

The Role of Education level in the Modern Standard Arabic Use: The Saudi Context

Yasir Zayed Alasiri

King Khalid University

دور المستوى التعليمي في استخدام اللغة العربية المعيارية: السياق السعودي

د. ياسر زايد العسيري

جامعة الملك خالد

Abstract

This study examines the impact of education on the use of MSA in everyday life in society in Saudi Arabia. So far in traditional speech we use MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) for formal situations, and we also use Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) in informal occasions. Recent trends exhibited that educated people use MSA more in informal situations. Utilizing a mixed-methods framework, the researcher integrated quantitative survey data with qualitative analyses and interviews to examine patterns of language usage and attitudes across different educational levels. High school, bachelor's degree, master's degree, Ph. D.—were surveyed to assess how often they used MSA and CSA in various social situations. Data suggests that increased educational attainment correlates with greater MSA use, challenging the prescriptive dictate of the language. Generally, those with advanced degrees reported increased use of MSA, highlighting education's effect on linguistic literacy. Qualitative data were analyzed through a thematic lens to identify nuanced perspectives on language conventions, cultural identity and language preservation. In addition, people noted the role of MSA in academic and professional realms while appreciating CSA's ties to culture and community. This article provides potential linguistic revelations in Saudi Arabia, despite some limitations which is: sample bias and self-reported data. The outcomes include language policy at a national level and teaching initiatives that reflect the activities of different practices. This study argues for continued engagement in sociolinguistics and educational linguistics, especially in regards to how we articulate and assess evolving language use around the world, and how language standards should be dynamic rather than static.

Keywords: Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA), language attitudes, linguistic diversity, language use and education, language variation.

مستخلص البحث:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في العلاقة بين مستوى التعليم واستخدام اللغة العربية الفصحى الحديثة (MSA) في المحادثات اليومية داخل المجتمع السعودي. نظرياً، تمت مقارنة اللغة العربية المعيارية في السياقات الرسمية، في حين كان النظر منحصرًا على استخدام العربية السعودية العامية (CSA) في التفاعلات غير الرسمية. ومع ذلك، تظهر الاتجاهات الأخيرة نمطًا حديثًا متمثلًا في تحول الأفراد المتعلمين نحو استخدام العربية الفصحى بشكل متزايد في السياقات غير الرسمية. تتبنى هذه الدراسة منهجًا متعدد الأساليب، يجمع بين المنهج الكمي والتحليل النوعي والمقابلات لاستكشاف أنماط استخدام اللغة والمواقف عبر مستويات التعليم المختلفة. تم مسح عينة مكونة من 80 مشاركًا من خلفيات تعليمية مختلفة - طلاب الثانوية، ودرجة البكالوريوس، ودرجة الماجستير، والدكتوراه - وذلك لمناقشة تكرار استخدامهم لـ MSA و CSA في السياقات الاجتماعية غير الرسمية. تشير النتائج إلى وجود علاقة طردية بين مستويات التعليم العالي وزيادة استخدام اللغة العربية الفصحى، مما يشكل تحديًا للمعايير اللغوية التقليدية. أفاد المشاركون الحاصلون على درجات علمية متقدمة باستخدام أعلى للغة الفصحى المعيارية، مما يسلط الضوء على تأثير التعليم على السلوك اللغوي. كشف التحليل الموضوعي للمقابلات عن وجهات نظر دقيقة حول تشكيلات اللغة، والهوية الثقافية، والحفاظ على اللغة. اعترف المشاركون بمكانة MSA في المجالات الأكاديمية والمهنية مع تقييم عالٍ لـ CSA لأصالتها الثقافية وروابطها المجتمعية. تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم ديناميكيات اللغة في المملكة العربية السعودية. وتدعو النتائج إلى سياسات لغوية شاملة واستراتيجيات تعليمية تستوعب الممارسات اللغوية المتنوعة. يفيد هذا البحث المناقشات الجارية في علم اللغة الاجتماعي واللسانيات التعليمية، مع التركيز على الحاجة إلى معايير لغوية مرنة تعكس الممارسات اللغوية المتطورة في المجتمعات متعددة الثقافات.

1. Introduction

Language has a crucial part in developing the standards, cultural identities, and the communication styles in various communities. Language is a significant aspect of the culture in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) that helps shape cultural identity, social relations, and religious practices. This requires an adaptive interplay between Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA), where both varieties serve a specific purpose and represent different social dimensions (Khan, I. A. 2011; Tskhvediani, Z. 2024). Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the formal register of Arabic which is used in official speeches, written letters, and academic writing throughout the Arab world. MSA has cultural and religious significance in Saudi Arabia as it is used in the Quran and it is the bedrock for scholars and for religious practices (Giolfo et al., 2016).

MSA is the language of unification among Arabic speakers; it is the bridge for a rich expressive culture between the countries where Arabic is spoken. On the other hand, Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) refers to a variety of spoken dialects, colloquial terms and expressions in Arabic that appear in conversational and informal communication among Saudi citizens. CSA is regarded as the dominant form of communication that has its roots reflecting regional identities and particularities (Omar, A., & Ilyas, M. 2018).

