The “White Dialect” of young Arabic speakers from Qassim (Saudi Arabia)

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Chapter 6

The main feature of the White Dialect

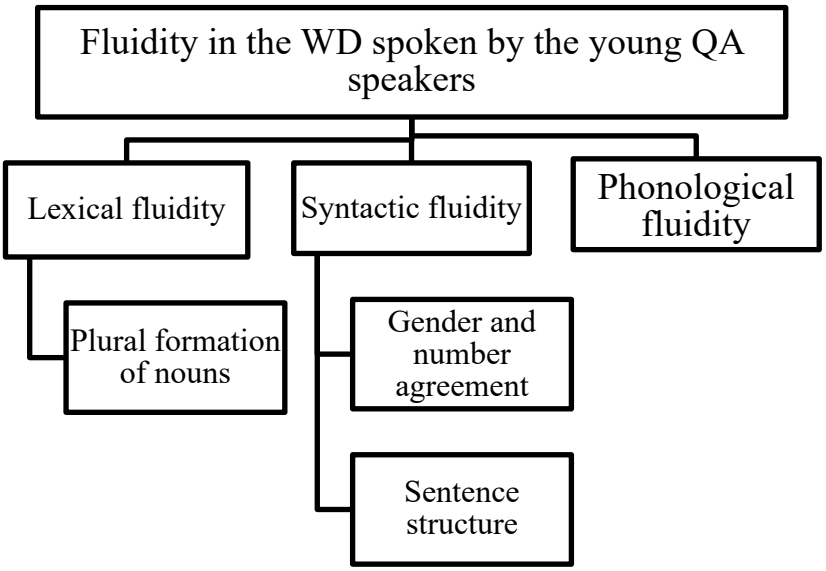
Introduction

The previous chapter provided quantitative evidence that the young Qassimi Arabic (QA) speakers' use of the QA variants is reduced when they speak in what they call the White Dialect (WD). They avoided the use of the QA variables either by switching to their counterparts in other varieties, or by using alternative strategies. The present chapter provides a broader linguistic description of the WD beyond the analysis of the use of the six QA variants that were investigated earlier in this study. I will discuss the main characteristic of the WD: fluidity, as an unpredictable and instable way of speech. Idiosyncratic styles were not taken into consideration; in other words, if a linguistic feature was used by an individual speaker but did not appear in the WD speech of the other participants, it was considered idiosyncratic. Influence from further Arabic varieties was occasionally detected, such as Lebanese Arabic (e.g. the adjectives *mni:ħ* 'good' and *ħazna:n* 'sad'), and Moroccan Arabic (*zweinah* 'beautiful'), but these varieties were not taken into consideration in this investigation as they were used only rarely (around 2 instances both, by 3 of the 20 participants). Note that this chapter is dedicated to discussing the main characteristics of the WD; the question what WD refers to exactly, and how it is generated are discussed in Chapter 8.

6.1. Fluidity as a characteristic of WD speech

6.1.1. Introduction

The WD is particularly characterised by its fluidity. It is a style of speech where speakers use a mixture of various Arabic varieties that may or may not include Standard Arabic (SA). The process of mixing different Arabic varieties occurs not only at the lexical level, but also at the phonological and syntactic levels. All three levels will be discussed below in detail. The following diagram provides an overview of the main aspects where the fluidity of the WD occurs.



6.1.2 Methods

As explained before (see also Section 2.2.3, Stage 2), the 20 young QA speakers who participated in this study were requested to provide two video or audio recordings of their social media posts: one directed to a Saudi audience, and one for a general Arabic-speaking audience. The analysis made in Chapter 5 did not show major

significant differences in the WD when addressing the two types of audience. Therefore, the examples discussed in this section are extracted from the WD speech of all participants (both male and female) regardless of their audiences.

6.1.3 Analysis

In order to describe the WD used by the young QA speakers, I adopted the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model developed by Myers-Scotton (1993). The MLF model proposes that in any sentence that contains a codeswitch, there is a hierarchy that acts as the base for structuring the sentence: the Matrix Language (ML), and the Embedded Language (EL). The ML is the language that provides the grammatical frame, and is therefore at work in every sentence. The morphemes of this language are referred to as "system morphemes". Meanwhile, the EL may only provide thematic content of the sentence; morphemes from this language can be referred to as "content morphemes". System morphemes include determiners, negation markers, affixes, and possessive pronouns, while content morphemes include nouns, verbs, and descriptive adjectives.

The MLF model is usually used to investigate codeswitching between two different languages, but according to Myers-Scotton (1997, 3), it is also suitable for analysing codeswitching between different dialects, registers, or styles. The sociolinguistic situation of Arabic involves diglossic codeswitching between Standard Arabic (SA) as a high variety, and the Arabic dialects as low varieties. The MLF model has been employed by a number of linguists working on Arabic (e.g. Boussofara-Omar, 1999, 2003, 2006; Bassiouney, 2009; Holes, 1993; Mazraani, 1997; Eid, 1988), who also remarked on certain limitations of the model. As discussed by Bassiouney, no existing model perfectly serves the investigation of diglossic codeswitching in Arabic; however, she notes that the MLF model is the most promising model, as it can apply to any grammatical structure (2009, 40). Bassiouney also addresses the limitations of the MLF model when applying it to Arabic diglossic codeswitching (2009, 49). In particular, there are sometimes system morphemes from both source languages in one sentence; that is, grammatical structures from both

codes. Moreover, there are some grammatical elements in diglossic Arabic sentences that are hard to categorise as either SA or dialectal, such as definite articles.

In this investigation, I faced a third issue when applying the MLF model. In almost all of the WD sentences, there are more than two codes at play. In contrast with the previous studies that investigated diglossic codeswitching between SA and an Arabic dialect as two codes, the WD sentences can be seen as containing multiple codes, and SA is not necessarily always one of them. The purpose of applying the MLF model in this investigation is not so much to determine case by case which variety is the ML (i.e., the dominant variety in the WD sentence), but rather to shed some light on the fluidity of the WD sentence and to highlight its flexibility to employ more than one code for system morphemes.

