

# Attitudes of the Harbi Arabic Speakers Toward their Dialect

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## Abstract

This study explores the attitudes of Harbi speakers toward the Harbi Arabic dialect, a Bedouin dialect spoken in Saudi Arabia. Using a descriptive analysis approach, the research investigates how these speakers perceive their own dialect. The study employs a qualitative research design, with a sample of five females aged 20 to 27. The findings reveal that Harbi speakers are motivated to integrate into the social fabric of the Arras community, leading to convergence with other dialects. Overall, the results indicate positive attitudes of Harbi speakers toward their dialect. For future research, the researcher recommends expanding the sample to include male participants and broadening the scope to further validate the findings.

**Keywords:** Saudi Arabia, Harbi speakers, Bedouin dialect, attitudes

## 1. Introduction

Language serves as a fundamental tool for communication, enabling individuals to convey information. The Arabic language spoken across the Arabian Peninsula exhibits significant diversity, characterized by “multiple varieties that converge or diverge based on geographical and genealogical factors” (Albirini, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, this linguistic diversity is particularly notable, with a wide range of dialects spoken across various regions (Al-Rojaie, 2021).

In the Arab world, dialects are typically classified as either Bedouin or sedentary (Al-Wer & Jong, 2017, Note 1). According to Albirini (2016), “Bedouinization was the norm in the early stages of the Islamic era” (p. 181). Bedouins have historically valued their dialects as symbols of their heritage and history (Abdel-Jawad, 1981). Albirini (2016) further argues that Bedouins were “less willing than the sedentary population to abandon or change their dialects... their social organization into clans and tribes with strong social ties made Bedouins resistant to linguistic assimilation in sedentary centers” (p. 182).

Milroy’s social network model of language maintenance supports this, suggesting that close relationships within a community are crucial for maintaining a dialect, as dense social networks preserve linguistic features and resist external influence. However, contact between sedentary centers and the Bedouin tribes that settled in these areas has led to dialect mixing and leveling (Albirini, 2016). The Harbi dialect, a Bedouin dialect spoken in Saudi Arabia, has been influenced by urbanization, with urban dialect (Note 2) features blending into it. This study aims to explore the attitudes of Harbi speakers toward their dialect and seeks to answer one key question: What are the attitudes of Harbi Arabic speakers toward their own dialect?

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Giles (2016), people consciously or unconsciously synchronize “aspects of their verbal (e.g., accent, rate of speech) and nonverbal behavior (e.g., gestures, posture)” (p. 36). Communication accommodation theory (CAT) is based on the concept of making these modifications. Accommodation theory identifies three primary ways in which people can modify their communication behavior relative to one another: Convergence, Divergence, and Maintenance (Giles, 2016). This theory attempts to explain “why speakers modify their speech in the presence of others in the ways and to the extent that they do” (Trudgill, 1986, p. 2). Furthermore, one of the tenets of accommodation theory is that “Communication accommodation is a pervasive and fundamental aspect of social interaction that serves two important functions: First, it helps facilitate coherent interaction, and second, it enables interactants to manage social distance from one another” (Dragojevic et al., 2013).

In the light of this theory, the present study examines the Harbi Arabic speakers’ behavior toward their dialects and whether the modification of the speakers’ dialect results in convergence or divergence with other dialects.

## 2. Literature Review

This study aims to contribute to the dialect's studies in Saudi Arabia. In Arabic dialectology, linguists try to classify the dialects of Peninsular Arabic according to two criteria: regional background and socio-cultural background (Al-Rojaie, 2021). In this sense, Boberg et al. (2018) point out that the Arabic dialect is classified according to regions, and within the regions, two linguistic forms are referred to: 'Bedouin' and 'sedentary'. Similarly, Al-Wer and Jong (2017) mention that the dialects of the Arab world have been divided into 'Bedouin' and 'sedentary' (Hadar). Moreover, Al-Rojaie (2021) argues that the classification of dialects into Bedouin and sedentary is due to the socio-cultural background, which is related to the historical origin, settlements, and lifestyle of the speakers. Thus, Bedouin dialects are the characteristics of dialects spoken by nomadic tribes, while sedentary dialects are dialects spoken by sedentary communities in rural and urban areas (Boberg et al., 2018). However, according to Al-Rojaie (2021), "the distinction between Bedouin and sedentary dialects is not entirely clear-cut in the contemporary situation in Saudi Arabia, mainly due to the rapid urbanization and modernization processes the country has undergone in recent decades, which have led to extensive mixing and contact between Bedouin and sedentary populations" (p. 473). Thus, in some social contexts, it may be difficult to distinguish the two dialects.

