

Linguistic Convergence and Divergence in the Use of the Third Person Singular Feminine Suffix among the Qassimi Speech Community in Riyadh

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic impact of dialect contact on Qassimi Arabic (QA) speakers residing in Riyadh. Focusing on the morphophonemic feature of the third-person singular feminine suffix (-ah/-ha), the research investigates patterns of convergence and divergence through a variationist sociolinguistic lens. Data from sociolinguistic interviews with 32 QA speakers in Riyadh were analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicate a prevalent use of the non-standard variant [-ah], suggesting a strong preservation of traditional linguistic features among QA speakers despite exposure to other Saudi dialects. This was explained by the concentration of QA speakers in particular neighborhoods creating ethnic enclaves that restrict exposure to other Saudi dialects and thus preserving pre-migration speech patterns. The suffix's morphophonemic function and lack of social or symbolic meaning also had a role in its preservation.

Keywords: Qassimi Arabic, language variation and change, convergence and divergence, Riyadh

1. Introduction

In variationist sociolinguistics, convergence and divergence are key concepts for understanding language change, especially in contexts of dialect contact and mobility. According to Soliz (2016), these concepts are central to Communication Accommodation Theory, developed by Howard Giles. Trudgill (1986) highlights that long-term accommodation is just the beginning of the spread of linguistic traits in dialect contact scenarios. The theory originally sought to explain why and how an individual's speech changes in relation to a conversational partner or social context (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Convergence refers to the process where a speaker adjusts their communication style to become more similar to others, while divergence involves altering communication to highlight or create differences (Soliz, 2016). These strategies are commonly observed when individuals from different social backgrounds, who speak mutually intelligible dialects, interact frequently. This phenomenon is often studied through speech pattern analyses in densely populated urban areas where diverse groups live and interact (e.g., Rosenberg, 2005; Taeldeman, 2005).

Over the past few decades, Saudi Arabia has undergone significant economic and urban development, leading to increased mobility and greater homogeneity within its societies. From 1970 to 2005, the Saudi Arabian government executed several development plans that established public services and economic projects in key cities such as Riyadh, Dammam, and Mecca (Al-Kharif, 2017). These cities now account for approximately 66.6% of the country's population (Saudi Census, 2018). This statistic indicates a diminishing demographic disparity between the regions of Saudi Arabia. Riyadh, in particular, has become a major destination for internal migration. The Saudi Census (2015) reports that 48% of families living in Riyadh relocated there from other parts of the country. By 2020, Riyadh's population had grown to approximately 8 million (Saudi Census, 2020).

1.1 Migration Patterns to Riyadh

Many big cities around the world have areas where people from the same country or culture live together, such as Chinatown in New York City or Koreatown in Los Angeles. These areas often feature their own shops, schools, and social groups, helping people from those countries feel more at home. However, in Riyadh, people from other regions of Saudi Arabia tend to live in neighborhoods based on their regional origin rather than forming distinct neighborhoods based on their entire culture. For example, there is distinct regional clustering in Saudi Arabia: the

Najdi community has a notable presence in Jeddah, the Ghamdi community is predominantly situated in Mecca, and the Qassimi community is concentrated in Riyadh. Migrants from Qassim, for example, make up about 8.6% of Riyadh's migrant population (Saudi Census, 2015) and primarily live in the city's eastern and northeastern neighborhoods. The Qassim Region and Riyadh are approximately 330 kilometers (205 miles) apart, which fosters close geographical and socio-economic ties that facilitate regular movement between the two areas. This proximity has led to enduring historical, economic, and social connections between Qassim and Riyadh.

1.2 Overview of Qassimi Arabic

QA is a sub-variety of Najdi Arabic spoken predominantly by the sedentary people in the Qassim region of central Saudi Arabia (Ingham, 1994). According to Al-Jumaah (2013), the QA boundaries can be represented in four major cities in the Qassim region, namely Buraydah, Unayzah, Ar Rass, and Al Bukayriyah, as well as smaller towns and villages mostly inhabited by sedentary people, such as Al Badayea, Al Khabra, Riyadh Al Khabra, Ash Shimasiyah, and Al Mithnab. In fact, Al-Jumaah (2013, 2016) traced QA history and noted that certain variety of linguistic traits in QA were derived from different tribal Old Arabic dialects such as Tai, Tamim, Bakr ibn Wil, and Qays dialects, while other traits were derived from some old Yemini tribal dialects.