These distinctions within CSA only emphasize the diversity that exists within Saudi Arabian dialects themselves — differing vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar across regions. Despite the codified roles of MSA and CSA, modern socio-linguistic changes in Saudi Arabia are calling the traditional language rule into question. It is well-known that MSA is being more frequently used in the informal environment and day-to-day conversations especially among those with high formal education (Elyas, T., & Picard, M. 2010). The context of this change is a reevaluation of conventional language use between formal Arabic and colloquial Arabic. This situation occurs among educated people who know MSA's reputation as the prestige language for work and intellectual thought. MSA is increasingly being incorporated into everyday speech, which breaks down the separation between formal language use and informal language use (RYDING, K. C. 2016).

There are many factors why the language has changed for Saudi speakers. Increased use of MSA in informal contexts is driven by higher levels of formal education, exposure to global media and literature, and aspirations for professional advancement. Moreover, language behaviors are influenced by political, social, and cultural factors (Shukri, N. A. 2014). As in any society, the ways in which language is used in Saudi Arabia are indicative of deeper shifts within the society itself. This reflects a gradual trend towards modernization and cultural adaptation in the Arabic language in general and how Arabic speakers present themselves. This trend challenges the status quo of conventional Arabic norms, allowing for more inclusivity in linguistics and more nuanced comprehension of the varieties of Arabic in Saudi society (Daoudi, A., & Murphy, E. 2011).

These factors — the evolving role of the Arabic language, the educational experience, and the broader social context — are important subjects themselves, and delving more deeply into each

can help better understand the nuanced relationship between them in the context of Saudi Arabia. In short, this adds to the repositories of languages, people and places, as well as needs and aspirations of people and communities for the ownership of linguistic and cultural capital. Rationale for this research by critically investigating the use of language and its assumptions in the Saudi context, the research aims to enable and encourage the use of MSA as opposed to CSA within Saudi community. Examining the impact of education level on the language behavior of Saudi speakers can shed light on these linguistic dynamics and preferences when it comes to inter-comun_Lingua (Subtirelu, N. 2014). Although the literature contributes meaningfully to perspectives on the wider Arab context, the unique socio-cultural makeup of Saudi Arabia warrants investigation in empirical research into the role of education and linguistic activities in the Saudi linguistic systems. Importantly, this study has implications for language policy and planning in the KSA.

This research considers how questioning our assumptions of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) being exclusively formal and colloquial spoken Arabic (CSA) being informal not only has implications for more nuanced conceptualization of language variation and usage patterns, but can also serve to shape our pedagogical approaches and language revitalization initiatives that focus on increasing access to linguistic diversity and cultural inclusion.

This study hypothesizes that people with a greater level of education tend to use MSA (more) (even in informal, everyday dialogues), which also contradicts with popular believe regarding MSA to be reserved only for formal events.

The Specific objectives of this research are:

- To provide evidence of a link between education with the frequency of MSA usage in informal communication situations.
- To explore participants' attitudes of MSA and CSA in different social and communicative settings.
- To question the common place assumptions that MSA is only used in formal situations whereas CSA is only utilized in informal setting, in the Saudi Arabian discourse.

2. Hypothesis Development

This research, therefore, hypothesizes that the proportion of Saudi individuals with higher levels of education, who are consistently using MSA as a communicative tool in regular and daily dialogues, will be much larger than those with lower-quality education. This hypothesis, which is derived from the researcher's standpoint, strives to explore the powerful impact education has on the language behavior in Saudi complex sociolinguistic context.

The language that one learns in their formative years has been thought to be highly influential. A crucial part of this hypothesis is that these individuals have benefited from higher levels of

education, which has made them more equipped with language skills and structures found in *Fusha* or formal Arabic, enabling MSA to better suit their daily conversations in all contexts. Technological advancements and global interactions could have further enhanced the people's craving for one, unified, standardized Arabic language. Furthermore, education promotes linguistic awareness and flexibility, equipping individuals to traverse varying linguistic conventions successfully by incorporating MSA into daily interactions. To empirically test the aforementioned hypothesis, a mixed method approach involving quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews will be employed.

The quantitative approach encompasses the survey data that quantitatively looks at how often MSA is used when interacting with each education level, whilst the qualitative approach goes deeper into the attitudes and beliefs of participants towards MSA and how it fits in with their language practices. This triangulation of findings establishes strong empirical validation of the relationship between education level and usage patterns of MSA.

The importance of the above-mentioned hypothesis is in bringing the opportunity to question the perception in Saudi dialect about the divide between formal and informal language. It has been argued that educated speakers are increasingly using MSA in non-formal/non-official contexts and the researcher will provide evidence for positive correlation between education and MSA use in order to further underscore the importance of everyday usage of MSA to challenge the stereotype about MSA as associated only with formal and official contexts. As language use in Saudi society continues to evolve, mediated access to linguistic choices shapes community dynamics, with diverse influences contributing to variations in speech.

Moreover, by highlighting the complex interaction of education, language choice and sociocultural dynamics, the hypothesis enriches broader debates in the field of sociolinguistics. It aims at investigating how education impacts people with rare linguistic inventories or endowed of exceptional metalinguistic awareness, which results in those individuals defining their speech practices appropriately according to varied communicative situations. This study is important in order to have an insight into the changing sociolinguistic situation of Saudi Arabia, which further helps policymakers and language educators in striving to ameliorate language use.

It is important to note that this hypothesis promotes the notion of higher education as an indicator of formality in discourse, which has formed the basis for understanding language usage in Saudi Arabia. The research thus contributes to the development of a more contextual understanding of the complex interactive relationships at play between education, language behaviour, and sociocultural realities of contemporary Saudi society by empirically testing this hypothesis.