6.1.4 Lexical fluidity

In our WD data, speakers alternate between SA and dialectal lexical items without any apparent systematicity. In the WD data collected for this investigation, lexical elements from the following Arabic varieties were found:

- Qassimi Arabic (QA): the speakers’ mother tongue
- Riyadh Arabic (RA): the variety spoken in the capital city
- Standard Arabic (SA): the variety used at school and in the media
- Hijazi Arabic (HA): a variety spoken in the western region of Saudi Arabia
- Kuwaiti Arabic (KA): the Arabic dialect spoken in Kuwait
- Egyptian Arabic (EA): the Arabic dialect of Egypt, used in the media

The examples presented in the analysis below each comprise two sentences from the same speaker. The rationale for this is to reveal how speakers might use different lexical choices even when producing similar sentence structures. Below each sentence, the system and content morphemes are described, and labelled as to which variety they derive from. The label “neutral” is used to denote the shared morphemes between SA and the various Arabic dialects. Sometimes, the morphemes seem to be shared by SA and the dialectal forms but differ in pronunciation, particularly in terms

of vowels (compare, for example, the definite article *al-* in SA and QA with its counterpart *il-* in RA). In such cases, the word is labelled based on the speaker's pronunciation. In order to provide full clarity on the differences between the varieties, I follow the method of presentation used by Bassiouney (2009), in which certain example sentences are accompanied by counterpart sentences in each of the varieties detected in the example sentence. The counterpart sentences in QA, RA, and SA were formed by myself (as a native speaker of QA, and a fluent speaker of RA and SA); meanwhile, the HA, KA, and EA counterpart sentences were formed and checked by three native speakers of each variety.

(1) a. *hal iħna: ðˤaru:ri: niħta:dʒ haði: il-mukammila:t*
Q we necessarily 1PL.need DEM.F.SG DET-supplements
'Do we necessarily need these supplements'

System morphemes:

hal	interrogative particle	SA
iħna:	personal pronoun 'we'	HA
haði:	demonstrative	QA or RA
il	definite article	RA

Content morphemes:

ðˤaru:ri:	adverb 'necessarily'	SA
niħta:dʒ	verb 'need'	QA or RA
mukammila:t	noun 'supplements'	SA

QA counterpart

hu: ħina: b-al-ħi:l niħta:dʒ ha-l-mukammila:t

RA counterpart

hu: ħina marrah niħta:dʒ ha-l-mukammila:t

HA counterpart

hu: iħna: marrah niħta:dʒ di-l-mukammila:t

SA counterpart

hal naħnu bi-ðˁ-ðˁaru:rati naħta:dʒu li-ha:ðihi l-mukammila:t

b. *ma:-fi: tˁiri:gah θa:njah nigdar niħasˁsˁil ha-l-mukammila:t*
NEG-PREP way other.F.SG 1PL.can 1PL.get DEM-DET-supplements
‘There is no other way to get these supplements?’

System morphemes:

ma:	negative marker	QA, RA
fi:	preposition	RA
ha	demonstrative	RA, QA
l	definite article	QA, RA

Content morphemes:

tˁiri:gah	noun ‘way’	RA
θa:njah	adjective ‘another’	QA, RA
nigdar	verb ‘can’	RA
niħasˁsˁil	verb ‘get’	RA
mukammila:t	noun ‘supplements’	SA

QA counterpart

ma:buh tˁiri:gih θa:njih nagdar na:xið minah ha-l-mukammila:t

RA counterpart

ma:fi:h tˁiri:gah θa:njah nigdar niħasˁsˁil minha ha-l-mukammila:t

SA counterpart

ʔala: ju:dʒadu tˁari:qatun ʔuxra: nastatˁi:ʕu min xila:liha: al-ħusˁu:la ʕala: ha:ðihi l-mukammila:t

In general, even though speakers of the WD seem to alternate arbitrarily between SA and the various dialects, there is a tendency to switch to SA for

interrogative particles such as *hal*, and in frequently used adverbs such as *ðˁaru:ri* ‘necessarily’. In the two examples above, the same speaker uses three codes for system morphemes within the same utterance: SA, QA, and RA are used in both sentences, and HA is present only in the system morphemes. For the first sentence, the QA and RA counterparts differ mostly in content morphemes, specifically the adverbs *b-al-ħi:l* and *marrah* which both mean ‘very’, used to intensify the RA verb *niħasˁsˁil* and the QA verb *niħta:dʒ* ‘we need’, thus giving an equivalent meaning to the SA-based adverb *ðˁaru:ri:* ‘necessarily’. However, for the second sentence, the QA and RA counterparts differ in the final vowels of the words *tˁiri:gah* ‘way’ and *θa:njah* ‘another’, and in the first vowel of the verb *nigdar* ‘we can’. The fluidity of the WD is apparent in the presence of more than two varieties in one sentence. It is also apparent in the lexical choice of the speaker to use a full dialectal ML form in the phrase *ha:ði: il-mukammila:t* in the first sentence, and a shortened form in the second sentence *ha-l-mukammila:t* ‘these supplements’.

