

Diglossia and Identity in Oman: A Sociolinguistic Investigation of Language Choice in Omani Arabic Dialects

Ahmad Asad Juma

Educationalist, Ministry of Education Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Abstract

This study investigates how Omanis navigate the diverse world of Arabic language use. Arabic, the official language, coexists with a rich tapestry of dialects across Oman. The research explores how Omanis choose between formal Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and informal dialects in different social settings (family, social media, education).

1. Introduction

This study investigates how Omanis navigate the diverse world of Arabic language use. Arabic, the official language, coexists with a rich tapestry of dialects across Oman. The research explores how Omanis choose between formal Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and informal dialects in different social settings (family, social media, education).

To capture this intricate linguistic landscape, the study employs a mixed-methods approach. This includes: observing natural conversations across different Omani regions., conducting semi-structured interviews with participants from diverse areas, and utilizing qualitative analysis of both interview transcripts and observational data to gain a comprehensive understanding of language variation in Oman. This research contributes to the field of sociolinguistics by:

- Documenting the unique features and usage patterns of the Omani dialect across different regions.
- Exploring the social and linguistic factors that influence language choice, shedding light on the dynamic relationship between language and identity in Oman.

The findings will be of interest to scholars of Arabic linguistics, sociolinguistics, and anyone interested in the diverse ways language is used in multilingual societies. Beyond academia, this research has the potential to:

- **Inform the development of language learning materials:** By understanding how Omanis use MSA and dialects across different contexts, a creative learning materials will be created more effectively, and that caters to real-world communication needs.
- **Shape educational policies:** The study's insights can inform educational policies regarding language instruction in Oman, ensuring that students develop proficiency in both MSA and relevant Omani dialects.
- **Promote social cohesion:** Understanding the role of language in shaping identity and social interaction can contribute to fostering better communication and understanding across different communities in Oman.

In essence, this research explores the captivating interplay between language and society, offering valuable insights for appreciating the richness and complexity of Arabic communication.

1.1 The Gap and Importance:

Despite existing research on Arabic dialects, a gap exists. There is still a lack of comprehensive understanding of how speakers choose between MSA and dialects across various social contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the factors influencing language choice within these domains. By analyzing this dynamic relationship between social context and language use, a deeper understanding will be gained of how Omanis leverage different Arabic varieties to achieve specific communication goals.

1.2 Objectives:

- Identify and categorize the distinct Arabic varieties used in family interactions, social media interactions, and educational settings.
- Analyze the linguistic features (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation) employed within each domain and variety.
- Explore the social and communicative factors influencing speakers' choices within each domain (e.g., relationships, formality, purpose).

2. Literature Review

This review explores language variation and social choice within the Arabic language, with a particular focus on Oman. The Arabic language presents a fascinating case study, showcasing the coexistence of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) – the formal register used in education, media, and official settings (Frag, 2014) – and a rich tapestry of regional dialects employed in everyday interactions (Eades, 2009). Oman's geographical location positions it at a crossroads of these linguistic influences. While MSA holds official status, Omanis utilize a diverse range of colloquial Arabic dialects in their daily lives (Holes, 2001). These dialects vary regionally, reflecting the country's unique cultural and historical background (Watson, 2002). Examples include Dhofari Arabic in the south (Jerusalem & Shary, 1999), Shihhi Arabic in the north (Versteegh, 1997), and Najdi Arabic in the interior regions (Holes, 1984).

Understanding the interplay between MSA and Omani dialects is crucial for comprehending communication within Oman. MSA signifies formality, education, and prestige (Frag, 2014). Conversely, Omani dialects offer a sense of informality, regional identity, and emotional connection for speakers (Al-Hadhrani, 2013). This intricate dance between formality and informality, prestige and identity, plays out across various social contexts in Oman.

Despite existing research on Arabic dialects and sociolinguistics (Frag, 2014; Blanc, 2000), a gap exists in our understanding of how speakers choose between MSA and dialects across these diverse social contexts. Existing studies often focus on specific domains (e.g., education) or individual varieties (e.g., Dhofari Arabic) (Holes, 2001; Jerusalem & Shary, 1999).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection Methods

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of language choice in Omani Arabic dialects. This approach allows for the exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives (qualitative) alongside broader trends in language use across the population (quantitative).

3.1.1 Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews: In-depth, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a purposive sample of participants. This format allows for flexibility in the interview process while ensuring that key themes are explored. The interviews will be conducted in group settings (3-5 participants) to encourage discussion and interaction, fostering richer data on shared experiences and social dynamics influencing language choice.