The Arabs were divided into tribes, these tribes had spread across the Arabian Peninsula, each with its own identity and independence. As a result, the emergence of a dialect unique to each tribe becomes a phenomenon to be studied and related to linguistic features and other factors that influence dialect variation. However, the interest in the study of dialect in the Arabian Peninsula has been neglected. The first scholar to study Arabic dialects was apparently Wallin (1855), when he observed the affrication of the consonants /k/ and /g/. After that, according to Il-Hazmy (1975), a number of studies on Arabic dialects were published, and some north-central Arabic dialects were extensively studied.

Moreover, some of the earlier studies examined the dialects of some Arabic tribes. For instance, Landberg (1919) examined the dialect of Anaza, while Cantineau (1937) examined the dialect of Shammer, Anza, and other smaller tribes. In addition, Cantineau (1937) studied smaller subgroups: the variety of Al-Rass spoken in the Qassim region of central and northern Saudi Arabia, and the dialect of Al-Gof spoken in the far north of Saudi Arabia. Few studies in the field of Arabic dialects, however, have dealt with the dialect of the Harb tribe.

Il-Hazmy (1975) described the dialect of the Harb tribe analytically when he tried to determine its position among neighboring tribes. Il-Hazmy (1975) limited his study to two regions: The first area extends from northeastern Rabigh to Al-Madinah. This area thus represented the language of the Harb in the Hijaz. The second area extends from Al-Madinah to Al-Fawwara in the district of Qassim; this area represents the language of the Harb in central Arabia. In his study, Il-Hazmy (1975) attempts to clearly characterize the Harb dialect. According to his study, the consonant [jīm] is a palatal-alveolar affricate /j/ that occurs throughout the Harb dialect. In addition, the symbol gy /g/ denotes a hard palatal plosive that is an allophone of /j/ and occurs mainly in the Northern Central group of Harb. The /dy/ sound, an anterior palatal sound accompanied by affrication, occurs among Harb as a variant of /j/. Moreover, the consonant [gāf] is a voiced velar plosive, while /q/, voiceless uvular, represents literary Arabic (e.g., gaf, /g/), a voiced uvular, occurs as an allophone among the Northern Central group. On the other hand, Il-Hazmy's (1975) study participants were elderly, so they provided him with a good example of a traditional language that was not influenced by schooling or other influences. Furthermore, the study participants were involved in agriculture, animal husbandry, honey extraction, and other similar occupations. Il-Hazmy (1975) found no evidence that the separation between settlers and nomads was important in social terms. He stated that the Harb have a distinctive dialect with few obvious signs of outside influence; nevertheless, aspects of the Koine language are evident in their otherwise traditional speech. Indeed, Il-Hazmy (1975) indicated that these features are found in the language of some farmers and traders who may have been linguistically influenced during their lives by their interactions with people living outside of urban areas. However, the Harb's attitude toward their dialect may change depending on social factors such as age, gender, and education.

Harb is a tribe in the Arabian Peninsula and was originally a Qahtanite tribe. The Harb tribe was a Yemeni Qahtanite tribe that settled in the area between the Two Holy Mosques at the end of the second century. From the fourth century, it succeeded in creating a strong clan entity (Alharbi, 2008). Thus, the Harb tribe was settled in the Hijaz after its emigration from southern Arabia (Yamen). Today, the Harb tribe extends from the Red Sea coast in Tihamah to the heart of Najd in central Saudi Arabia and in the north from Madinah to Al Qunfudhah in the south. Therefore, the Harb tribe is one of the prominent and superior tribes in Saudi Arabia. According to Il-Hazmy (1975), the Harb tribe is divided into Bedouin and Hadar; however, until recently, the Harb tribe was considered a semi-nomadic people.