(2) a. *ra:ħ ʔakawwir at-tamir wa ʔaħaʃʃi: maʕ-a:h il-mukassara:t*
FUT 1SG.shape in balls DET -dates and 1SG.stuff PREP-3SG.M DET-nuts
I will shape the dates into balls and stuff it with nuts’

System morphemes:

ra:ħ	future marker	RA
a(l)-	definite article	neutral
maʕ-	preposition	neutral
-a:h	3SG.M suffix pronoun	HA
il-	definite article	RA

Content morphemes:

ʔakawwir	1SG verb ‘shape into balls’	QA, RA
tamir	collective noun ‘dates’	neutral
wa	‘and’	neutral
ʔaħa ʃʃi:	verb ‘stuff’	QA, RA

mukassara:t	noun ‘nuts’	neutral

QA counterpart

b-akawwir at-tamir wa ʔaħaʃʃi: muʕ-uh al-mukassara:t

RA counterpart

ra:ħ ʔakawwir at-tamir wa ʔaħaʃʃi: maʕ-ah il-mukassara:t

HA counterpart

ħ-akawwir at-tamr wa ħ-aħaʃʃi: maʕ-a:h il-mukassara:t

SA counterpart

sa-ʔukawwiru at-tamra wa sa-ʔaħaʃʃi: maʕahu al-mukassara:t

In example (2a), the speaker employs both RA and HA as the ML. Looking into the counterpart sentences given for each of the varieties used in the example, the difference lies mainly in the future marker *ra:ħ* and the third person masculine singular suffix pronoun *-a:h* in the prepositional phrase *maʕ-a:h.*

b. *ra:ħ ʔaxazzin-uh b-aθ-θalladʒah ill-ħagg baʕdein*
FUT 1SG.store-3.SG.M.DO PREP-DET-fridge PREP-possession later
‘I will store it in the fridge for later’

System morphemes:

ra:ħ	future marker	RA
-uh	3SG.M.DO pronoun	QA
b-	preposition	QA
aθ-	determiner	neutral
ill-	preposition	QA, RA (shared by many dialects, but not SA)
ħagg	possessive particle	QA, RA
	preposition	KA

Content morphemes:

ʔaxazzin	1sg 'store'	QA, RA
θalla:dʒah	noun 'fridge'	neutral
baʕdein	noun 'later'	shared by many Arabic dialects, but not found in SA

QA counterpart

b-axazzin-uh b-aθ-θalla:dʒih ill-baʕdein

RA counterpart

ra:ħ ʔaxazzin-ah b-aθ-θalla:dʒah ill-baʕdein

KA counterpart

b-axazzin-ih b-iθ-θalla:dʒah hagg baʕdein

SA counterpart

sa-ʔuxazzinu-hu bi-θ-θalla:dʒati li-waqtin ʔa:xar

In example (2b), the speaker employs three codes for the system morphemes, namely QA, RA, and KA. In addition, the speaker uses *ill-ħagg*, which is a combined form drawing on two codes: *ill-* is a preposition found in QA and RA with the meaning 'for', and *ħagg* is a preposition with the same meaning found in KA. Note that the word *ħagg* exists in QA and RA as a possessive particle, as in *al-bait ħagg al-walad* 'the boy's house'(lit. 'the house of the boy'), but it is not used as a preposition 'for' in these varieties. However, in KA, *ħagg* is a preposition 'for', while the possessive particle is *ma:l* (Holes, 1984). Thus, the sentence 'the boy's house' in KA would be *al-bait ma:l l-walad.* In short, in example (2b) the speaker combines the QA/RA form *ill-* with the KA form *ħagg* to serve as a preposition 'for'.

In both (2a) and (b), the speaker seems to adhere to using the RA future marker *ra:ħ.* However, the speaker alternates between the HA form of the third person masculine suffix pronoun *-a:h* in the first sentence, and the QA form *-uh* in the second sentence. This indicates fluidity in the codeswitching patterns in the WD of the young QA speakers.

(3) a. *miʃ mitwaffir ʕind-ina: fikrat taqabbul li-r-raʔi: al-ʔa:xar*
NEG available PREP-1PL concept acceptance PREP-DET-opinion DET-other
‘We do not have the concept of accepting the other opinion’

System morphemes:

miʃ	negative marker	EA
ʕind	preposition	neutral
-ina	1PL suffix pronoun	neutral
li-	preposition	neutral
(l-)	determiner	neutral
al-	definite article	QA, SA

Content morphemes:

mitwaffir	adjective ‘available’	RA
fikrat	noun ‘concept’	SA
taqabbul	noun ‘acceptance’	SA
raʔi:	noun ‘opinion’	SA
ʔa:xar	adjective ‘other’	SA

QA counterpart

mahu:b imtiwaffir ʕind-ina: fikrat innina nagbal rai aθ-θa:ni:n

RA counterpart

mu: mitwaffir ʕind-ina: fikrat innina nagbal rai aθ-θa:ni:n

EA counterpart

miʃ mitwaffir ʕind-i:na: fikrat innina nitʔabbal raj in-nas it-ta:njah

SA counterpart

la: tatawaffaru ladajna: fikrat taqabbuli raʔi: al-ʔa:xar

In example (3a), the speaker employs a combination of neutral morphemes with one EA morpheme, the negative marker *miʃ*. Providing counterpart sentences for

this example was challenging, as the speaker structured the first part of the sentence using a dialectal frame (*miʃ mitwaffir ʕind-ina:*) but structured the second part of the sentence using an SA frame (*fikrat taqabbul li-raʔi: al-ʔa:xar*). Thus, to form the dialectal counterparts, *innina* 'that we' was used to connect the two parts of the sentence.

(3) b. *ha:ða: mumkin mub maudʒu:d*
DEM.M.SG probably NEG available
'This is probably not available'

System morphemes:

ha:ða:	masculine singular demonstrative	neutral
mub	negative marker	QA

Content morphemes:

mumkin	adverb 'probably'	RA, EA (and many other Arabic varieties)
maudʒu:d	adjective 'available'	neutral

QA counterpart

ha:ða: jimkin mub maudʒu:d

RA counterpart

ha:ða: mumkin mu: maudʒu:d

SA counterpart

rubbama: ha:ða: lajsa maudʒu:dan

In example (3b), the speaker chose to use the QA negative marker *mub*, while in example (3a) the same speaker uses the EA negative marker *miʃ*. The two sentences were uttered in the same discourse, separated by a number of intervening sentences. At first, example (3b) may appear to be essentially a QA sentence, since the system morpheme contains the QA negative marker *mub*. However, the RA adverb *mumkin* reveals that it is a sentence of mixed varieties (note that the other content morpheme,

maudʒu:d, is neutral as to the dialect). Moreover, in contrast to example (3a), the sentence in (3b) does not include any morphemes from SA. This seems to indicate that SA is not an essential feature of WD speech; in this way, its role is similar to the other Arabic varieties used in the WD.