1.2.1 The Third-Person Singular Feminine Suffix in QA

Generally, Arabic language has two ways of realizing the third-person singular feminine suffix /-ha/, whether it is bound to a verb (fiʕl) or a letter (ḥarf): in the first, they confirm the ʔlif sound (ل) after the haʔ sound (هـ) as in (kitabuha, كتابها, her book), in the second, the ʔlif after the haʔ is deleted and the letter preceding the ha is always formed with a fatha as in (kitabah, كتابه, her book) (see Table 1). While the former is a well-known standard feature in SA and most Arabic dialects, the latter is often attested in certain Peninsular Arabic dialects among which is QA. It is assumed that the deletion of the ʔlif letter is due to a desire to emphasize the haʔ sound, which is considered the basic signifier of the pronoun (Al-Qarni, 2019). As mentioned earlier, this morphophonemic feature is realized in the QA as a distinguishing feature of QA as well as Arabic spoken in Hail. For the purpose of the present study, the third person singular feminine pronoun (-ah) is delimited as a dependent variable.

Table 1. The differences between SA and QA in the realization of the suffix pronoun of the study

Features	SA Forms	Romanized form	QA forms	Romanized form
3rd sg.fem	ها	-ha	هـ	-ah

However, old Arab grammarians referred to this linguistic phenomenon as ineffective and a deviation from SA because, according to Sibawayh, removing the ʔlif sound from the pronoun /-ha/ would make the feminine pronoun appear more like the male pronoun (uh), which will compromise the preciseness of the SA (Al-Qarni, 2019). In contrast, Al-Ubudi (1978) contends that this is a feature that is not deemed deformed colloquial or odd to the Arabic language, but rather one that has an Arabic historical origin and can be found in some Semitic languages (e.g., Hebrew). Bishr (2004) also mentioned that it is a phenomenon observed in the Syriac language as well.

It is important to note that the third-person singular feminine pronouns in Arabic can be attached to a verb (fiʕl), which turns them into object pronouns as in (راسمها, rasamha, he draw her), or they can be attached to a noun (ism), which turns them into possessive pronouns (كتابها, kitabuha, her book) (Makkawi, 2021). In the current study, the third-person singular feminine pronoun /-ah/ was only counted in its objective and possessive forms.

1.3 Objective of the Study

Saudi Arabia's vast size and diverse array of dialects have sparked increasing scholarly interest in understanding their mutual influences. The study of dialect contact as a driver for language change in Saudi Arabia traces its roots to earlier works by scholars such as Al-Jehani (1985), Khtani (1992), and Al-Shehri (1993). However, dialect contact gained significant momentum following Al-Essa's study in 2008, which examined how the Najdi community's speech patterns evolved in Jeddah, a city with a distinct dialect. Al-Essa's research initiated a wave of similar studies nationwide, undertaken by scholars like Alghamdi (2014), Alqahtani (2015), AlAmmar (2017), Hussain (2017), and Al-Rohili (2019), exploring the intricate dynamics of dialect interaction and its societal and linguistic implications.

Despite the extensive body of variationist sociolinguistic research conducted across various regions of Saudi Arabia, a notable gap exists in studies focusing on dialectal variations within Riyadh. This city, renowned for its linguistic diversity, presents an unexplored frontier for understanding the interactions and mutual influences among Saudi dialects. Specifically, the dynamics of dialect contact in Riyadh remain inadequately investigated, hindering

our understanding of how these dialects blend and evolve within its urban environment.