Furthermore, the Harb tribe is divided into two main branches: Banu Salm and Banu Masruh. The Banu Salm are

divided into two branches: Marawiha (Hawazim) and Maymum, while Banu Masruh is divided into six branches: Banu Awf, Banu Amr, Zibaid, Muklaf, Banu Safar and Banu Ali. Each of the aforementioned sub-branches includes a number of sub-tribes and clans (Il-Hazmy, 1975; Alharbi, 2008). Thus, the Harb tribe is a relatively large tribe that occupies a large area in Saudi Arabia. However, for the purpose of this study, the researcher is limited to investigating the Harb’s attitude towards the Harbi dialect in Najd in Saudi Arabia, particularly in Al-Rass province. According to Il-Hazmy (1975), the immigration of the Harbi to central Arabia is a recent phenomenon. Alharbi (2008) stated that the Harb tribe lived near urban areas such as Jeddah, Mecca, and Medina. Therefore, they dealt with pilgrims and immigrants since ancient times. They also assisted the Quraish tribe in greeting and welcoming newcomers, which resulted in a gentler tone; however, not all Harb branches. According to Alharbi (2008), the Banu Amr, a sub-branch of the Banu Masruh, migrated to Najed about 100 years ago. In addition, it is worth noting that the Harb in Najed and the Harb in Hijaz have different linguistic characteristics in the form of dialects. In fact, the contact between the two groups of Harb is not effective.

Generally, the dialect of the Harb tribe is considered as a settled dialect because the origin of the Harb tribe is in the Western region of Saudi Arabia; however, it can be easily influenced by the neighboring tribes (Il-Hazmy, 1975). That is, the Harb tribe in the Western region has adopted the Hijazi dialect, while the Harb tribe in Najd has adopted the Najdi dialect. On the other hand, Al-Wer and Jong (2017) argue that “Najdi dialects are generally more conservative than other Bedouin dialects, but this is not to say that they lack innovation” (p. 528). Conversely, Al-Rubaat (2022) states that Bedouin dialects are more conservative than others due to limited contact between Arab tribes and other languages compared to urban areas. However, Il-Hazmy (1975) argues that the Harb dialect is originally a non-Hadari dialect; it is not influenced by the Koine language or any urban language. Furthermore, Il-Hazmy (1975) mentions that the features of the Harb dialect are common with many neighboring tribes (e.g., the Anza, Shammar, and Otaiba tribes).

Obviously, not all the linguistic features are shared among the Harb tribe; that is, Harb in Hijaz for example do not use the affrication of the sound [k] and [g] into [ts] and [dz] as Harb in Qassim do. Conversely, some clans of Banu Amr and Banu Awf of the Harb tribe in Madinah are using the affrication of the sound [k] and [g] into [ts] and [dz]. In addition, Al-Mozainy (1981) demonstrates the stress shift impacted by vowel deletion in the Bedouin Arabic dialect spoken in the Hijaz, known as Bedouin Hijazi Arabic or BHA. Al-Mozainy (1981) explains that in his study the BHA dialect, like all other Bedouin Arabic dialects, has a rule that “a short high vowel is deleted from an open syllable, and the short low vowel / a/ is changed to a high vowel in the same environment” (p. 3). For example, the verb (to drink) in the perfect tense: /širib/ and /šarbat/ there is a high vowel between [r] and [b]. However, this vowel is missing from the same position in /šarbat/. Between [š] and [r], on the other hand, there is a high vowel in /širib/, while in /šarbat/, there is an [a]. In short, BHA has a rule that deletes a high vowel from a short open syllable.

One the other hand, according to Il-Hazmy (1975), the dialect of Harb tribe in the Northern Central Arabian constitutes of the following features:

- It has some features similar to the dialects of Shammar and Anza tribes.
- It has additional features of Arrass dialect.

Furthermore, Al-Rubaat (2022) compared some Arabic terms of Saudi dialects (e.g., urban Hijazi, urban Najdi, and dialect of the Harb tribe with its parts Najdi and Hejazi parts); indeed, according to Al-Rubaat (2022), there is a correlation between these dialects as following:

Table 1. Terms Used by Urban Dialect and Harb Dialect

Term	Standard Arabic	Urban Hijazi	Harb tribe (Hijazi)	Harb tribe (Najdi)	Urban Najdi
water	māʾ	Mōya	ḡmā or mōya		mōya
I want	ʾurīd	ʾabḡa or rarely ʾaba	ʾaba	ʾabi	
Where?	ʾayn	Fēn	Fēn	Wēn	

Thus, the dialect of the Harb tribe has been influenced by other dialects over time. In some cases, it can be difficult to tell whether a particular linguistic feature is unique to the Harbi dialect or has been adopted from surrounding dialects. As a result of recent leveling and blending of dialects, the boundaries between some dialects have become increasingly blurred. The Harbi speakers may be moving closer to other dialects, such as Hijazi and Najdi, or moving away from ancestral dialects for many social reasons: education, occupation, and more.