3. Literature Review

In fact, studies on sociolinguistics conducted in different Arab nations provided evidence of this interaction by investigating how the use of MSA is related to educational background, especially when it comes to specific communication situations. Other studies, like those conducted in Egypt and Lebanon (and in a variety of other Arab countries), have examined the relationship between

higher attainment levels of formal education and linguistic behavior and MSA in informal contexts (Kecskes, I. (2018; Dweik et al., 2015). In Egypt, Palfreyman et al. (2018) analyzed language usage among university graduates and noted an increase in MSA usage in formal and informal occasions with higher academic qualifications.

Educated speakers of Arabic tended to use MSA more than others, and they associated it with prestige, formal, intellectual, and business communication. Such a pattern is representative of a wider trend seen in Arab countries whereby higher education cultivates the use of Modern Standard Arabic in linguistic behaviors (Palfreyman et al., 2018). Likewise, a study conducted in Lebanon by Dweik et al. (2015) "Investigating how the Lebanese are affected by education regarding their language use". The study found that, relative to less educated counterparts, greater proficiency and comfort in using MSA was noted among people with higher levels of education, particularly in academic and workplace settings. These results emphasized the educational influence in organizing language attitudes and linguistic competence (Dweik et al., 2015), indicating that education is an essential factor in both linguistic standardization and language variation among the Arab communities.

Diversity of Languages in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a unique sociolinguistic landscape with its complex interplay of culture, religion, and regionalism. MSA and CSA coexist and interact, each fulfilling different communicative roles and reflecting different social dynamics and shaping the larger linguistic picture of the Kingdom (al-Rojaie, Y. 2023). This, together with the various cultural identity, historical legacies, and religious practices, is what makes the linguistic identity of Saudi Arabian people more complex. This blended with Arabic dialects has been crucial as MSA serves as the language of religious texts, official speeches, and scholarly work, all of which have an important role in the linguistic culture of Saudi society (Sawaie, M. 2007).

On the other hand, Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) represents informal expressions, regional dialects, and the casual language used in the fields of informal conversation and general society. The linguistic diversity of the Kingdom is reflected in the social and regional identities expressed through CSA—having been influenced by the different languages and dialects of various provinces (Holes, C. 2009). The values and philosophies shaping the communication practices also functions within the framework of Saudi Arabia's societal context, which is inherently intertwined with Islam. This systematically clustered way of life, which strictly adheres to religious principles, gender roles, and hierarchical structures, regulates conversational and linguistic practices, including language (Alomaim, T. I., & Altameemi, Y. M. 2022). With the societal nature and culture peculiarities in Saudi Arabia, and appropriateness of language usage, there is a need for a focused study explicitly relating to education level and language usage in the kingdom. Research in other Arab nations along the same lines has found a general positive relationship with MSA but these assumptions need to be made cautiously in the case of Saudi Arabia, taking into account the national language policies and local attitudes toward it, among other factors (Ryding, K. C. 2009).

Religious teachings and cultural norms shape local linguistic practices and consequently manners of speaking and ways of thinking toward MSA and CSA.

However, the historical influence of Arabic, in conjunction with Saudi Arabia's global standing, would logically compel the government to promote MSA as the language of formal education, media and religious discourse, as this signifies it as a connective force in Saudi society (Jabeen, I. 2023). Educational policies in a country like Saudi Arabia are significant in changing language learning and proficiency levels. This prioritization in educational frameworks, along with efforts for preserving heritage and implementing new policies aimed at cultivating a sense of national identity, impacts the linguistic practices of individuals depending on their level of education (Mahboob et al., 2018). The way in which Saudi speakers ensure that they utilize the language in an ever-changing world, is affected by various socio-cultural factors, on individual and community levels, family and social networks and exposure to global media. Modernization, globalization, and traditional values intersect in a linguistic landscape where individuals orbit around linguistic norms that vary based on education, social context, and communicative purpose (Alhamazany, A. 2021).

The socio-linguistic context of Saudi Arabia is also introduced in this section highlighting the influences of linguistic varieties, cultural communities as well as multilayered society issues on the social, professional, and academic life of individuals using the language. This highlights the significance of conducting a localized exploration into the link between educational attainment and language utilization within Saudi context, given the norms governing the local linguistic practices and socio-cultural components. A thorough examination of language attitudes, communicative behaviors, and the role of education in the processes of linguistic normalization in the Kingdom is essential to unlocking the complex sociolinguistic dynamic in the country. Similar studies in surrounding Arab countries, including Egypt and Lebanon, reflect useful findings about the general characteristics of language use as a function of education level. Since Saudi Arabia has a close knit interrelation between cultural dos and don'ts, linguistic conventions and religious customs (Holes, C. 2009), MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) emerges as the formal speaking style (used in writing, media and everyday interactions) with cultural, religious and academic significance. MSA acts as a common foundation, enabling communication and cultural exchange across Arabic-speaking countries, while Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) reflects the everyday language used in informal contexts and local environments. Thus, the unique sociolinguistic landscape of Saudi Arabia calls for a localized examination of the correlation between education level and language use in this specific context. Education as a factor impacting MSA use in regional studies in Egypt, a study found that education is positively correlated with MSA use (Moubahed, 2014), whereas in Lebanon the correlation between education and geographical factors (place of birth and residence) has led to similar conclusions (Ouhbi et al., 2019). However, in the wider Saudi context, it is important to analyze whether such findings are apt for the local atmosphere without digging deeper into the local linguistic practices, educational policies and socio-cultural backgrounds. Saudi Arabia's educational policies reflect an emphasis

on MSA, which are crucial in defining language acquisition and proficiency levels for students in formal educational contexts as well as media channels (Mahboob et al., 2018).