While studies by Al-Rojaie (2010, 2013) and Alkhamees (2023) have conducted detailed linguistic analyses of QA's distinctive features, these investigations have primarily focused on its linguistic characteristics without contextualizing them within significant dialect contact scenarios to assess their impact on QA. Moreover, despite extensive sociolinguistic inquiries into various Saudi communities—such as the Najdi community in Jeddah, the Ghamdi community in Mecca, the Hail community, the Dwasir tribe in Dammam, and the Harb dialect in Medina—the Qassimi speech community residing in Riyadh's eastern and northern neighborhoods remains conspicuously under-researched.

1.4 Scope and Research Questions

This study employed a variationist sociolinguistic framework, following the methodologies outlined by Labov (1963, 1972), to investigate the Qassimi speech community's linguistic interactions with other Saudi dialects in Riyadh. Specifically, the research focused on the realization of the third-person singular feminine suffix, a salient morphophonemic feature of Qassimi Arabic. The primary research question is:

1) To what degree do QA speakers residing in Riyadh exhibit linguistic convergence or divergence with other Saudi dialects in the realization of the third-person singular feminine suffix?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dialect Contact

The theoretical underpinning of the dialect contact approach was established with the publication of Trudgill's book *Dialect in Contact*, in which he primarily focused on the processes that could occur if distinct mutually intelligible dialects encountered one another. He concentrated on disseminating linguistic forms at the micro-level, focusing on transferring specific linguistic features from one place to another at the level of the individual speaker (Trudgill, 1999). This was accomplished by employing Howard Giles' (1973) theory of linguistic accommodation as a tool of explanation within the paradigm of the social psychology of language. In what follows, I will attempt to briefly discuss the role of accommodation theory in dialect contact framework followed by a brief outline of some basic concepts in the dialect contact framework such as convergence, divergence, and maintenance to the extent that they are relevant to the current study.

2.2 The Role of Communication Accommodation Theory

Language variation and dialect change are said to be driven by Communication Accommodation Theory (hereafter CAT) (Siegel, 1985). In communicative encounters, people instantly start to synchronize aspects of their nonverbal (e.g., gesture and posture) and verbal behavior (e.g., accent and speech rate). These modifications form the basis of CAT, as they clearly explain why speakers' accents change during a conversation (Soliz & Giles, 2014). It further explains how speech dissimilarities are reduced by speakers' adaptable language practices during physical contact (Trudgill 1999). The central premise of Trudgill's argument was that if linguistic accommodation occurs over a long period of time between speakers of different dialects, as it would in situations such as urbanization, migration, and colonialism, then the accommodated forms may eventually become inherent characteristics of the speakers' dialects (Britain, 2006).

2.2.1 Linguistic Convergence, Divergence, and Maintenance

In CAT, convergence, divergence, and maintenance are the three fundamental strategies by which individuals may modify their communication behaviors in relation to one another. Convergence has been the most commonly researched of the several accommodating strategies that speakers utilize to attain these aims and might be regarded as the historical core of CAT (Giles, 1973). The term convergence has been defined as “a strategy whereby individuals adapt their communicative behaviors in terms of a wide range of linguistic (e.g., speech rate, accents), paralinguistic (e.g., pauses, utterance length), and nonverbal features (e.g., smiling, gazing) in such a way as to become more similar to their interlocutor's behavior” (Giles & Ogay, 2007, p. 294). Convergence, which focuses on modifying communication to resemble a conversational partner more, is related to the interlocutor's communication competence, the recipient of the convergent behavior, and the speaker's and conversation's positive perceptions (Soliz, 2016). Furthermore, people usually converge when the conversational goal is social approval and affiliation with others.