According to Albirini (2016), language attitudes are “socio-psychologically evaluative reactions to a particular

language or to speakers of that language” and “permeate our personal and social lives on a daily basis” (p. 78). Garret (2010) states that attitudes may differ between people of different ages, between regions, and depending on the situation in which the language is used. On the other hand, Allport (1935) pointed out that “attitudes are never directly observed, but it is impossible to explain satisfactorily the consistency of an individual’s behavior or the stability of a society unless they are recognized by inference as real and essential parts of human nature” (p. 839). In this vein, Garret (2010) noted that “in terms of our everyday language use, language settings can be expected not only to influence our reactions to other language users around us, but also to help us anticipate the reactions of others to our own language use and thus influence the language choices we make in our communication” (p. 21). Thus, we can shape our language in different styles to get the specific reactions we expect from others. As a result, we can strive to be perceived as friendly, intelligent, and part of a particular group. A speaker’s membership in a social group may be associated with the speaker’s linguistic preferences, which can lead to stereotypical assumptions about the shared characteristics of group members. It is assumed that this social classification serves a variety of purposes (Tajfel, 1981).

### *2.1 The Rationale of the Study*

Many studies have been done on regional dialects, but few on the dialects of the Saudi tribes. Few previous studies have investigated the dialects of Bedouin tribes spoken in Saudi Arabia, such as the Anaza dialect (Landberg, 1919), the Shammar dialect (Cantineau, 1937), and the Harbi dialect (Il-Hazmy, 1975). Since there are few studies dealing with the dialect of the Harb tribe, there are many gaps that need to be filled. Therefore, the present study attempts to focus more on the dialect of the Harb tribe. Furthermore, this study investigates a pattern in the Harbi Arabic dialect and explores the Harbi speakers’ attitudes toward their dialect.

### *2.2 Aims and the Research Question*

The Harb tribe is considered one of the largest tribes in Saudi Arabia. In the pre-Islamic period, the Harb tribe migrated from Yamen to Hijaz in Saudi Arabia (Il-Hazmy, 1975). Thereafter, it settled in different areas of Saudi Arabia. However, the Harbi dialect is indistinguishable from the dialects of the neighboring tribes or the dialects of the region, such as Hijaz and Najd. Therefore, the present work aims to answer one question: What are the attitudes of the Harbi Arabic speakers toward their own dialect?

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Participants*

The aim of this study is to investigate the attitudes of the Harbi Arabic speakers toward their dialect. Therefore, the participants are descendants of the Harb tribe, residing in Alrass in the Qassim region. The researcher utilized a friend-to-friend sampling method, deemed more practical than random sampling. The sample consists of five women aged 20 to 27, all familiar with the dialects of various tribes. Additionally, the participants share similar backgrounds and experiences, as their families and relatives belong to the Harbi tribe. This consistency ensures that external factors have not significantly influenced their dialect.

### *3.2 Materials*

In this study, a qualitative research design was employed. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, all conducted by the researcher. The interviews, which lasted an average of 40 minutes each, were recorded using a voice recorder. The primary aim of the interviews was to determine whether participants could distinguish or identify the Harbi dialect among other dialects. To achieve this, the researcher played audio clips from various media sources (e.g., YouTube) that featured the dialects of different tribes, such as Harb, Otaibah, and Mutayr. Participants were then asked if they could recognize the speakers’ dialects and, specifically, how they identified the Harbi dialect. Additionally, the researcher explored the factors that make the Harbi dialect distinct from those of other tribes.