However, the training of MSA in the school curriculum stems from a grander reframing of linking the Arabic standard to cultural preservation and national identity. Studying the specific sociolinguistic context of Saudi Arabia through education and language use not only validates the possibility of what this research tries to explore, but it also exposes an avenue for new knowledge regarding how language is used, how culture is adapted, and how Modern Standard Arabic is being negotiated in informal settings to its adopters. Through exploration, we will be able to look into the possible reasons behind the attitudes towards the use of Arabic language and its perceived status in the context of educational practices and socio-cultural dimensions in the country which have significant implications for international communication policy and global issues such as language standardization and cultural identity of the Kingdom.

4. Methodology

This research used mixed-methods analysis to validate the researcher's hypotheses and assumptions about patterns of language use across groups of participants with varying levels of education. A total of 80 people participated in the study, divided into groups according to four educational levels: high school, bachelor, master, and Ph. D., with each group consisting of 20 people.

4.1. Quantitative Approach

A survey tool was created to ensure objective data collection concerning participants' language practice tendencies. The survey involved questions about the frequency of usage of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic (CSA) in different social settings, such as conversations with family members, interactions with coworkers, language exchanges in social gatherings, etc. Our participants rated their language preferences on a scale of 1 to 5 — 1 = never use; 5 = always use. A descriptive (cross-sectional) survey was conducted in which self-administered questionnaires were distributed to participants via an online survey platform (eg, Qualtrics) to facilitate data capture and analysis.

The survey also used a Likert scale, a psychometric scale that measured responses of survey participants on a continuum, which allowed for quantitative comparisons between how individuals used a variety based on their education level, and these data could be statically analyzed to see if there are significant differences between groups. This structure allowed the researcher to make qualitative opinions and preferences into quantitative data points, validating the quantitative results of the study.

4.2. Qualitative Approach

A smaller selection of participants from each educational level underwent in-depth interviews to explore the rationale for their language choices. Additional interviews examined attitudes towards MSA and CSA, perceptions of language formality, and the effects of education on language use. Interviews were audio recorded upon consent from participants and transcribed for qualitative analysis.

4.3. Data Analysis

Statistical tools like correlation and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data to detect any patterns or relationships between education level and language use. Data were analyzed with statistical software packages SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The qualitative data from the interviews were subject to thematic analysis and key themes and narratives extracted. This strategy consisted of an organized coding process that identified themes that occurred repeatedly within the interview transcripts. Qualitative analysis was done to aid in being able to organize and interpret the data efficiently.

4.3.1 Content Analysis

Additionally, the researcher performed content analysis on some of the transcribed interviews data (of equal length: 2 minutes per interview for each participant) from some spontaneous interactions with 20 participants of different educational levels to count the occurrences of MSA vocabulary in their spontaneous interaction with the researcher.

Table 1: Frequency of MSA variants

Education Level	No.	Frequency of MSA Vocabulary
High School	5	137
Bachelor's Degree	5	190
Master's Degree	5	256
Ph.D.	5	304

The findings indicated that high school participants used MSA vocabulary infrequently compared to bachelor, master, and Ph. D. accounting for only 137 MSA words. However, participants with bachelor, master and Ph. D. degree showed a high frequency employment of MSA words in their casual conversation with the researcher, the variants MSA words being 190, 256, 304 respectively. This indicates that higher education level made participants more likely to use MSA more often in their language contact.

On the contrary, there was a relative inverse relation between education level and CSA usage. It reflects the apparent influence of education levels on the frequencies of the use of MSA features in informal communications of the subjects.

4.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Education Levels by Participants Language Use Pattern

Using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never using, 5 = always using), the study explored participants' reported frequencies of using Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic (CSA) at various levels of education. The following Table shows the mean frequency of language use according to education level.

Table 2: Mean Frequency of Language Use by Education Level

Education Level	MSA Usage (Mean \pm SD)	CSA Usage (Mean \pm SD)
High School	2.8 \pm 0.9	4.2 \pm 1.2
Bachelor's Degree	3.5 \pm 1.0	3.8 \pm 1.1
Master's Degree	4.1 \pm 0.7	3.0 \pm 1.0
Ph.D.	4.5 \pm 0.6	2.5 \pm 0.8

Individuals at the high school level reported a mean MSA = 2.8 (SD = 0.9) and mean CSA = 4.2 (SD = 1.2). Participants with a bachelor degree had a higher mean MSA usage (M = 3.5, SD = 1.0), compared to high school participants, but a slightly lower CSA usage (M = 3.8, SD = 1.1). Those who held a master's degree showed an increase in mean MSA usage (4.1, SD = 0.7) with a trend of increasing MSA usage with increasing education. In contrast, their CSA use decreased to a mean of 3.0 (SD = 1.0). Participants with a Ph. D. had the highest mean MSA usage of 4.5 (SD = 0.6) compared to all other education levels, but had the lowest mean CSA usage of 2.5 (SD = 0.8).