Conversely, divergence strategy emphasizes the linguistic and nonverbal contrasts between the speaker and the listener (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Such behaviors are prompted when an individual's social identity (e.g., ethnicity, cultural identity, age identity) is evident and valued in the context. According to Soliz (2016), people usually diverge when they seek to highlight their group affiliation and enhance or preserve the differences between social

groups during a conversation. At times, speakers' techniques for communicating might occasionally highlight noticeable differences and social group identities. When this is the ultimate goal of the conversation, people tend to stick with their verbal and nonverbal cues. Accordingly, maintenance was typically presented in the theory as the third accommodating strategy. However, maintenance strategies frequently sustain a social and relational distance; as a result, they function and are viewed similarly to divergence. The women in Hachimi's (2007) study, which concentrated on the outcome of Fessi-Casablancan contact in Morocco, provided an example of maintenance. They preserved the highly stereotyped Fessi post-alveolar approximant [ɹ], which is regarded as a minority form in Fessi's speech. The preservation of Fessi characteristics was shown to be correlated with positive attitudes toward the Fessi dialect and strong in-group affiliations (Hachimi, 2007).

Drawing on the concepts of maintenance, different studies have been able to show that in dialect contact situations, variables that signal the social identity or heritage features have remain unchanged. That was exemplified in the preservation of the interdental variants (θ), (δ) and (\eth) in the speech of Ghamdi speakers in Mecca (Alghamdi, 2014), Najdi speaker in Jeddah (Al-Essa, 2008), and rural immigrants in Jeddah (Al-Shehri, 1993). In Alghamdi's study, she provided an explanation for Ghamdi's strong inclination to maintain the interdental variety by claiming that it was one of their heritage variants. Similarly, Al-Essa (2008) suggested that the divergence of low contact speakers and their maintenance of the Najdi variants of the interdental variables is the result of the speakers using these as social markers to signal their distinctive social identity and particular in-group membership, in addition to their social networks and limited contact with the urban Hijazi locals. Furthermore, Al-Shehri (1993) revealed that there was no noticeable difference in the interdental pronunciation of rural immigrants according to their level of education. Al Shehri (1993) commented saying that "regardless of whether the interdental pronunciation was identical to the standard or not, the rural form seemed to draw its significance from being used by this group as verbal marker of their ethnic identity" (p. 113).

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Collection

The development and use of a well-structured technique is the foundation for reliable results in quantitative sociolinguistic research. To accomplish this, two methodological issues need to be addressed: the selection of a representative sample and the collection of naturally occurring data.

3.1.1 The Sample

When constructing a variationist research, the researcher must consider how the sample will be selected. Sankoff (1980) outlines three fundamental concerns that researchers have when using sample techniques: establishing the sampling universe, evaluating the relevant dimensions of variation within the community, and determining the sample size. Given the current study's focus on QA variation as shown by Qassimi speakers in Riyadh, only native Qassimi speakers were considered. Moreover, most quantitative sociolinguistic studies rely on the method of judgment sampling. The rationale behind this technique is that the researcher determines in advance the kind of speakers he/she wants to examine before searching for a certain number of speakers that fall into the stated categories (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

In the current study, the Qassimi community in Riyadh has the advantage of being socially identifiable and distinct, and considering the objective of the study, which necessitates identifying the participants' demographic characteristics in advance, judgmental sampling was used to ensure that a representative sample of the community under study was chosen. Secondly, I targeted speakers who were born in their hometowns in Qassim and migrated as adults to reside in Riyadh, particularly in the eastern or the south-eastern neighborhoods of Riyadh. The participants' residency in such neighborhoods of Riyadh, which used to be inhabited by Qassimi migrants, was a significant geographic consideration in the participant selection process. The sample consisted of thirty-two first-generation Qassimi participants who settled in the eastern and south-eastern neighborhoods in Riyadh, such as Al-Jazirah, As-Salam, Al-Fayha, Al-Mughrizat, and Ar-Rayyan, As-Sulay, Ar-Rabwah, Ar-Rawabi, Ishbiliyah, and Ar Rawdah.

In the current study, the 'friend of a friend' strategy was utilized to fill the requisite quotas in the study sample. To fill the required quotas of the sample, different methods were used. In principle, gaining access to the Qassimi community in Riyadh was not difficult since I had the advantage of having relatives in that community. However, gaining access to adult male speakers was one of the challenges of this research. In other words, it was not possible for the author, a woman, to randomly interview males in the Qassimi speaking community in Riyadh because of Saudi social tradition, which includes the local interpretation of religious teachings related to men's close contact with women other than their relatives. Instead, an assistant who meets the criteria for participant selection was utilized as the author's male informant. He was instructed on how to collect data and provided the details he needed.