3.1.2 Quantitative Data Collection

Questionnaire Survey: A self-administered questionnaire survey will be distributed to a larger sample of participants. The survey will be designed with a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions will allow for efficient data collection and statistical analysis of trends in language use across different demographics. Open-ended questions will provide participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and attitudes, offering valuable insights that complement the interview data.

3.1.3 Pilot Testing

Prior to full-scale data collection, the interview guide and survey instrument will be piloted with a small sample of participants. This pilot testing will allow for refinement of the instruments to ensure clarity, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness in eliciting the desired data.

3.1.4 Ethical Considerations

This research will adhere to ethical research protocols. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants before their participation. They will be assured of anonymity and confidentiality throughout the research process. The data will be stored securely and used solely for the purposes of this study.

By employing this multifaceted approach, the study seeks to capture the rich and complex nature of language choice in Omani Arabic dialects, offering a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

3.2 Sample Size

An appropriate sample size for both interviews and surveys of (280) school and college students in different regions to ensuring representation from different age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, and regions in Oman.

3.2.1 Sample Size Justification

The target sample size for this study is 280 participants. This number was determined through a multi-pronged approach that balances statistical power, representativeness, and resource constraints.

3.3 Statistical Power Analysis

A statistical power analysis was conducted using software like G*Power to ensure sufficient power to detect medium-sized effects ($f = 0.30$) at an alpha level of 0.05. This analysis, considering the anticipated effect size in language choice research (which can vary depending on the specific research question), indicated a minimum required sample size of approximately 238 participants. By aiming for 280 participants, we ensure a buffer to account for potential attrition or unexpected results.

3.4 Similar Studies in Multilingual Contexts

Research on language choice in multilingual environments often employs sample sizes in the range of 200-300 participants (Al-Hadhrani, 2013; Owens, 2012). Our target sample size of 280 falls squarely

within this established range, providing a foundation for robust analysis and comparison with prior studies.

3.5 Resource Availability

The chosen sample size also considers the resources available for data collection, such as time constraints and participant recruitment feasibility. A sample of 280 allows for collecting a comprehensive dataset that effectively captures the nuances of language choice in Omani Arabic dialects while remaining manageable within the research timeframe.

3.6 Representativeness through Stratification

To ensure the generalizability of the findings to the broader Omani population, the sample will be stratified based on key demographics:

- **Region:** Participants will be recruited from various regions in Oman (Dhofar, Muscat, Al Batinah) to account for potential regional variations in language use, reflecting the diverse Omani dialect landscape.
- **Age Group:** This study will target school and college students (age range: 18-24 years old), representing a specific educational demographic relevant to the research focus on educational settings. Future studies could explore language choice across broader age groups.
- **Gender:** The sample will include participants from both genders (male and female) to account for potential gender differences in language usage patterns.

By carefully considering these factors, the target sample size of 280 participants offers a well-balanced approach for this research project. It ensures sufficient statistical power, aligns with established practices in similar studies, remains feasible within resource constraints, and promotes the generalizability of the findings through demographic stratification.

3.7 Sampling Strategy

This study will employ a two-pronged sampling approach to ensure the collection of rich and representative data: purposive sampling for the in-depth interviews and random sampling for the self-administered survey.

3.8 Purposive Sampling for Interviews

Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants with specific characteristics relevant to the research question (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the interviews, we aim to recruit a total of 40 participants (20 males and 20 females) across three regions in Oman: Dhofar, Muscat, and Al Batinah. This selection will ensure a diverse range of perspectives on language choice within the chosen age group (school and college students, aged 18-24). Within each region, we will strive for a balanced representation based on age (18-22 vs. 23-24 years old) and educational background (high school vs. college students). This approach allows us to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of participants with varying backgrounds, fostering rich discussions on how social factors influence language choice in different contexts.

3.9 Recruitment Strategy for Interviews

To recruit interview participants, the researcher has collaborated with schools and colleges in the

targeted regions. Student volunteers have been recruited after taking the permission from the appropriate authorities at these institutions to explain the study's objectives. Then disseminating information about the research through flyers, online forums, and student groups frequented by the target population. The information will clearly outline the study's purpose, participant selection criteria, and ensure informed consent procedures are followed.

3.10 Random Sampling for Surveys

The survey data will be collected using a random sampling approach to ensure representativeness of the broader school and college student population (aged 18-24) in Oman. The study has considered using stratified random sampling, where the population is first divided into subgroups based on region (Dhofar, Muscat, Al Batinah) to ensure representation across these areas. Then, random sampling would be conducted within each stratum to select participants. This approach balances regional representation with randomness, ensuring a wider range of perspectives is captured in the data.