### *3.3 Procedures*

This study aims to explore the Harbi speakers’ attitudes toward their dialect using thematic analysis. The researcher employed this method to examine the data and identify recurring themes mentioned by participants. After obtaining consent, the researcher recorded the interviews and later transcribed them. The researcher allowed participants to review the transcriptions and remove any parts they wished to exclude. The researcher analyzed the data interpretively, focusing on the common themes that emerged throughout the interviews, and then attempted to interpret the findings based on these recurring patterns.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

The present study aims to answer a question: What are the attitudes of the Harbi Arabic speakers toward their own

dialect? To answer the research question, the researcher uses the semi-structured interview approach. Moreover, the participants were descended from the Harb tribe to observe their dialect and speech pattern in addition to the interview questions. In general, the results of the study show that the personality of the Harbi speakers plays an important role in the way the dialect is constituted. All participants emphasize that the origin of the Harb tribe is in the Hijaz region, which is why their dialect is considered an urban dialect. However, the Harbi speakers tend to adopt the surrounding dialects in different regions. The results show the following themes that illustrate the attitude of the Harbi speakers toward their dialect:

- The origin and the features of the dialect
- Education
- Motivations for changing
- Identity and Ideology

#### *4.1 The Origin and the Features of the Dialect*

According to Il-Hazmy (1975), the Harb tribe traces its origins back to the second century of Islam. In 131 AH, they moved from the South of the Arabian Peninsula to Hijaz in search of water and land. The participants in the study confirmed this information, even though it was passed down orally from their ancestors. According to one participant, “the Harb tribe originated in the Hijaz, but some clans remained in the Hijaz while others migrated to the Najd to make a living.” Similarly, another participant noted that “Harb is considered a Hadari tribe because the origin of the tribe is in the Hijaz as they served the pilgrims with Quraish.” Moreover, the Harb tribe “controlled most of the roads leading to the holy cities (Mecca and Madinah)” (Il-Hazmy, 1975, p. 23); furthermore, one participant explained, “through their interactions with others, the Harb adopted a dialect that many people could understand.”

In contrast, another participant argued that “all contact with other tribes consciously or unconsciously influences the dialect of the tribe.” Participants pointed out that the Harb tribe was known for trading with other tribes in the Hijaz and Northern Central. One participant even explained that the “Harb tribe maintains many relations with other tribes (Bedouin and sedentary); therefore, the characteristics of their dialect are constantly changing.” According to one participant, “The rate of linguistic evolution within the Harb tribe is slow, largely due to limited inter-tribal communication. The Harb tribe in the Qassim region does not reside in a single area or form a cohesive community; instead, they are dispersed throughout the region. As a result, the origins of their dialect remain unclear.” One participant argued that “Al Henakiyah, a city and governorate in Al Madinah province, is considered the dialect of origin for the Harb tribe.”

The Harb in Hijaz and the Harb in Qassim have distinct experiences and backgrounds, leading the Harb in Qassim to interact with other tribes that share similar experiences. Indeed, the findings indicate that shared norms and experiences take precedence over using the Harbi dialect when fostering a sense of belonging to the same tribe. For example, one participant said that “The Harb in Hijaz use a different Harbi dialect compared to that in Qassim, particularly in terms of vocabulary and accent.” Il-Hazmy (1975) pointed out that it is difficult “to say to which Arabic dialect group the ancient Harbi language belongs.” The study results indicate that participants generally struggle to recognize the Harbi dialect, whereas they can easily identify the dialects of Otaibah and Mutayr. One participant explained that “the Harbi dialect is clear and much more similar to Koine.” Another participant argued, “I use Koine so people do not recognize my dialect; I do not really know how to describe or identify our dialect.” One participant stated, “We adopt the dialect of the region we live in, and I can’t recall any specific words that belong to our tribe.” She added, “I’ve heard my grandmother use some words that we no longer use, such as *tuhai* (listen), *yunis* (have pain), and *alhana* (unknown thing).” However, some of these words are also used in other Bedouin dialects. Similarly, another participant explained that “Our dialect lacks complex words or distinctive expressions; therefore, the Harbi dialect is more of a mixture of dialects without unique expressions.”

The participants in this study try to distance themselves from the Bedouin dialects; they adapt to the Koine, as one of them said: “Koineization involves the elimination of specific isoglosses between different dialects” (Palva, 1982, p. 18). This is evident as the participants use almost the same speech patterns when answering the interview questions. They try to distinguish themselves from the Bedouin dialects by using an intelligible dialect. On the other hand, the results of the study reveal a linguistic variable of the Harbi dialect in Arrass, namely the variable (h) at the end of words. The participants showed a tendency to adopt [-ha] in words like /kuðjha/ (take it). They pronounce it softly, unlike the other Bedouin tribes. Participants claimed that this linguistic variant, with its pronunciation softly, is salient in their dialect. However, it may be that participants deliberately adopt this linguistic feature to distinguish themselves from the Bedouin and Qassimi dialects; they switch to more urban dialects.