I also asked one of my female participants to interview her husband on my behalf.

3.1.2 Sociolinguistic Interviews

The aim of capturing vernacular, or everyday casual speech, is central to the variationist approach (Tagliamonte, 2006). Sociolinguistic interviews, often conducted in-person or occasionally over the phone, are the most common method for this purpose (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). These interviews allow for the collection of extended informal speech, provide recordings for future analysis, and help researchers follow the Principle of Accountability (Feagin, 2002). For this study, the researcher and the male assistant conducted interviews over six months, each lasting about 40 minutes for a total of 22 hours. Interviews took place in participants' homes, coffee shops, and public parks, recorded with a digital tape recorder. Two group interviews were conducted, while sixteen interviews were conducted via Zoom and Blackboard due to accessibility issues. The interviews had two parts: one focusing on participants' demographic information and social network, and the other discussing general topics of interest to elicit detailed speech. To minimize observer's paradox, demographic information was gathered indirectly. The male assistant was instructed on how to conduct the interviews and suggest topics but was allowed flexibility to add topics to encourage conversation.

3.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed audibly. Every lexical item that contained the pronoun /-ah/, whether in the objective or possessive form, was recorded, classified as either [-ah] or [-ha], and coded. Each speaker produced at least thirty tokens, which were then quantified and coded. To eliminate lexical effects, a limit of three tokens of particular items was established when the same speaker used the same lexical item repeatedly.

A detailed analysis of the variability patterns of the lexical items demonstrated functional variations in how the same linguistic variable was realized. For example, in some of the interviews, the participants identified to the third-person male singular using the same pronoun, /-ah/. This exception can be explained by the fact that it is a typical pattern that appears in different dialects of Riyadh. In order to prevent any misinterpretation about pronoun usage, such tokens were eliminated and only pronoun usage related to the third-person feminine singular was counted.

3.2.1 Statistical Analysis

Following these procedures, a total of 2074 tokens were retained for statistical analysis (1506 realized with [-ah] and 568 realized with [-ha]). First, the frequency index for the variable is obtained by calculating the means of its usage. After that, SPSS 25 was used to perform a statistical analysis of variance. To compare between the two groups (e.g., those who realized the standard variant [-ha] and who realized the non-standard variant [-ah]), the Independent Sample t-test was used to determine if the differences between the variants under examination are statistically significant. In t-test, the differences between groups were considered statistically significant if the tests had a P value of 0.05 or lower, and vice versa.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Linguistic Convergence and Divergence in the Qassimi Speech Community in Riyadh

In this section, the general results will be presented illustrating the general patterns of language variation and change occurring in the Qassimi community in Riyadh, by presenting the finding that shows the extent to which QA speakers maintained the non-standard variant [-ah] and adopted the innovative feature [-ha]. This, in turn, shed light on the question that this research seeks to answer related to linguistic convergence and divergence.

The findings obtained from the analysis of the data are shown in Figure 1. The figure clearly exhibits a maintenance of the third-person singular feminine suffix (-ah) in the dialect of QA speakers in Riyadh. The findings showed that speakers maintained the use of the non-standard variant [-ah] 72.6 % of the time while the standard variant [-ha] was used only 27.3% of the time. Such results indicate that QA speakers in Riyadh tend to maintain the non-standard variant and do not try to converge to the innovative feature spoken widely in Riyadh.