Seemingly, data suggests that there is a positive relationship of education level with the MSA usage where an implication were observed for Higher education level. Participants with Master degree and Ph.D reported higher usage of MSA than individuals at lower education levels (High School and Bachelor's Degree). In contrast, individuals with lower education levels (High School) reported overall more frequent CSA use compared to those with higher education levels.

Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was performed to evaluate the correlations between the educational attainment and the patterns of the language use. Table 2 shows correlation coefficients.

Table 3: Correlation Between Education Level and Language Use

	MSA Usage	CSA Usage
Education Level	0.72**	-0.58**

Subsequently, the researcher performed Pearson's correlations between the education level and the MSA usage, which found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). That is, in terms of speaking/word interactions, the higher an individual had education the more likely they were to use MSA. On the other hand, a moderate negative correlation was found between education level and CSA usage ($r = -0.58$, $p < 0.01$). Indicating that with higher level of education participants are more likely to less frequently use CSA.

A high positive correlation between education level and MSA usage clearly indicates that the degree of education has a rather strong effect on favoring the use of formal Modern Standard Arabic especially in academic/professional contexts. Further, analyses of the collected data simultaneously indicated a negative correlation with the use of CSA; more frequent use of colloquial varieties decreased when educational level increased.

4.3.3 Qualitative Analysis

Themes from In-depth Interviews

Analysis of the interviews based on thematic analysis exhibited valuable insights on attitudes towards Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and Colloquial Arabic (CSA) and views on formality of language and education on language behavior. The qualitative data resulted in the following themes accompanied by illustrative examples from participants:

Theme 1: Theme 1: Formality and Education

Those with higher levels of education viewed MSA as a more formal, academic, and professional language. This perception was because Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was associated with intellectual prestige in formal contexts. For instance, one Ph. D. participant expressed:

“Modern Standard Arabic is required in academic and professional contexts. It is viewed as more sophisticated and subtle. When I present my research or converse with colleagues, I default to MSA because it is the language of academic exchange.”

Another Ph. D. attendant expressed a similar perspective, saying,

“MSA is critically important for writing papers and interacting with international colleagues in my research field. It is the variety of scholarship and intellectual discourse.”

One person with a master's noted,

"Throughout my studies, I was taught to appreciate MSA for being clear and precise in academic writing. It's important for accurately expressing technical ideas."

A bachelor degree's participant said,

"As a young professional, I've learned how advantageous MSA can be, in terms of networking and advancing my career the future. It's considered a sign of education and sophistication in business contexts."

Theme 2: Cultural Identity

A few participants attributed their sense of regional affiliation and belonging to their practice of associating with their use of Colloquial Arabic (CSA). CSA was seen as a means of expressing cultural heritage and keeping a connection with local customs. Participant with a master's degree:

"Speaking Colloquial Arabic just feels closer to my roots, to my community." It is a reflection of who I am and where I come from. It's not only about language; it's about preserving our cultural identity and continuing it to the next generation."

Someone with a bachelor's degree wrote:

"growing up, CSA was the language of my community. I used it today and it reminds me of my hometown upbringing."

A Ph. D. participant emphasized the importance of CSA in everyday interactions, stating,

"CSA embodies the hospitality and warmth of our culture. It's the language of mundane life and community gatherings."

a high school participant said,

"I use CSA with friends and family. It is more natural and comfortable for informal conversation and emotion."

Theme 3: Language Maintenance

Concerning education, those who were educated in MSA had higher interest in keeping their knowledge of MSA. Language improvement out of higher education was a decisive factor in

formal language use such as academic research and conference presentations etc. One of the interviewed participant stated:

“Learning at a higher level forced me to use my Modern Standard Arabic to read scholarly literature and discussions, I realized that MSA is an essential part of school success and profession development. For me, it was very reflective when it comes to language knowledge and I saw the way to use that list. I used MSA beyond every day talk and it improved my Modern Standard Arabic skills.”

Similarly, one of the master degree stated:

“In my profession, MSA is very crucial as I need it to access literature and further research. I have the goal to complete my higher education and I had a chance to promote my MSA knowledge and skills through this goal”

A Ph. D. holder woman also reported importance of MSA by stating the following:

someone should have more proficient Modern Standard Arabic in doctoral programs to publish his or her research and go to talk in conference. That’s was the movement point for me and I start to keep practicing my language skill.”

One of high school’s holder discussed the effect of education and language growth:

“I was forced to learn fusha as I saw how fusha is influential in formal communication after I ended my high school. It is the fact that I work to improve my education.”

Indeed, MSA knowledge and understanding are widely influenced by these factors, which take the form of inspiration by education; language use in school culture and education, and choice of language. These examples are consistent with the themes identified through thematic analysis within their data, illustrating how language practice is guided by broader social, cultural, and educational impact, which informs and influences individuals’ identification with language.

By incorporating these examples, interpretations of qualitative themes are deepened, and the examples provide insight into the inner motivations and beliefs that guide linguistic performance within this culturally-influenced society.

4.3.4. Challenging Assumptions about Language Formality in Saudi Arabian Discourse

Such challenging of the conventional associations of language formality in Saudi Arabian discourse may indicate an important shift in linguistic behavior, as they would suggest a shift both in education(s) and society(s) in which such uses are made. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has

traditionally been considered an elevated register and used for formal communications, religious sermons, and education throughout Saudi society. On the other hand, Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) has always been the spoken language used in the social setting, daily life and in conversation with people in local society.