Dragojevic et al. (2013) point out that “Upward adjustment refers to shifts toward a more prestigious variety of speech, whereas downward adjustment refers to shifts toward a less prestigious or even stigmatized variety” (p. 37).

#### 4.2 Education

The results show that education can influence the way people speak. That is, depending on the level of education, people use the alternative dialect of their ancestors and then gradually discard some tribal words. Three of the participants assumed that their dialect has changed gradually since they started school. One noted, “Through education and mixing with other people at school, the girls from the Harb tribe have started to deviate from their original dialect, not because they want to, but some of the words have gradually disappeared.” In addition, two of the participants mentioned that “it’s easier to use the common words that everyone in the school understands instead of trying to stigmatize us, because in my opinion it’s not necessary to tell people that we belong to the Harb tribe.” Thus, the language of the participants differs daily from that of their elders and their dialect is indistinguishable from that of the surrounding dialects. According to the participants, their language has adapted over a long period of time, resulting in a permanent change in their dialect.

#### 4.3 Motivations for Changing

Labov (1972) postulates two types of change: Change from below and change from above. That is, change from below unconsciously and change from above consciously. Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015) explain that “change from below is systematic, unconscious change, while change from above is sporadic, conscious, and associated with issues of prestige” (p. 214). As the results of this study show, change in the Harbi dialect comes from above. The Harbi speakers are motivated to integrate into the social fabric and conform to the norms of the environment; therefore, their dialect changes consciously. In addition, the fact that the Harbi speakers’ dialect is generally considered as a soft dialect provides opportunities for blending with other dialects.

However, each generation adopts and modifies a dialect, steering it in a new direction. Consequently, the small changes we see today can lead to entirely new dialects in the future. The younger generation consciously alters their dialect to align more closely with urban dialects. As one participant noted, “When I speak in Bedouin dialects, my Hadri friends sometimes laugh at me, so I adjust my dialect to match theirs.” Thus, their motivation to consciously switch could be “a cognitive (organizational) motive related to controlling comprehension and communicative efficiency” (Dragojevic et al., 2013, p. 41).

Furthermore, the results indicate that participants prioritize effective communication with others, leading them to feel less obligated to use their tribal dialect. One participant stated, “When I talk to someone from Buraidah, I do not use the same dialect I do with my relatives because they will not understand me. So, I try to use a more common speech style as much as possible to ensure people from different dialects can follow along.” Thus, adapting to a shared speech style enhances communication, fosters predictability, reduces uncertainty and anxiety in interactions, and promotes mutual understanding.

#### 4.4 Identity and Ideology

According to the results of the study and other scattered information gathered orally by the researcher from older men, the personality of the Harbi speakers plays a significant role in the formation of their dialect. That is, the Harbi speakers tend to fit into the social fabric in Najd. They are urbanized and do not bother to stigmatize themselves among other tribes. However, Albirini (2016) points out that Bedouin did not change their language when they moved to cities because they were organized into clans and tribes with strong social ties. In fact, many Bedouin tribes, such as the Otaibah and Mutayr tribes, stigmatize themselves with certain words and use a very distinct Bedouin dialect. One participant says, “We may use the same words as other tribes (e.g., Otaibah), but our accent is more intelligible.” Other Bedouin tribes may emphasize certain linguistic features in their dialect out of tribal pride. The participants of this study noted that they do not strongly rely on the Harbi dialect, which is not easily distinguishable. As mentioned previously, participants were unable to recognize their own tribe’s dialect, even though they could identify the dialects of other tribes, such as Otaibah and Mutayr.

According to Silverstein (1979), language ideology is “a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as rationalizations or justifications for perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Gal (2002) refers to language ideologies as “culturally specific ideas that participants and observers bring to language, the ideas they have about what language is good for, what linguistic differences mean about the speakers who use them, why linguistic differences exist in the first place” (p. 197). In this context, the results reveal that participants believe dialect does not necessarily reflect the customs of the tribe. As one participant stated, “I can greet my guest without using difficult words that they may not understand,” and she pointed out that “the purpose of communication is to connect

with others.” However, two of the participants argued that they intentionally diverge themselves from Alrass dialect, as they desire to emphasize their tribal identity by maintaining the tribal dialect, even though their speech patterns were very similar to the Alrass dialect. In contrast, other participants indicated that they had unconsciously adopted the Alrass dialect due to frequent interactions with the local community. One participant explained, “My mother is from Hijaz, so she speaks the Harbi dialect from that region, even though she now lives in Qassim,” adding, “I don’t adopt my mother’s dialect but rather the surrounding dialects, like the Alrass dialect, because it’s more comfortable and easier for others to understand me.”