Plural formation in the WD

Both in SA and in the relevant dialects, nominal plurals are formed according to many different patterns, and are largely unpredictable. Interestingly, in WD they are sometimes mixed up. Speakers sometimes use or create plural noun forms that do not exist in either SA or QA or RA. The following examples show WD plural forms that are different from the QA, SA, and RA forms:

(8) *ka:nat min ʔafðˁal at-tadʒruba:t*
3SG.F.be PREP best DET-experiences
‘It was one of the best experiences’

System morphemes:

min	preposition	neutral
a(l)-	definite article	neutral

Content morphemes:

ka:nat	3SG.F verb (to be) ‘she was’	neutral
ʔafðˁal	adjective ‘best’	SA
tadʒruba:t	noun ‘experiences’	not part of SA or a dialect

The noun *tadʒruba:t* in example (h) is unexpected and does not exist in the Arabic varieties used by the WD speakers. In SA, the plural form of *tadʒrubah* ‘the experience’ is *tadʒa:rib.* This word is borrowed from SA into QA and RA, and as such retains its SA plural form in both varieties.

(10) *ilbisi:* *ʃirra:ba:t* *ʕala:* *rdʒu:l-ik*
IMP.F.SG.wear socks PREP legs-2F.SG.POS
'Wear socks on your feet'

System morphemes:

ʕala:	preposition	SA
-ik	2SG.F possessive suffix pronoun	RA

Content morphemes:

ilbisi:	fsg imperative verb 'wear'	neutral
ʃirra:ba:t	noun 'socks'	not part of SA or a dialect
rdʒu:l	noun 'legs'	RA, HA

In example (10), there are two plural nouns. The first one *ʃirra:ba:t* 'socks' is very unusual, as it does not exist in any of the other Arabic varieties used by the speaker. The plural form of the singular word *ʃirra:bih* 'a sock' in QA is *ʃirra:b, ʃara:b* in EA, and *ʃara:ri:b* in RA and HA, while the SA counterpart is *dʒawa:rib*, and KA uses a different word, *dla:ɣa:t*. The second plural form, *rdʒu:l* 'legs', is a common plural form in RA and HA. The QA counterpart is *ridʒlein*. The word for 'leg' in many Arabic dialects is also used to refer to the foot; therefore, the SA counterpart for this sentence would be *qadamaj-ki* 'your feet' (the SA equivalent for 'your legs' would be *ʔardʒula-ki*).

A different case of unexpected constructions related to plural formation is found with the use of unit nouns vs. collective nouns. Collective nous are syntactically masculine singular, while unit nouns are feminines and have both singular and plural forms. Unit nouns are, among others, used in combination with numbers in the range $3 \leq 10$, as in SA *θala:θatu tuffa:ħa:t* 'three apples', while collective plurals are used when talking about the noun in an indefinite plural quantity, as in SA *ʔakaltu tuffa:ħan* 'I ate apples' (i.e. I ate apples in general without counting how many apples I ate).

(9) *gatˁʕi:* *min* *θala:θ* *il-xams* *tiffa:ħ*
IMP.F.SG.cut PREP three PREP-five apples
‘Cut from three to five apples’

System morphemes:

min	preposition	neutral
il-	preposition	QA, RA (shared by many Arabic dialects)

Content morphemes:

gatˁʕi:	SG.F imperative verb ‘cut’	QA, RA
θala:θ	numeral ‘three’	neutral
xams	numeral ‘five’	neutral
tiffa:ħ	noun ‘apples’	QA, RA

In example (9), the speaker uses the collective plural *tiffa:ħ* ‘apples’. The expected plural form in this situation would be the plural of the unit noun, both in SA and in the relevant Arabic dialects. In QA and RA it would be *tiffa:ħa:t* and in SA *tuffa:ħa:t*.

Unexpected plural formations were found mostly in the speech of the female group. One exception that was used almost equally between the two genders is the two nouns *an-na:s* or *al-ʕa:lam* ‘the people’, which is most of the time treated as singular feminine nouns even when used to denote a masculine or plural referent people in a masculine or plural context, e.g. *al-ʕa:lam tiʔaθθar* ‘people get affected’ (singular feminine verb) instead of *jitʔaθθaru:n* (plural masculine verb).

More notes on the lexical fluidity of the White Dialect

In general, when the young QA speakers use the WD, they tend to use more lexical items that are shared by SA and the Arabic dialects (labelled above as ‘neutral’), such as *ðˁaru:ri:* instead of *lizu:m* or *la:zim* ‘necessarily’, and *kiba:r as-sinn* instead of *ʃi:ba:n* ‘old people’. Moreover, they seem to replace the QA

preposition *bi-* 'in' with its RA equivalent *fi-,* even though both prepositions exist in SA. An example of this is the replacement of the QA prepositional phrase ma:-buh with the RA *ma:-fi:h* 'there is none'. They typically use *bi-* only when bi- precedes a noun or a determiner, as in the phrase *b-h-al-ħaja:h* 'in this life' (instead of *f-h-al-ħaja:h*).

Some of the WD speakers tend to give both the QA word and its SA or RA equivalent, combined by means of the conjunctions wa 'and' or aw 'or'. This is illustrated in the following examples (underlining denotes the equivalent words):

(4) a. *fa ʃa:fu:-hum wa ʃa:hadu:-hum*
QA + SA
'Then they saw them'

b. *ʕan ar-ridʒa:l al-musinni:n aw ʕumu:man ar-rdʒa:l al-kba:r*
SA + QA
'About the old men in general'

c. *hal bitalti: aw istamarriti:*
QA+ SA
'Did you continue?'