Recent sociolinguistic studies carried out in the Saudi setting, however, have exposed persuasive insights that are contrary to these own perceptions, especially in the case of educated people (Alghamdi, H., & Petraki, E. 2018). These studies demonstrate a noteworthy trend toward MSA use in private space—most prominently in everyday conversations and social settings. Against the wider backdrop of these shifts in language attitudes and the narrowly applied use of MSA, educated Arabic speakers are now actively including bits of MSA in their daily speech.

The drastic change of using MSA in informal contexts is unlike traditional linguistic rules, where MSA is used as formal and CSA is used as informal language. Instead of viewing them as an opposition, there is an increasing awareness of linguistic hybridity, where people mix aspects of both MSA and CSA in their speech. Such in-between blurs the lines of what has been the more traditional spectrum of formality and informality in the Saudi Arabian speech pattern.

This growing merger in informal dialogue is perhaps due to different causes including influence of higher schooling, direct exposure to media, formal writing, and online connection (Alghamdi, H. and Petraki, E. 2018). People who are educated understand that MSA is more prestigious and it lingers inside professional and intellectual aspects of the society so they often tend to use it even in their colloquial interactions. Furthermore, the changes in language use signal general socio-cultural transformations in which people want to convey their linguistic identity in increasingly more subtle and inclusive ways. This phenomenon has far-reaching implications for language attitudes and perceptions in Saudi Arabian society. It reflects a move reducing traditional speech rules, making language use more pragmatic and more flexible to needs. This phenomenon has implications for understanding contemporary communicative practices, as well as the social and cultural functions of language itself. For Saudi speakers, the incorporation of MSA serves as a language practice that reflects a negotiation: Overcoming linguistic divisions, Saudi speakers range from formal registers to informal registers by consolidating MSA as hybrid variety. Accepting this gradual insertion of MSA, Saudi speakers are aware of the split between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’, adhering to their surroundings and identities through the line of the communicative context.

Societal Implications and Linguistic Adaptation

The changing language practices in Saudi Arabia indicate a major change that has far-reaching consequences for society, enabling linguistic modernization and cultural adaptation in the Kingdom (Alghamdi, H., & Petraki, E. 2018). By questioning established norms on language formality, Saudi speakers encourage linguistic inclusion and a deeper comprehension of the spectrum of Arabic language forms.

One major impact of this linguistic change is the protection of linguistic inclusiveness. However, the approach toward Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has also changed and it has gained a wider acceptance in non-formal contexts. MSA is particularly appealing for educated speakers needing to articulate sophisticated concepts or participate in academic debates without the constraints of formal language; it has become a useful linguistic tool for negotiating these conversations. This evolution allows Saudi speakers to engage more authentically across a wider spectrum of communicative contexts, blurring the lines between formal and informal usages of language.

These usage trends also signal broader cultural shifts and aspirations for linguistic mastery within Saudi educational circles, where MSA's use in speech and writing is ever-increasing. Communicating through multiple languages is an adaptation that reflects the power of language as a cultural artifact, which is always changing to accommodate the communicative needs and social identities of its speakers. Essentially, people do not just display linguistic variations by meditating elements of MSA into informal painting but also reveal an intentional cultural approach and the transformation thereof. The dynamic language landscape in Saudi Arabia highlights the complex interplay between language, cultural identity, and social interaction. The use of contemporary lexicon within this context reflects inclinations of the rich traditions that combine the native culture and belongs to the wider narrative of cultural appreciation where language remains the one of the most important means to navigate through heritage, social transformation and offer inclusive communicative spaces.

5. Discussion

Generally speaking, the quantitative and qualitative exploration of language use, preferences and attitudes of Saudi Arabian participants indicates the complex interplay between level of education and choice of language. Based on the previous studies we will delve into the findings from this study regarding the evolving language practices in Saudi Arabia, how this development may impact the entire sociolinguistic dynamic in Saudi society.

The content-analysis indicated that high school subjects used MSA features less often compared to those of bachelor, master, and Ph. D. degree participants. But those with bachelor, master, and Ph. D. degree demonstrated considerable frequency usage of MSA vocabulary in their spontaneous conversation with the researcher.

This hints at the seemingly palpable effect of education on how MSA words are used in casual discourse among the respective subjects (Table 1). Furthermore, the analysis showed that there was a distinct correlation between education and ability to speak both MSA and CSA, and that MSA was spoken more prominently as education level increased. The average frequency of usage of MSA was significantly larger with higher education levels, while the average frequency of usage of CSA indicated an opposite trend (Table 2). These results support previous studies, conducted in other Arab countries, such as Egypt and Lebanon, which found that higher education was associated with greater MSA in both formal and informal contexts (Auer, P. 2020; Díez, A.

I. 2021). A highly educated person is expected to use more MSA as compared to a less educated one (Sulliman, A. 2020).

While MSA is considered high formal language and not necessarily the preserve of high education level speakers, the positive association between education level and MSA usage raises questions about the traditionally held assumption that MSA is the preserve of the elite. People with higher education, with the ability to write and speak in MSA, find themselves communicating in many different contexts — informal, and academic (Alghamdi, H., & Petraki, E 2018).