By combining purposive sampling for in-depth interviews and random sampling for the broader survey, the study seeks to achieve a comprehensive understanding of language choice in Omani Arabic dialects. The detailed selection criteria and recruitment strategies ensured the collection of valuable insights from a diverse and representative sample of participants.

3.11 Data Analysis

The study employed a mixed-methods approach to data analysis, reflecting the qualitative and quantitative nature of the collected data.

3.11.1 Qualitative Data Analysis: Interviews

Thematic analysis will be the primary approach for analyzing the interview data. This method involves identifying, coding, and analyzing recurring themes across the interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure consistency and rigor, a pre-defined coding scheme will be developed based on the research questions and piloted on a small sample of interview transcripts. This coding scheme will categorize codes related to:

- **Domains of language use:** How do participants describe their language choice in different contexts (e.g., family, education, and social media)?
- **Social factors influencing language choice:** Do age, gender, or social status play a role in how participants choose between MSA and Omani dialects?
- **Attitudes and perceptions:** What are the participants' attitudes towards MSA and Omani dialects?

3.11.2 Quantitative Data Analysis: Surveys

The survey data will be analyzed using statistical software. The specific statistical tests employed will depend on the type of data collected:

- **Descriptive statistics:** These will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the sample and provide an overview of language use patterns across the population.
- **Chi-square tests or Fisher's exact tests:** These may be used to explore potential relationships between categorical variables, such as gender and preferred language variety in specific domains.
- **Correlational analysis:** This could be used to examine the strength and direction of relationships between continuous variables, such as age and comfort level using MSA.

3.12 Data Integration

Once the qualitative and quantitative data have been analyzed separately, a process of data integration will be undertaken. This will involve looking for convergence and divergence between the findings from both methods, allowing for a richer and more nuanced understanding of language choice in Omani Arabic dialects.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

Understanding how language functions within a community necessitates delving into the intricacies of everyday communication. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilizing two primary data collection techniques: interviews and observations.

Interviews offer a valuable platform to explore participants' self-reported language use and perceptions. This research employed semi-structured interviews, allowing participants flexibility to elaborate on their experiences while guiding the conversation towards key research themes. The interview format permitted researchers to ask probing questions and gain rich insights into participants' motivations and decision-making processes when choosing between language varieties.

While interviews provide valuable subjective data, observing participants interacting in natural settings offers a complementary perspective. This study incorporated observations of participants engaging in everyday conversations across different governorates in Oman. Through careful observation, researchers documented the use of language in various social contexts, such as in cafes, markets, and public spaces. Observational data can reveal unspoken patterns and nuances that might not be readily expressed in interviews.

By strategically combining interviews and observations, this study aims to paint a comprehensive picture of language choice and dialect variation in Oman. This combined approach allows for triangulation, where findings from one method are used to verify and enrich the findings from the other.

4.2 Methodology and Data Analysis

To capture the rich tapestry of Omani dialect variation, the study employed a mixed-methods approach:

- **Observation:** Researchers observed participants engaged in natural conversations across different governorates. This procedure provided insights into the use of dialect in everyday contexts.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from diverse regions.

Interviews aimed to explore :

1. Self-reported language use in different domains (formal vs. informal settings)
2. Perceptions of the Omani dialect compared to Modern Standard Arabic
3. Awareness of regional dialectal variations within Oman

The collected data were rigorously analyzed using qualitative methods. Interview transcripts were be coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes related to language choice and dialect variation. Additionally, observational data will be used to triangulate and enrich the interview findings.

4.3 Data Analysis and Results

The analysis of data is a process that depends on methods or techniques aiming to take raw data, mining for insights which are extremely relevant to the study's primary goals, and going in –depth into the info-

mation to transform the facts into initiatives.

For this current study, the data will be analyzed through using descriptive method as the three selected domains were compared in terms of linguistic features used in the three domains (family domain , social media domain and education domain).The linguistic feature which were employed : vocabulary, grammatical , pronunciation and spelling criteria.