There are social and cognitive pressures from outside the group that cause the dialect to change. One aspect that constructs an individual’s identity is the language and dialect they use. Kroskrity (2000) defines identity as “the linguistic construction of membership in one or more social groups or categories” (p. 111). Therefore, using the dialect of one’s tribe is seen as an important part of identity. One participant mentioned, “Some individuals deliberately emphasize their tribal affiliation by their dialect.” She explained “As long as we can all speak the Arabic language and communicate effectively, there’s no need to use tribal dialects that most people might not understand.” Similarly, another participant stated, “The moment I stop speaking the Arabic language is the moment I lose my identity.” These responses reflect the idea that, while the Harbi speakers value their linguistic heritage, they prioritize communication and adaptability over rigid adherence to tribal dialects, “the loyalty of a group of people is not necessarily determined by the language they speak” (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015, p. 32). One participant pointed out that “we have our history, so the dialect I use is not evidence of my loyalty or identity.” In general, the female participants in the current study prefer to use urban dialects, as they perceive them to be more acceptable to their generation compared to Bedouin dialects. This preference is mainly driven by the stigmatization of Bedouin dialects by their peers.

Furthermore, the relationship between dialect and solidarity was examined. According to Wardhaugh and Fuller (2015), “a sense of solidarity may lead people to preserve a local dialect or endangered language in order to resist power or insist on independence” (p. 32). In this context, Harbi speakers maintain the cultural norms of their ancestors. However, their dialect has been influenced by the desire to integrate into the broader social fabric. This suggests that while Harbi speakers hold onto traditional norms, they are also open to evolving and adapting their dialect to align with changing social dynamics.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study investigates the attitudes of the Harbi Arabic speakers toward their dialect. To achieve this, the researcher employed a qualitative research design, and conducted interviews with five female participants from the Harb tribe. The data was analyzed interpretatively, and the findings reveal that Harbi speakers have a generally positive attitude toward their dialect. However, unlike other Bedouin tribes, they do not seek to emphasize their identity through their dialect.

Additionally, the Harbi speakers show a strong desire to integrate into the broader social fabric. As a result, they often adopt the dialect of the region or the koine, allowing for intelligible communication with people from other dialect backgrounds. Despite this, the study’s results may be limited as they focus solely on female participants, which make it difficult to generalize the findings across the entire tribe.

Moreover, the study faced limitations due to time constraints and the challenge of collecting data from male participants. Future research should aim to expand the sample to include both male participants and a broader geographic area to enhance the reliability of the findings. The researcher also recommends studying the Harbi dialect in Hijaz and smaller settlements, where external influences on the dialect are minimal, to gain a deeper understanding of how the dialect is preserved and evolves over time. By focusing on regions with minimal external influence, researchers can better assess the factors that contribute to the stability or change of the Harbi dialect within these communities. This will provide valuable insights into the dynamics of language adaptation and identity among Bedouin tribes.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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No additional data are available.

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## Notes

Note 1. The word “Bedouin” is written with a capital initial because it refers to a specific group of people. The word “sedentary” is not capitalized because it is an adjective rather than a proper noun.

Note 2. Urban dialects are the varieties of Arabic spoken in cities, used by larger, diverse populations.

## Appendix A

### The interview Questions

The researcher conducted the present study using the following interview questions:

- 1) Do you distinguish the Harb dialect from the short clips?
- 2) What are the characteristics of the Harbi dialect?
- 3) How would you describe the Harbi dialect?
- 4) Do the Harbi speakers converge or diverge from the surrounding dialect? Why?
- 5) Do you use the Harbi dialect while interacting with people of different dialects? Why?
- 6) Do you think using a certain dialect reflects loyalty to the tribe?
- 7) Do people of the Harb tribe try to distinguish themselves by using a specific dialect? Why?
- 8) Do the Harb speakers have a sense of belonging to the Arras dialect? Why?

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