In some cases, speakers use the same strategy of mentioning two words or phrases together, but these two words or phrases are not semantically equivalent: they might be in the same lexical category or have a semantic association, but they are not synonymous. This situation is illustrated by the examples below:

d. *jadʒdaʕ girʃ b-al-baħar w-girʃ b-as-sifi:nih aw di:na:r b-al-baħar w-di:na:r b-as-sifi:nih*
QA + neutral
'He throws qirsh in the sea and qirsh on the ship or dinar in the sea and dinar on the ship'

The terms *girʃ* ‘qirsh’ and *di:na:r* ‘dinar’ refer to two different currencies, which are not equivalent in value. Here, *girʃ* was pronounced with the dialectal *g* not the SA *q*, which indicates that it is a dialectal word, while *di:na:r* is a neutral word. Since the speaker was narrating an ancient story, he may have used them together due to confusion about which currency was used during the era of the story. Alternatively, he may have wished to change the locality of his narration, as *girʃ* is a monetary unit of the Saudi Arabian Riyal, while *di:na:r* is the currency of several other Arab countries.

e. *luh maʕa:jir muʕajjanah wa bunu:d muʕajjanah*
SA + SA
‘It has certain standards and certain articles’

In this example, the speaker was talking about the law regarding a certain issue in his society. The word *bunu:d* refers to the articles in a certain law, while *maʕa:jir* refers to standards that are used to judge quality. The two words both apply to the semantic field of (legal) judgment, but, in general, they are not synonymous.

f. *ħarr jisˁi:b-uh difʔ jaʕni:*
neutral + SA
‘He gets hot, warm, I mean’

Here, the first uses the noun *ħarr* ‘hot’, which has a strong negative connotation in Saudi culture, and then corrects it with the SA word *difʔ* ‘warmth’, which has a more positive connotation.

This method of mentioning two (semi-)equivalents at the same time is used repeatedly by different speakers of both genders, which indicates that it is not an idiosyncratic style but a recurring feature in WD speech. There are two plausible accounts for this behaviour: either the speakers accidentally use a QA lexical item and then try to correct themselves with a shared equivalent that they are familiar with,

such as from SA or RA, or they wish to add more clarification to their speech as they are aware that they are shifting away from their natural dialect and that the form that they shift to might not convey their meaning adequately.

In a similar pattern that is specific to the male group, speakers use a common QA metaphorical phrase or proverb and describe its meaning in the following phrase, often without using any conjunction. This is illustrated in the following two examples:

(5) a. *jamsik nʕa:l-uh wi jagðˤib al-arðˤ ha:dʒ marrih misriʕ*
'He holds his shoes and grips the ground running very fast'

Here, the first part *jamsik nʕa:l-uh wi jagðˤib al-arðˤ* 'he holds his shoes and grips the ground' is a QA metaphorical phrase, of which the meaning is described in the second part: *ha:dʒ marrih misriʕ* 'running very fast'.

b. *jadxil b-wadʒh fla:n ja:xið ħagg-uh b-jid-uh*
'He enters into someone's face he takes his right with his own hands'

Here, the metaphorical phrase *jadxil b-wadʒh fla:n* 'to enter into someone's face' means that the person referred to is brave, and that he *ja:xið ħagg-uh b-jid-uh* 'takes [that which is] his right with his own hands'.

Lexical fluidity in the WD can also be seen in speakers' choices to use lexical items, including prepositions in a way that conforms neither to one of the relevant Arabic dialects, not to SA. Examples are provided in the following table:

WD utterance	SA expected form	QA expected form	exceptional behaviour	Gloss
jusabbib ɣeir ra:ħah	*jusabbibu ʕadam ar-ra:ħah*	*jisabbib ðˤeigih* (i.e, discomfort)	lexically unexpected: *ɣeir* means ‘different’ while *ʕadam* means ‘un-’	‘It causes discomfort’
ħatta jantudʒ al-qara:r	*ħatta: juttaxaðu l-qara:r*	*lein ju:xað al-qara:r*	lexically unsuitable: *jantudʒ* means ‘produced’	‘Until the decision is made’ (lit. ‘produced’)
h-al-mawa:ðˤi:ʕ ʔatitˤarraq ʕalj-ah	*ha:ðihi l-mawa:ðˤi:ʕ ʔatatˤarraqu la-ha*	*h-al-mawa:ðˤi:ʕ ʔatitˤarraq lah* ~ (*lihin*)	lexically unsuitable: *ʕalj-ah* means ‘on it’ while *la-ha* means ‘about them’	‘These subjects, I talk about them’
al-baha:ra:t li-t-tanki:h	*al-buha:ra:tu li-ʔiðˤa:fat i n-nakhah*	*al-baha:ra:t li-ʔiðˤa:fat a-nnakhih*	lexically unsuitable: the verbal noun *tanki:h* is not a grammatically accepted Arabic derivation of the noun *nakhah* ‘flavour’	‘Spices are for adding a flavour’

6.1.5 Syntactic fluidity

Syntactic fluidity in the WD can be seen in two aspects: in gender and number agreement and in sentence structure. These are discussed in turn below.

Gender and number agreement

In almost all varieties of Arabic, there are two nominal genders: masculine and feminine. All nouns require agreement in gender and number with the associated linguistic items in the utterance. SA has a very complicated set of agreement rules; the system is different, and slightly less complicated, in QA and the other Arabic dialects. For example, in QA, dual nouns take plural agreement, as in

ħitˁi: *milʕagtein* *kba:r*
IMP.F.SG.put two.spoons big.PL
'Put two big spoons'

In SA, the adjective must agree in number with the noun; thus, in SA, the adjective *kba:r* would be *kabi:ratain*, while in QA, RA, and many other Arabic dialects, dual nouns are treated as plural for the purpose of agreement, as in the example above.