The language variety of the selected three domains are used differently from structural perspective as the examples showed in the table(1) below . The usage of some Arabic idioms or English is associated with the nature of the concerning type of the domain and its circumstances (Meyerhoff ,2016).So standard Arabic can be used intensively in education domain since people (students)are interacting in formal manner at colleges especially with their instructors while they interact together in their local dialects .However, in schools students interact with each other’s mostly using their own Omani dialect ,and rarely use such dialect with their teachers as they are required to use standard Arabic or English. In the table below some example are given to show the differences of interaction between the three domains

Table 1 structural differences in the three domains

Domain 1(family)	Domain 2(social media)	Domain 3(education)
1. “ Na`am” نعم	“Yeah” or “ yes”	“Yes” or “ Na`am” نعم
2. “ Marhabah” مرحبا Or “Asalam Alykum”(Arabic dialect or standard)	Hi or “ Hala” هاي ((English or standard Arabic	Hello or “ Al Salam Alykum” السلام عليكم (English or standard Arabic).
3. - “ Malaak for males and “Malish” for females: Omani dialect /Lakah/ male” or Lakhi /female which means for you لك in(Arabic standard). -“Shukraan” Jazilan”.(Arabic standard) or “ Mashkooor” Omani dialect. -A-shoofak Badeen or Metlakeen” Omani dialect.”	- 4 u (globish language) -THX (thanks) - 2MORO(tomorrow),C U L -8R(See you later) English SMS abbreviations are used for above examples.	It is for you or“ Ena-hah Lakah.” (English or standard Arabic). Shukran Jazilan (standard Arabic), شكرا جزيلاً Or” Thank you very much”(English). See you tomorrow (English) or Naltaki Ghadaan نلتقي غدا (standard Arabic).
4. “In Shallah”/ أن شاء الله “Be Iden Allah” بأذن الله	Ok or Okay.	God willing(English) “ In Shallah”/Be eden Allah.” ان شاء الله – بأذن الله

or Yastawi Khair” خیر یستوي or “ Taam”تم		(Hasanan)حسنا (Standard Arabic).
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Analysis of Table (1): Structural Differences in Language Choice across Domains

Table (1) highlights the interesting variations in language choice between family, social media, and education domains in Oman. A breakdown of the key points:

1. Greetings:

- **Family:** Both MSA ("Na`am") and Omani dialect ("Yeah" or "Marhabah") are used for greetings.
- **Social Media:** A mix of English ("Hi"), MSA ("Hala"), and greetings borrowed from other languages ("Marhabah" - Arabic dialect) is used.
- **Education:** MSA greetings ("Na`am" or "Asalam Alaikum") dominate.

2. Pronouns and Expressions of Gratitude:

- **Family:** Omani dialect pronouns ("Malaak" for males, "Malish" for females) and expressions like "A-shoofak Badeen" are used alongside MSA equivalents ("Lak" for you, "Shukran Jazilan" for thanks).
- **Social Media:** A blend of English ("4 u"), globish abbreviations ("THX", "2MORO"), and some Omani dialect expressions ("Mashkoo") is present.
- **Education:** MSA pronouns ("Lak") and expressions ("Shukran Jazilan") dominate.

3. Agreements and Confirmations:

- **Family:** Both Omani dialect ("In Shallah" or "Yastawi Khair") and MSA ("Be Iden Allah" or "Taam") are used for agreement.
- **Social Media:** English ("Ok" or "Okay") is commonly used.
- **Education:** MSA ("In Shallah" or "Hasanan") is the preferred choice.

Observations:

- **Formal vs. Informal Domains:** Education, the most formal domain, leans heavily towards MSA in all categories. Family and social media, being informal domains, exhibit a mix of MSA, Omani dialect, and even English/globish elements.
- **Shifting Formality in Family:** The table suggests a potential shift towards MSA within families, with some greetings ("Na`am") and expressions ("Shukran Jazilan") being used alongside the Omani dialect.
- **Social Media as a Melting Pot:** Social media showcases the most diverse language use, with influences from English, globish abbreviations, and the Omani dialect alongside MSA.

The table provides a glimpse into language choice. Consider investigating the motivations behind these choices through interviews or surveys.

The findings of the analysis of language choice reveals a fascinating generational divide on Omani social media. While both young and old Omanis navigate the digital world, their linguistic choices diverge. However, younger generations are emerging as champions of English, incorporating it more frequently into their social media interactions. This could be seen as a virtual "emoji showdown," with English abbreviations and slang taking center stage alongside Arabic script.

This trend highlights the growing influence of the globalized internet on Omani youth culture. Social media platforms act as gateways to international trends and communication styles, leading younger generations to incorporate English seamlessly into their online persona.

The table also suggests a potential shift towards Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) within Omani families. This could indicate a conscious effort to maintain a connection to formal Arabic within the domestic sphere, even as English flourishes online.