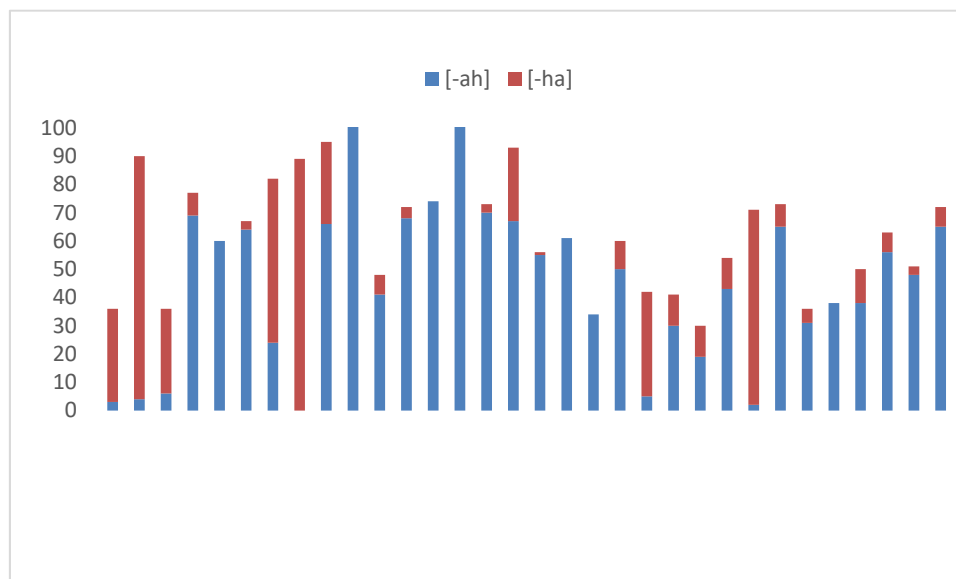


Figure 1. The Use of the Standard [-ha] and Non-standard [-ah] Variants by QA Speakers

4.2 Maintenance of the Non-Standard Variant of the Third-Person Singular Feminine Suffix by QA Speaker in Riyadh

The comprehensive analysis revealed that among Qassimi participants in Riyadh, the non-standard variant [-ah] remained prevalent, accounting for 72.6% of usage, while the standard variant [-ha] was used at a comparatively low rate of 27.3%. These findings contrast with typical patterns reported in previous studies of dialect leveling in Saudi Arabia, which usually show a decline in the use of traditional and socially marked forms alongside an increase in the adoption of less marked forms common in the broader regional community (e.g., Hussain, 2017; Al-Jehani, 1985; Al-Shehri, 1993; AlAmmar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Rohili, 2019; Alaodini, 2019; Alghamdi, 2014). To understand these findings, it is essential to consider the role of Communication Accommodation Theory, as outlined by Trudgill (1986), particularly in the initial phase of linguistic characteristic distribution during dialect contact, especially when this contact occurs consistently over time, known as long-term accommodation.

These findings can be explained by considering the geographic location of the neighborhoods where the participants reside in Riyadh. This study targeted QA speakers living in the eastern and southeastern neighborhoods, areas where many people from Qassim live, forming an ethnic enclave. This focus was intended to minimize any potential influence of participants' geographic location on their speech patterns. In such an enclave, there is likely little societal pressure for QA speakers to diverge from their own dialect or converge with other supralocal or local varieties in Riyadh, given their limited daily interactions with people outside their linguistic community. According to the model proposed by Auer and Hinskens (2005), which describes dialect change through accommodation in several stages—the first being the interactional component—we observe the partial absence of this element among the QA speakers in this study. This is supported by a participant's observation that residing in the southeastern areas of Riyadh significantly influenced her sister's dialect.

Another possible reason for QA speakers maintaining this suffix is the generational focus of the study. The criterion for selecting participants was limited to the first generation of Qassimi migrants to Riyadh. This may be an external factor affecting the degree of accommodation. Prior studies have noted that first-generation migrants, who are adults who have passed the “critical stage” of language and dialect acquisition, are unlikely to significantly change the grammar and phonology of their speech. They may adapt in minor ways to their new linguistic environment, but substantial changes are rare (Yaeger-Dror, 1994; Kerswill, 1994; Shockey, 1984).