These changes denote linguistic modernization and cultural adaptation, which makes MSA a sign of intellectualism and professionalism (Alghamdi, H., & Petraki, E. 2018). This trend mirrors wider societal developments for linguistic literacy among educated speakers in the Saudi Arabian context. This correlation analysis further clarifies the connections between the level of education participants are receiving and their language preferences. The positive relationships between the level of education and MSA indicate the effect of higher education on the use of MSA language, especially in academic and professional fields (Table 2).

In contrast, the moderate negative association with CSA suggests that people with higher education levels tend to use colloquial varieties less frequently. This phenomenon reflects the impact of learners' educational level on their language use, and the changing trends and linguistic identity in Saudi society (Alhamazany, A. 2021). It is worth mentioning that themes obtained from the interviews offer rich details of the participants' views on their linguistic preferences with respect to (i) their feelings toward MSA and CSA, (ii) their opinions about language formality, and (iii) their perspective on education as a means of maintaining the languages. The previous sections of Form and Education, Cultural Identity and Language Maintenance emphasize that language choice and use are such multi-layered phenomena, and that cultural contexts and personal identity coalesce at the moment language choice and use occurs.

Such qualitative results corroborate findings of previous studies that highlight the variable and stereotypical attitudes towards education as a mechanism for linguistic standardization (Alresaini, S. S. 2012). MSA is viewed as a representation of cultural prestige and intellectual sophistication by educated people, whereas CSA is viewed as a medium through which regional identity and community belonging are expressed (Alhamazany, A. 2021).

Synthesizing Findings with Sociolinguistic Theory

This combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative findings provides useful insights into the sociolinguistic landscape of Saudi Arabia, including the intricate landscape of education, language decisions, and cultural identity. Through the lens of these broader theoretical concepts, we may contextualize these insights into how language practices and associated ideologies respect or contradict the desiring norms surrounding classical and colloquial varieties (Auer, P. 2020). Diglossia, a concept proposed by linguist Charles A. Ferguson (1959), refers to a specific linguistic situation, where two communication varieties of a language are used by a community at

the same time (what we can see is that for the same language, there are two different varieties that support two different tasks). That is, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the high variety utilized in formal situations, where as Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) serves as the low variety spoken during regular interactions (Alresaini, S. S. 2012).

In contrast, we found that this dichotomy was gradually eroding, at least among educated speakers, and that this increasingly blurred the line between MSA and CSA as previously mentioned. Language ideology, in contrast, is the beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions related to the uses of language in society. Specifically, our findings add to the literature on the changing attitudes toward language among Saudi speakers, whereby educated speakers approach MSA not just as a formal register, but also a carrier of prestige, intellectualism, and professionalism (Al-Tamimi, 2019). Moreover, findings undermine common beliefs regarding the variance of MSA usage across the formality spectrum, revealing a greater degree of integration of MSA in informal domains. Educated speakers employ their command of MSA in variety of communicative contexts, which obscures the distinction in Arabic between informal and formal registers (Alghamdi, H., & Petraki, E. 2018). This phenomenon mirrors wider sociolinguistic trends and poses a challenge to the unyielding nature of diglossic situation in Saudi Arabia.

5.1. Study Implications

Overall, the study's results have meaningful implications for language education and cultural dynamics within Saudi Arabia.

Understanding Language Dynamics

Colloquial Saudi Arabic (CSA) and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) are two forms of the language that are both used across the country, so the current study sought to explore how that reflects across age groups and social settings. Such overlaps reflect how rigid diglossic models no longer apply in some social contexts, as distinct varieties blur into one another, creating seamless language practices that defy classification.

Fostering Cultural Identity

This implies that educators can utilize the knowledge of the social norms and attitudes towards MSA and CSA across different educational levels to develop responsive curricula and pedagogical methods to the linguistic setting of the Saudi learners. Such a development may promote linguistic inclusivity and the possibility of switching linguistic conventions based on the contextual and situational goals of communication.

By examining participants' attitudes towards language choice, the study emphasizes the significance of language as both a marker of cultural identity and a strong link with the community. This information can be utilized together with educational programs to support the preservation of culture and heritage through language acquisition.

Enhancing Communicative Competence

It enlightens the extent of communicative competence among the Saudi speakers and can guide the education and other sectors to focus on the people according to their education and linguistic level. This provides educators the opportunity to highlight the functionality of language use to allow students to take advantage of formal and informal varieties of language.

Challenging Assumptions

Traditional approaches presume that MSA is a formal type that lacks the informality, colloquialism and naturalness in spoken communication, while CSA tends to be informal within the context of Saudi Arabian discourse. Teaching this way allows learners to reclaim linguistic space in a social class where / and when they might typically be disadvantaged.

Empowering Language Users

Finally, the study's goal is to equip the speakers of the varieties spoken in Saudi with knowledge and awareness through which they may utilize the norms without any hindrance; if they choose to do so, in other settings. Language, By embracing linguistic diversity and challenging stereotypes, individuals can express their identities and communicate effectively across different domains of social interaction.

5.2. Study contributions

The second half of the paper confirms the aforementioned hypotheses as it provides with links various theoretical and outcome contributions to effective practices to inform educational sociolinguistics and language policy implementation in the Arab world with empirical evidence in Saudi Arabia.

Theoretical Contributions

Reconceptualizing Language Variation: Theoretical Contribution to language variation: This study contributes to our understanding of theoretical discussions on language variation by rethinking dichotomies between MSA and CSA in Saudi social contexts. The implications of this study offer a broader view of linguistic usage and what constitutes realities in the Saudi/Arab context.