Another important difference in number agreement between SA and QA and other Arabic dialects is the way the position of the subject in the sentence affects verbal agreement. In SA, if the subject is preverbal, as in *atˁ-tˁa:liba:tu ðahabna ila: l-madrasah* 'the students went to school', the verb has to agree in number with the subject; meanwhile, if the subject is postverbal, the verb only agrees in gender, for example *ðahabat atˁ-tˁa:liba:tu ila: l-madrasah*. By contrast, in QA, the verb always agrees in gender and number with its subject regardless whether the subject is preverbal or postverbal. When it comes to the WD, the speakers do not adhere consistently to either SA or QA rules of gender or number agreement. Below are some examples of fluidity in number agreement in the WD:

WD utterance	SA equivalent	QA equivalent	Gloss
ħatˁ milʕagtein malja:nih verb + dual noun +singular adjective	*wadˁaʕa milʕagataina mammlu:ʔatain* verb + dual noun + dual adjective	*ħatˁ milʕagtein malja:na:t* verb + dual noun + plural adjective	‘he puts two full spoons’
θala:θah ki:s three + singular noun	*θala:θatu ʔakja:s* three+ plural noun	*θala:θ ʔakja:s* three+ plural noun	‘three bags’

In the first example, the phrase *milʕagtein malja:nih* in the WD utterance is neither SA nor QA as the speaker used a singular adjective to agree with a dual noun. In SA, as mentioned earlier, the adjective must agree in number with the noun if it is a dual, while in QA dual nouns agree with plural adjectives.

Number agreement fluidity and gender agreement fluidity are both common in the WD. Most of the instances of fluidity found in number agreement concern dual nouns, or the use of the unexpected plural forms (discussed in the next section). However, while fluidity in gender agreement was found in the speech of all the participants, this was not the case for number agreement. The latter mostly occurred in the WD of the female group and was found less in the male group. Furthermore, it is important to note that there was both inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation in number agreement.

In terms of gender agreement, some speakers show a very high level of fluidity while others are more consistent in their choices. Moreover, a speaker of WD may demonstrate gender agreement fluidity while talking about one subject, but apply the QA or RA rules of agreement after moving to a new topic. Since the WD data were taken from social media posts on various subjects, no specific type of topic could be determined as the main controller of the level of fluidity in gender agreement in the WD. The example below illustrates the fluidity of gender agreement in the WD:

(6) *lau tarawwaʃein tru:ħ ləun asˁ-sˁabɣih*
CONJ 2SG.F.shower 3SG.F.go colour DET-dye
'If you take a shower, the colour of the hair dye will go away'

System morphemes:

lau	conjunction	neutral
a(l)-	definite article	neutral

Content morphemes:

tarawwaʃein	2SG.F verb 'take a shower'	QA, RA
tru:ħ	3SG.F verb 'go'	QA, RA
ləun	noun 'colour'	neutral
sˁabɣih	noun 'dye'	QA

In example (6), the feminine verb *tru:ħ* 'go away' does not agree with the masculine noun *ləun* 'colour'. One could argue that this gender disagreement is caused by the confusion between the masculine noun *ləun* and the feminine noun *sˁabɣih*. However, this is not a likely source of confusion for a native QA speaker, given the relationship of the verb *tru:ħ* with *ləun* rather than *asˁ-sˁabɣih* — it is the colour of the hair dye that goes away, not the dye itself. If this sentence were uttered in QA or SA, the verb would agree in gender with *ləun* 'colour', e.g. (QA): *lau tarawwaʃein jiru:ħ ləun asˁ-sˁabɣih.*

In a similar situation of fluid gender agreement in the WD, one speaker produced the following phrase:

(7) *gahwih mintahjah ta:ri:x-aha*
coffee expired date-3SG.F.POS
'Coffee with an expired date'

System morphemes:

-aha	3SG.F possessive suffix pronoun	SA, RA

Content morphemes:

gahwih	noun ‘coffee’	QA
mintahjah	adjective ‘expired’	RA
ta:ri:x	noun ‘date’	neutral

In example (7), the feminine adjective *mintahjah* ‘expired’ describes the masculine noun *ta:ri:x* ‘its date’. The speaker’s choice of the feminine adjective form is probably caused by confusion between the feminine noun *gahwih* ‘coffee’ and the masculine noun *ta:ri:x* ‘date’. The suffixed feminine pronoun *-aha* in *ta:ri:x-aha* may have contributed to this confusion: it is attached to a masculine noun *ta:ri:x* ‘date’, but it is a possessive pronoun referring to the feminine noun *gahwih*. In other words, it is the date that has expired, not the coffee itself. If this sentence were uttered in QA or RA, it could be formed in two ways: the first way would be *gahwih mintihi ta:ri:x-aha*, in which the adjective agrees with the masculine noun *ta:ri:x*; the second way would be *gahwih mintahjat at-ta:ri:x*, in which the whole adjectival phrase *mintahjat at-ta:ri:x* ‘that is expired regarding to its date’ agrees with the feminine noun *gahwih*.