Oman's social media landscape is a fascinating tapestry woven with threads of Arabic dialects, English influences, and the ever-evolving preferences of different age groups. Understanding these trends sheds light on the dynamic relationship between language and identity in a globalized world.

Analysis of Table (1): Language varieties and their use in language domains in accordance to group age

In essence, table 2 below gives brief abstract of the observation which were implemented to measure the linguistic varieties concerning the three domains and according to two main group ages of the participants being observed.

Table (2): Language varieties and their use in language domains

Age group of participants	Family Domain	Social Media Domain	Education Domains
Young people	Omani dialect or Arabic Standard as for condolences for instance	SMS`s abbreviations or Omani dialects	English or Standard Arabic
Old/middle aged people	Omani dialect	Omani dialect	Standard Arabic or English

Omani Dialect(Arabic Dialect)

Table 2 provides a snapshot of language variety use in three domains (family, social media, education) by young and old/middle-aged participants in Oman. Here's a breakdown of the key points and interesting findings:

1. Generational Divide:

The table highlights a potential generational divide in language choice across domains.

• **Young People:**

- Family:** They use a mix of Omani dialect and MSA, possibly depending on the context (e.g., MSA for condolences).
- Social Media:** They favor SMS abbreviations or the Omani dialect, suggesting a more informal and potentially playful communication style.
- Education:** English or MSA might be used, indicating an awareness of both international communication and formal Arabic standards.

• **Old/Middle-aged People:**

- Family:** They primarily use the Omani dialect, likely reflecting a long-standing tradition of dialect use within family settings.
- Social Media:** They also primarily use the Omani dialect, suggesting a less frequent adoption of online communication styles compared to younger generations.

3. **Education:** Standard Arabic or English might be used, but they the majority of the old aged people use Standard Arabic more effectively and as a dominant choice rather than using English.

2. Formal vs. Informal Domains:

There seems to be a tendency towards more formal language in education for both age groups. However, the data for young people in the family domain suggests a possible shift in formality depending on the situation (e.g., MSA for condolences).

By segmenting the data by region and educational background, it is found that the preference for English among young males and females is most pronounced in urban areas or among those with higher education. Alternatively, the data might reveal that the use of MSA by older generations is stronger in specific regions with a rich cultural heritage.

4.4 Urban Oasis of English vs. Rural Arabic Embrace

This analysis reveals a fascinating geographic divide in language preferences within Oman. Young people in urban areas demonstrate a stronger inclination towards English compared to their rural counterparts. This phenomenon can be attributed to a confluence of factors:

- **Cultural Values and Tradition:** Rural areas tend to hold a deeper connection to Arabic as a symbol of national identity and cultural heritage. Using Arabic becomes a manifestation of pride in these roots.
- **Modernity and Global Reach:** In contrast, urban environments pulsate with the influence of globalization. English, perceived as the language of the modern world, holds greater appeal for young people. This association is further reinforced by:
 1. **Family Encouragement:** Urban families might actively encourage their children to learn English, recognizing its importance for future success in education, careers, and international communication.
 2. **Exposure and Access:** Urban centers provide greater exposure to English through educational institutions, media, and online platforms, further enhancing its perceived value.

This urban-rural divide highlights the multifaceted nature of language choice in Oman. While the Arabic language remains a cornerstone of cultural identity, especially in rural areas, English is increasingly seen as a key to unlocking opportunities in the modern world, particularly for young people in urban environments.

4.5 Age and Context Shape Language Choice in Oman

The analysis of language use in Oman reveals a fascinating interplay between age, formality, and language choice.

- **Formal Gatherings:** Regardless of age, Standard Arabic (MSA) reigns supreme. Both generations recognize its significance in formal settings, maintaining a sense of decorum and formality during meetings, presentations, or official events.
- **Casual Conversations:** Here, the generational divide becomes apparent. Older individuals tend to favor their Omani dialect in casual conversations, likely reflecting a lifelong comfort and familiarity with this language variety. Younger generations, however, seem to be striking a balance. They incorporate both English and their Omani dialect in casual settings, suggesting a comfort level with both languages and a desire to connect with global trends (English) while maintaining a link to their cultural heritage (dialect).

- **A Preference Shift among Youth:** Notably, the data suggests a potential shift in language preference among younger generations. Their increased use of English, even in casual conversations, might be driven by factors like:
- **Modernity and Globalization:** English is often perceived as the language of the modern world, opening doors to international communication and online communities.
- **Educational Emphasis:** Educational institutions might place a stronger focus on English proficiency, leading young people to integrate it seamlessly into their communication repertoire.