Language Ideology and Attitudes: The study adds to the theories of language ideology, investigating participants' attitudes towards MSA and CSA regarding education level. And by exploring the effects of language ideologies on communicative behaviors, the study adds to broader conversations about language attitudes and sociolinguistic identity.

Contributing New Insights in Saudi Sociolinguistics: By embedding quantitative and qualitative approaches, this research contributes fresh insights into the field of sociolinguistics in Saudi

Arabia. Analysis of education level on language use. An analysis of how language use varies across different education levels. This analysis reflects impacts of education level on language use.

Educational Linguistics: It contributes to educational linguistics by showing how language is a function of education practices. The significance of educational background in language policy and curriculum development for promoting linguistic diversity and proficiency is well emphasised.

Practical Contributions

The Role of MSA and CSA: The results do not consider MSA and CSA as competitors, but as two varieties living together in the Saudi linguistic space; thus, they can be viewed as a window for language policy-makers to accommodate proper inclusive language policies addressing MSA and CSA.

Curriculum Development: Insights from the study can help educators develop curricula and engage in teaching practices that promote linguistic competence in various language varieties. The incorporation of MSA and CSA through creative language education provides students with practical skills and knowledge as well as an understanding of the fundamental structure of the region in question.

Professional Development: This research suggests implications for professional development for formal and informal contexts alike to target language use for even greater benefits. Language use varies by education level, and professionals can use this information to interact effectively in diverse communicative situations.

Cultural Preservation: This study contributes to the cause of cultural preservation, underscoring the role of language in the sustenance of cultural identity. These findings can be supported by educational initiatives to foster cultural awareness and heritage appreciation through language education programs.

Understanding language preferences and attitudes can lay the groundwork for community engagement strategies that promote linguistic inclusivity and social cohesion. Research can help local organizations and language advocates foster more dialogue and collaboration around language diversity.

Such theoretical and practical contributions emphasize the need for a better understanding of education level and sociocultural factors as it relates to language behaviors in Saudi Arabia to help achieve linguistic diversity and empower individuals to navigate linguistic norms authentically.

5.3. Limitations of the Research

Although this study strives to shed light on the impact of education level on the use of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) among Saudi citizens, there are some limitations that must be

acknowledged that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of the results. The first limitation was that there may be some sampling bias in the study participants selected. Because the research may have collected its participants from students nearby, it could be biased towards certain places in the population rather than representative of the country simply. In such a context, this bias might not encompass the variety of language use and ideology in various regions and classes of Saudi Arabia. A further key point is the degree to which each study relies on self-reported data via surveys and interviews, which raises the possibility of response bias. Participants may give socially desirable responses or overestimate their usage of MSA, particularly if they believe MSA is correlated with increased social status or educational level. Such a limitation would restrict the accuracy and reliability of the reported language usage patterns as well as the overall validity of the study's findings. In addition, the study was limited by a lack of depth in education level (i.e. high school, bachelor degree, master degree, Ph. D.) might miss subtleties connected to other educational tracks or vocational training. This would potentially restrict the view of which educational background affects the way individuals use language since there are individuals with educational experiences that do not fit these categories.

Another limitation of the study is its cross-sectional design, which only reflects language use and attitudes at a single time point, making it difficult to comment on the potential role of longitudinal predictors of language behavior. For example, language use patterns and attitudes towards MSA could be affected by a number of historical, societal, or educational developments for which the approach does not take account, indicating the need for longitudinal studies that can capture the dynamic outcomes of complex language practices. Likewise, the influence of contextual variables that impact language, for instance, regional dialectal differences, cultural practices, or different communicative situations, might not have been taken into consideration. More generalized discussions about the relationship between education and language use may disregard differences in language behavior occurring in different sociocultural contexts even within the same country: Saudi Arabia. Causation cannot be inferred from the results planted purely on correlation.

Further, there may be other unidentified factors, such as personal interests, social circles, or media influences, which play a significant role in the formation of language preferences and behaviors that require thorough analysis. Finally, participants' actual linguistic competencies in MSA may have been underestimated due to the greater dependence on self-reported language proficiency measures. Further evidence of the impact of education level format on language usage could be established through the use of objective language proficiency measures (i.e., language assessments or performance tasks).

6. Conclusion

Finally, this study provides significant information about communication patterns (MSA use) in Saudi Arabia according to speakers' educational level. Results underscore an overt trend among educated speakers whose use of MSA in everyday interactions dispels traditional assumptions that MSA is utterly or uniquely formal. This study reveals the complex interrelationship between

education, language choice, and cultural identity by merging quantitative analysis of language usage patterns with qualitative exploration of participants' attitudes. The findings of course come with certain limitations (such as sampling biases, reliance on self-reported data and so on), yet the study is suggestive of the need for a nuanced ideology of language policies and educational strategies which not only appreciates the value of linguistic diversity, but also enables people to choose between linguistic norms depending on social context and communicative purpose. Future studies may apply these finding to explore further the factors influencing language behavior whilst also exploring the implications of particular language practices in Saudi Arabia on a broader scale. Thus, this article introduces an innovative outlook on research in the field of sociolinguistics and educational linguistics and has been based on current awareness of how speakers can take advantage of linguistic diversity through the contemplation of future research that potentially contributes to the implementation of more adequate tasks for each language setting.

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