Sentence structure in the WD

In general, sentences in the WD follow the structure of the Najdi dialects. However, the data collected for this study show features that would be considered ungrammatical according to the grammatical rules common to the Najdi Arabic varieties. These features are found in the morphology of the word, in the sentence order in general, and in the unexpected use of some of the QA prepositions. These features have been attested repeatedly among the WD speakers. The following example demonstrates one such common issue in the composition of WD sentences:

(11) *aʃ-ʃa:mbu:* *ħagg-kum* *tarawwaʃein ʕa:di*
DET-shampoo possession-2PL.M.POS 2SG.F.shower normally
'You take a shower normally with your shampoo'

System morphemes:

a(l)-	definite article	neutral
ħagg	possessive particle	QA, RA
-kum	2PL.M possessive pronoun	neutral

Content morphemes:

ʃa:mbu:	noun 'shampoo'	neutral (borrowed from English)
tarawwaʃein	verb 'shower'	QA, RA
ʕa:di	adverb 'normally'	neutral

In example (11), the speaker creates an inversion which is considered atypical in the grammar of the Najdi Arabic varieties. Instead of starting with the verb *tarawwaʃein* 'take a shower', the sentence starts with a topicalization, *aʃ-ʃa:mbu: ħagg-kum* 'your shampoo'. The most common sentence structure would be *tarawwaʃein ʕa:di b-aʃ-ʃa:mbu: ħagg-kum* in which a preposition *b-* is added to connect the two phrases. Another alternative formulation would be *b-aʃ-ʃa:mbu: ħagg-kum tarawwaʃein buh ʕa:di*; note that the latter is not a frequently used structure in spoken QA or RA, but perfectly grammatical. The WD sentence is atypical because it bypasses the need for the QA preposition *b-* 'with'.

Another recurring atypical construction is found where the functional status of certain adjectives that express quantity is changed from adjectives to quantifiers, as in the following sentence *tantaqil ʕan tˁari:q kiθi:r ʔaʃja:ʔ* 'it spread through a lot of things', for which the expected form would be *ʔaʃja:ʔ kiθi:rih* in which the adjective follows the noun, as in almost all Arabic varieties. This kind of construction occurs very frequently in the data with quantifiers such as *kiθi:r* 'a lot' in the previous example and *gili:l na:s* 'few people'. This feature was found in the speech of both male and female participants.

One thing that I observed in the WD data is that speakers tend to formulate longer sentences to convey their message. This could be a result of their awareness that they are shifting away from their native dialect, combined with a desire to be as clear as possible in their speech. An example of this is the tendency to reiterate nouns where it would have been possible to use a subject or an object pronoun instead. In addition, many of the sentences in the WD data are followed by a paraphrase, as in the following sentence:

Allˤa:h ħadʒab ʕan ʃaj ɣajbi: mumkin ʃaj kint ana: abi ʃaj la:kin Allˤa:h ma: aʕtˤa:ni ija:h wa h-ar-raybah ma:za:lat b-nafsi: la:kin Allˤa:h ħa:dʒbuh ʕanni
‘Allah deprived me of a metaphysical thing. It might be something that I wanted something but Allah did not give it to me and this desire is still in me but Allah deprived me of it’.

It would have been possible for the speaker to convey the message in a shorter form, for example, *mumkin ʕindi: raybah l-ʃaj wa Allah ħadʒab-ha ʕanni* ‘I might have a desire for something but Allah deprived me of it’. Many of the WD sentences were formed in a similar way. Note that it is unlikely that this would have been caused by the pressure of the moment, as the data were drawn from pre-recorded social media posts and the speakers were not improvising when they were talking to their audience: they had the chance to re-record and modify the post if it did not sound acceptable to them.

6.1.6 Phonological fluidity

Fluidity in the WD phonology can be clearly seen in the pronunciation of lexical items that are shared by SA and RA and/or QA. Specifically, it can be clearly observed where the first vowel of a word alternates between *i* and *a*. In this regard, WD speakers may alternate between two or more pronunciations of the same word, even within a single utterance. This can be seen in the case of the definite article *al-*, which is also

pronounced as *il-*, as illustrated in the following example, which has *al-xija:ra:t* with *al-* and *il-muħallija:t* with *il-* in one single sentence:

(12) *al-xija:ra:t tsˁu:m iθna:ʕaʃ sa:ʕih bas il-muħallija:t*
DET-choices 2SG.M.fast twelve hour CONJ DET-sweeteners
taksir. asˁ- sˁija:m
3SG.F.break DET-fast
'The choices are fasting for twelve hours, but the sweeteners break the fast'

System morphemes:

al-	definite article	QA, SA
bas	conjunction	QA, RA (found in many Arabic dialects)
il-	definite article	RA
a(l)-	definite article	QA, SA

Content morphemes:

xija:ra:t	noun 'choices'	SA
tsˁu:m	2SG.M verb 'fast'	neutral
iθna:ʕaʃ	numeral 'twelve'	QA, RA
sa:ʕih	noun 'hour'	neutral
muħallija:t	noun 'sweeteners'	SA
taksir	3SG.F verb 'breaks'	neutral
sˁija:m	noun 'fast'	neutral

The definite article is *al-* both in QA and SA, but *il-* in RA. However, since the article is pronounced the same in SA and QA, it is hard to tell whether it should be considered an SA pronunciation or a QA one. The alternation between *i* and *a* as first vowel is also found in content morphemes, specifically, verbs that are shared between QA and the other Arabic varieties, as in the following two examples:

(13) a. *tigdar ta:kil min θala:θ la-ʔarbaʕ wadʒba:t*
2SG.M.can 2SG.M.eat PREP three PREP-four meals
‘You can eat from three to four meals’

System morphemes:

min	preposition	neutral
la-	preposition	QA, RA

Content morphemes:

tigdar	2SG.M verb ‘can’	RA, HA
ta:kil	2SG.M verb ‘eat’	QA, RA
θala:θ	numeral ‘three’	QA, RA
ʔarbaʕ	numeral ‘four’	QA, RA
wadʒba:t	noun ‘meals’	QA,RA,HA,KA

b. *tagdar ta:kil b-atˁ-tˁari:qah alli tabɣa:-ha*
2SG.M.can 2SG.M.eat PREP-DET-way REL 2SG.M.want-3SG.F.DO
‘You can eat in the way you want’

System morphemes:

b-	preposition	QA, SA
a(l)-	definite article	QA, SA
alli	relative marker	QA, RA
-ha	3SG.F.DO pronoun	RA

Content morphemes:

tagdar	2SG.M verb ‘can’	QA
ta:kil	2SG.M verb ‘eat’	QA, RA
tˁari:qah	noun ‘way’	SA
tabɣa:	2SG.M verb ‘want’	QA, RA

In examples (13a) and (b), the speaker used the same verb with different pronunciations: in example (a) it is pronounced *tigdar* as in RA and HA, and in (b) it is pronounced *tagdar* as in QA.