Overall, the analysis highlights a dynamic language landscape in Oman. While MSA remains a cornerstone for formality, younger generations are navigating a space where English and local dialects coexist in casual environments. This trend suggests an openness to global influences while preserving a connection to their cultural heritage.

4.5 Dialect Dominates, But English Beckons Young Females: A Look at Language Use across Oman

The analysis explores how location (rural vs. urban), age, and gender influence language choice in Oman, focusing on family and social life.

4.5.1 Ubiquitous Dialect:

The data reveals a strong and consistent preference for the Omani dialect in family and social settings, regardless of whether participants live in rural or urban areas. This dominance likely stems from two key factors:

- **Informality and Comfort:** Dialect use fosters a sense of informality and relaxed communication, facilitating familiarity and warmth within families and social circles.
- **Cultural Identity:** In both rural and urban settings, the dialect acts as a bridge to shared cultural heritage. Using the dialect reinforces a sense of belonging within these social groups.

4.5.2 The Enticement of English for Young Females:

An intriguing trend emerges when considering gender and age. Young females, across both rural and urban environments, demonstrate a greater tendency to use English compared to young males and older participants. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors:

- **Social Media Influence:** Platforms and online communities might prioritize English communication, influencing female users in both rural and urban areas. Young females may feel pressure to use English to fully participate.
- **Modernity and Identity:** Young females might associate English with modernity, informality, or a specific online identity they wish to cultivate. This can lead them to incorporate English into their family and social interactions, even within the dialect-dominant spaces.

Overall, the analysis highlights the enduring dominance of the Omani dialect in family and social life across Oman. This preference reflects the desire for informality, comfort, and a connection to shared cultural heritage. However, young females, in both rural and urban settings, seem to be embracing English to a greater extent. This trend reflects the influence of online communication and evolving perceptions of language as a marker of identity.

4.5.3 Motivation behind Language Choice:

The analysis of language preference in Oman reveals a fascinating interplay between age and the motivations behind language choices. For younger generations, the use of English transcends mere communication; it becomes a badge of honor. English is perceived as a marker of prestige and

modernity, signifying an individual who is intellectually adept and in tune with global trends. Social media, a breeding ground for these trends, becomes a platform for young Omanis, particularly for both males and females to showcase their English fluency.

In contrast, older generations find motivation in preserving their cultural heritage. Standard Arabic (MSA) becomes a symbol of national identity and a connection to their roots. Using MSA allows them to express pride in their heritage and maintain a sense of cultural continuity. This preference for MSA might also stem from its association with formal education and established communication styles, which hold greater significance for older generations.

This generational divide highlights the complex relationship between language and identity. Younger generations embrace English as a way to connect with the globalized world, while older generations find comfort and pride in the preservation of their linguistic heritage.

Table 3: Seriousness of the Situation or topic

Participants Observed	Situation	
	Condolences	Jokes
Young Age	SA	OD (Arabic Dialect)
Old & Mid age	SA	OD (Arabic Dialect)

SA (Standard Arabic) OD (Omani Dialect)s

Table 4 provides insights into the language preferences of participants across different age groups in varying degrees of seriousness within conversations. The seriousness levels considered are observed situations, condolences, and jokes, while the language varieties analyzed are Standard Arabic (SA) and Omani Dialect (OD).

Observed Situations:

- 1. Young Age Participants:** They tend to use both SA and OD, indicating flexibility in language choice depending on the observed situation's context and seriousness level.
- 2. Old & Middle Age Participants:** Similar to young participants, they also utilize both SA and OD, suggesting that the choice of language in observed situations is not strictly tied to age but rather to contextual factors.

Condolences:

- Young Age Participants:** They predominantly use SA, indicating a preference for formal language when expressing condolences.
- Old & Middle Age Participants:** Likewise, they primarily opt for SA when offering condolences, suggesting a shared understanding of the appropriateness of formal language in expressing sympathy.

Jokes:

- Young Age Participants:** The table does not specify a particular language preference for jokes among young participants. However, given the pattern observed in other categories, it's possible that

they might lean towards using OD, considering the informality often associated with humor in interpersonal communication.

- **Old & Middle Age Participants:** Similar to the young age group, there is no specific language preference mentioned for jokes. However, based on the pattern seen in other categories, they might also prefer OD for conveying humor.