Although investigating the social and symbolic significance underlying the current pattern of variation was not within the scope of this study, there are indications suggesting an absence of social meaning attached to the suffix in question within the Qassimi speech community. For example, when participants were asked how others recognize their linguistic background or why they consider themselves speakers of the QA, they often referred to old lexical terms and expressions stereotypically associated with QA, such as */we:n-ho-boh?/* (“where is he?”), */wraets tsɔda?/* (“why are you like that?”), and */irrizhimno/* (“calm down”), as well as prominent phonetic features like [ts], [dʒ], and [-an]. This suggests that the third-person singular feminine suffix [-ah] does not have a distinct

social meaning within the Qassimi community in Riyadh. It also does not seem to develop social stigmatization within the present community and is not known to undergo dialect change in other varieties

Another possible factor explaining the current pattern of variation and change is related to the morphophonemic function of the suffix in QA. As mentioned earlier, the suffix serves a morphophonemic function in QA, specifically signaling feminine entities that are not explicitly mentioned in the context. Due to this function, it has apparently remained largely unaffected by the leveling process commonly observed in contact situations. This explanation aligns with the findings of Alkhamees (2023), Al-Rojaie (2013), Hachimi (2007), and Jabeur (1987). However, it may contradict the studies of Al-Essa (2008) and Al-Shehri (1993), which showed that change also affects linguistic variables with morphophonemic functions. Their findings were attributed to comprehension difficulties between rural and urban speakers in Mecca and the phonetic similarity between the Urban Hijazi suffix [-u] and the Qassimi variant [-uh]. Given the lack of external influences on the use of the third-person singular feminine suffix [ah], it is plausible that QA speakers will primarily maintain this linguistic feature.

The current patterns of variation might also suggest that a change is in progress, potentially becoming more pronounced in the second and third generations of speakers within the Qassimi community in Riyadh. This pattern aligns with findings from Al-Wer's (2020) study in Amman, where she examined speech variation across three generations of families from Nablus, Palestine, and Salt, Jordan. Al-Wer found that the highly noticeable features in Jordanian Arabic speech were mostly preserved by the first generation.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that first-generation Qassimi immigrants in Riyadh exhibit a strong preference for the non-standard third-person singular feminine suffix [-ah], suggesting that dialect leveling for this feature is in its initial stages. The clustering of QA speakers in specific neighborhoods creates ethnic enclaves, limiting exposure to other dialects and thus preserving pre-migration speech patterns. The lack of social or symbolic significance associated with the suffix, coupled with its morphophonemic function, contributes to its persistence. Future research should investigate subsequent generations of Qassimi immigrants and explore the potential influence of social media on dialect use within the Qassimi community.

The findings of this study emphasize the resilience of regional dialects in urban environments, where ethnic enclaves contribute to the preservation of distinct linguistic identities despite pressures for assimilation. This underscores the importance of intra-community networks and a sense of belonging in maintaining linguistic divergence. The research enriches sociolinguistic literature by demonstrating the coexistence of localized dialect divergences and convergences within a single community, supporting theories of dialect convergence and contact-induced change. The findings suggest that accommodation theory must consider the multifaceted nature of linguistic interactions, as social factors and interaction patterns play complex roles in shaping dialect evolution.

Finally, in this study, a number of important limitations need to be considered. The study's small sample size limits the generalizability of its findings, and expanding the participant pool would enhance the robustness of conclusions. Additionally, speaker attitudes towards the suffix and QA were not explored, warranting further investigation. Focusing only on first-generation immigrants restricts understanding of linguistic diversity within the Qassimi community, and future research should include second and third generations. Lastly, the study's geographic focus on specific Riyadh neighborhoods calls for broader research across diverse areas and comparisons with ancestral regions.

Additionally, its focus on QA speakers within specific neighborhoods of eastern and southeastern Riyadh restricts the generalizability of findings concerning the third-person singular feminine suffix and its relationship with neighborhood dynamics. To address this, future research should encompass diverse neighborhoods and regions across Riyadh to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these dynamics influence linguistic manifestations. Moreover, the study's concentration on contemporary patterns may overlook historical variations within the region where this linguistic feature originated. A proposed remedy involves comparative studies that juxtapose current usage in Riyadh with ancestral regions like Hail and Qassim, aiming to trace historical and regional linguistic changes.

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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.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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