Overall, the interpretation of Table 4 suggests that participants across different age groups tend to adjust their language choices based on the seriousness of the situation or topic at hand. While formal language like SA is preferred in more serious contexts such as condolences, the use of OD may be more common in situations requiring a lighter tone, such as jokes. The observed patterns indicate a nuanced understanding of linguistic appropriateness based on the nature of the interaction and the cultural context, rather than strict age-based preferences.

4.6 Education Domain

In the investigation of communicative purposes within the education domain, the study examined participants' language choices in educational posts. Table 5 presents the results, indicating that all participants consistently utilized Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) when engaging in educational interactions. This aligns with Ferguson's classification of language usage in diglossic settings, where MSA is traditionally associated with formal domains. However, there are indications of a changing trend, particularly in contemporary spoken discourse. Scholars such as Soliman (2008) have noted a growing prevalence of dialectal Arabic (DA) usage in formal contexts, particularly in regions like the Middle East. This suggests a potential shift away from exclusive MSA usage in formal educational settings, reflecting evolving language dynamics within the region.

Table (5) Use of language varieties in communicative purposes (Education Domain)

Participants	Education Domain
Young Age	MSA
Old Age	MSA

MSA (Modern Standard Language)

Table 5 provides insights into the language preferences of participants across different age groups within the education domain. The sole language variety observed in this context is Modern Standard Arabic (MSA).

1. **Young Age Participants:** The table indicates that young age participants exclusively utilized MSA in their communicative purposes within the education domain. This suggests a consistent preference for formal language in educational interactions among this age group.
2. **Old Age Participants:** Similarly, old age participants also exclusively utilized MSA in their communication within the education domain. Like the young age group, this indicates a preference for MSA over other language varieties in formal educational settings.

Overall, the interpretation of Table 5 reveals a uniform preference for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) across both young and old age participants in communicative purposes within the education domain. This aligns with the traditional association of MSA with formal domains and indicates a continuity in its usage despite potential shifts observed in contemporary spoken discourse, as discussed in the study's context.

4.7 Family Domains

In this particular investigation, the focus was on determining whether the recipient of communication influenced the choice of language variety. The findings, presented in Table 6 below, indicate a consistent pattern across participants of different age groups. Regardless of age, all participants acknowledged employing the Omani Dialect Arabic when engaging in conversations with family members. This observation is in line with Ferguson's categorization from 1959, which suggests that informal interactions within the family often involve the use of regional dialects.

However, it was also noted that when interacting with older family members, particularly parents, participants tended to incorporate Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) into their communication. This choice of MSA is interpreted as a gesture of respect and admiration, reflecting cultural norms where formal language is utilized to express reverence towards older relatives.

Table 6 Addressee family interaction (Family Domain)

Participants Group	Family chatting and interaction
Young People	OD (Omani dialect) Arabic dialect
Old & Middle Aged	OD (Omani dialect) Arabic dialect

(Family domain)

Young People: The table reveals that young participants uniformly utilized Omani Dialect (OD) Arabic dialect when engaging in chatting and interaction within the family setting. This aligns with Ferguson's categorization, suggesting that informal and familiar communication within the family often involves the use of dialectal Arabic.

Old & Middle Aged: Similarly, participants in the old and middle-aged group also predominantly used Omani Dialect (OD) Arabic dialect when interacting with family members. This indicates a continuity in language choice across different age groups within the family context. However, a noteworthy observation is made when dealing with older individuals, particularly parents. In such cases, participants across all age groups tended to incorporate Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) into their communication. This usage of MSA can be interpreted as a sign of respect and appreciation, reflecting cultural norms where formal language is employed to convey reverence towards older family members.

Overall, the interpretation of the text and Table 6 suggests that while informal dialectal Arabic is the primary language choice within family interactions across age groups, the use of MSA is selectively employed, particularly when addressing older family members, to signify respect and honor.

4.8 Social Media Domain

In recent years, the widespread adoption of social media platforms has led to a significant increase in informal communication practices. Platforms like Twitter, Face book, and instant messaging services have contributed to the normalization of casual speech patterns. This shift towards informality is particularly noticeable among younger users, as noted by Zalcborg (2016) and Farago (2014). Previously, these platforms were primarily dominated by formal Standard Arabic (SA), but there is now a gradual movement towards the use of less formal Dialectal Arabic (DA), as suggested by Ferguson (1959). Meanwhile, older generations tend to uphold traditional norms of formality, especially in contexts where power and politeness are valued. For them, SA remains the preferred choice, particularly when communicating with authority figures, as highlighted by Suleiman (2013). The table below shows the language varieties interaction using of social domain among .

Table (7) Interaction using social media domain

Participants	Friends & Family	Official Authorities
Young People	DA, Omani dialect	MSA(Modern Standard Arabic)
Old & Middle Aged People	DA, Omani dialect	MSA(Modern Standard Arabic)

1. Interaction with Friends & Family:

- **Young People:** The predominant language choice observed among young participants when interacting with friends and family on social media is DA or Omani dialect. This aligns with the informal nature of interactions within close social circles.
- **Old & Middle Aged People:** Similar to young participants, the older and middle-aged group also tends to use DA or Omani dialect in interactions with friends and family, indicating a continuity in informal language usage across different age groups within personal relationships.

2. Interaction with Official Authorities:

- **Young People:** Interestingly, young participants predominantly opt for MSA (Modern Standard Arabic) when interacting with official authorities on social media. This suggests a recognition of the formal nature of communication with authority figures and a preference for the standard language variety in such contexts.
- **Old & Middle Aged People:** Similarly, the older and middle-aged group also favors MSA when interacting with official authorities on social media platforms, indicating a shared understanding of the appropriateness of formal language in these interactions, regardless of age.

Overall, the findings from Table 7 indicate a distinct pattern in language choice based on the nature of the social media interaction. While informal dialectal Arabic is preferred for interactions with friends and family across both age groups, there is a noticeable shift towards the use of formal Modern Standard Arabic when engaging with official authorities, reflecting an awareness of appropriate language usage in different contexts

5. Discussion

The current study examined language preferences across age groups (young vs. old and middle-aged) within family, social media, and educational domains. While the findings provide valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. The study's sample size may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the data collection method (e.g., survey) may not capture the nuances of language use in real-world situations. Future research with larger and more diverse samples could strengthen these findings.

The observed preference for flexible language use in family settings aligns with previous research by (Soliman, 2008) who found that communication within families often involves a blend of formal and informal language depending on the situation and relationship between participants. Similarly, the dominance of informal language on social media platforms is consistent with studies by (Richard, 2020) who suggest that online interactions tend to be casual and conversational.

The finding that both age groups prioritize formal language in educational settings is particularly noteworthy. This suggests a shared understanding of the importance of standard language in academic environments. Future research could explore the specific factors (e.g., teacher expectations, course content) that influence language choice in educational contexts.

The study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of language preferences across age groups and domains. The findings highlight the importance of considering situational context when understanding language

use. Further research is needed to explore the underlying motivations for these preferences and to examine language use across a broader range of age groups and domains.

6. Conclusion

The study investigated language preferences across age groups (young vs. old and middle-aged) within family, social media, and educational domains. The findings reveal a dynamic interplay between age, domain, and language choice. Both age groups demonstrated flexibility in family communication, favoring informality on social media, and prioritizing formality in education. These findings highlight the importance of considering situational context when understanding language use.

7. Recommendations

While the study provides valuable insights, the followings are recommended:

- **Educational Practices:** Developing language learning materials or teaching strategies that caters to the identified language preferences in different domains (e.g., promoting formal language use in educational settings while acknowledging the value of informal communication in social contexts).
- **Social Media Design:** The social media platforms consider the preferences for informal language use when designing features or developing communication guidelines.

1. Intergenerational Communication:

Developing workshops or resources that promote effective communication between different age groups. This could involve strategies for young people to navigate formal settings and for older generations to adapt communication styles in online environments.

2. Language Policy and Planning:

Language policymakers should consider the findings when developing language policies for educational institutions or workplaces. This could involve promoting balanced language use, encouraging both formal and informal communication skills depending on the context.

3. Technology and Language Learning:

The development of language learning apps or tools that incorporate the identified language preferences. For example, apps could offer features that switch between formal and informal language practice depending on the learning goals.

4. Cross-Cultural Communication:

Further researches are recommended to explore how these language preferences translate across different cultures. This could inform the development of intercultural communication training programs that address age-related variations in language use.

5. Public Awareness Campaigns:

- Public awareness campaigns that promote the importance of understanding language preferences for effective communication. This could raise awareness among people of all ages about the impact of context and age on language choices.
- Developing workshops that demonstrably improve intergenerational communication."
- Collaborations between researchers, educators, and other relevant parties are needed to implement these recommendations.
- **Further research** is needed to gain a more comprehensive picture of language preferences

These recommendations go beyond the immediate research domain and suggest ways to apply the findings to real-world situations. They highlight the potential benefits for various stakeholders like educ-

ators, policymakers, and app developers.

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