Another case of this is found in the second person singular masculine independent pronoun, which is *ʔanta*: in SA. It is pronounced *ʔant* in QA, but *int* in RA and KA, and *inta* in HA and EA. The WD speakers in this study differed greatly in their choices among the forms of these personal pronouns: some used one form for a while and then switched to another within the same discourse, while others adhered to one form throughout.

In a similar situation, phonological fluidity is apparent in the feminine ending of the noun. In QA, the ending is usually *ih*, while in SA, RA, and many other Arabic dialects it is *ah*. For instance, the noun *saːʕih* 'hour' in example (l2) above was pronounced as in QA, while in SA, RA, KA, and EA it is pronounced as *saːʕah*. In the WD, speakers appear to alternate arbitrarily between the two pronunciations. Further examples are provided below.

(14) a. *il-hadaf hu: al-ħusˁuːl ʕala: ħajaːt sˁiħħijih*
DET-goal he DET-getting PREP life healthy
'The goal is getting a healthy life'

System morphemes:

il-	definite article	RA
hu:	3SG.M pronoun	neutral
al-	definite article	QA, SA
ʕala:	preposition	neutral

Content morphemes:

hadaf	noun 'goal'	neutral
ħusˁuːl	noun 'getting'	SA
ħajaːt	noun 'life'	neutral
sˁiħħijih	adjective'healthy'	QA

b. *min al-ʔaʃja:ʔ alli la-ha: ʕala:qah b-sˁiħħat al-baʃrih*
PREP DET-things REL PREP-3SG.F. relationship PREP-health DET-skin
‘From the things that are related to skin health’

System morphemes:

min	preposition	neutral
al-	definite article	QA, SA
alli	relative marker	QA, RA
la-	preposition	neutral
-ha:	3SG.F suffix pronoun	SA, RA
b-	preposition	neutral

Content morphemes:

ʔaʃja:ʔ	noun ‘things’	SA
ʕala:qah	noun ‘relationship’	SA
sˁiħħat	noun ‘health’	neutral
baʃrih	noun ‘skin’	QA

In example (14a) the speaker pronounces the adjective *sˁiħħijih* as in QA, rather than using a pronunciation shared by SA and the other Arabic dialects, namely *sˁiħħijah.* In example (14b), the same speaker uses the word with both pronunciations, i.e. once with *a* and another time with *i.* In the word *ʕala:qah*, the speaker uses the vowel *a* before the final feminine *h*, but in the word *baʃrih,* the same speaker uses the vowel *i* before the final feminine *h*. Among the female speakers, this alternation between the two pronunciations (*-ih* and *-ah*) almost never occurred in loan nouns from SA; this can be clearly seen in words containing the case of the SA sound *q*, such as *θaqa:fah* ‘culture’ and *qija:dah* ‘leadership’. However, this approach does not seem to be applied by male WD speakers, as they tend to alternate between the *a* and *i* vowels before final feminine *h* even in words from SA: the word *ʕala:qah* was pronounced as *ʕala:qih* by three male speakers. This is shown in the examples below.

(15) a. *ma:-luh ʕala:qih b-alli ħasʿal*
'He has no relation to what has happened'

b. al- ʕala:qih tirgil
'The relationship is shaking'

c. *tagdar tigu:l ʕala:qih ʕa:birah*
'You can say it is a temporary relationship'

In the third example above, both the noun *ʕala:qih* 'relationship' and the adjective *ʕa:birah* 'temporary' are borrowed from SA. In *ʕala:qih*, the speaker uses *-ih* rather than SA *-ah.* However, he does not do so in the word *ʕa:birah.*

6.2 General notes about the fluidity of the WD

Each individual's use of the WD is unique. Moreover, every speaker of the WD shows intra-speaker variation, even within a single utterance. Sometimes, a speaker uses more SA features than dialectal ones in his/her speech; other times, s/he creates new linguistic forms and mixes them with forms from SA and other Arabic dialects.

In most cases, the WD of the young QA speakers is a mix of the following Arabic varieties: Standard Arabic, Qassimi Arabic, Riyadh Arabic, Hijazi Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic, and Egyptan Arabic. A WD sentence tends to use system morphemes from different varieties and that contradicts the predictions of the MLF that speakers utilize the system morphemes from a single variety and which referred to as the Matrix language. What determines how much of each form is used within a WD utterance appears is unclear. Speakers seem to use more SA and RA characteristics than from the other dialects, including their own QA. When it comes to the SA and the RA characteristics in the WD speech, the data do not point to major differences between the two types of audiences. In both sets of recordings (i.e. targeting the two different audiences), the WD speech fluctuated as speakers moved from one discussion topic to another. Neither the topic of discussion, nor the type of education a speaker received

affected the linguistic feature of their WD. One could argue that the limited use of QA characteristics in the WD could be linked to the speakers’ exposure to the other Arabic varieties; however, this does not explain why there was inter-speaker variation in the use of SA characteristics in their WD speech even though they were exposed to a similar amount of SA via school and media.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a further linguistic analysis of the WD used by the young QA speakers, which goes beyond the use of the six variables as presented in the previous chapter. This chapter aimed to shed light on the main characteristic of the WD used by the young QA speakers, which is its fluidity. Results show that the young speakers use more than one Arabic variety in their WD speech, and that SA might not be a necessary variety in a WD sentence. This mix of Arabic varieties is detected in terms of system morphemes as the grammatical frame of the sentence, as well as in the content morphemes such as verbs, nouns, and adjectives. The data show clearly that the WD tends to use system morphemes from several varieties in one single sentence, which is against the predictions of the MLF. The participants in this investigation shared a core set of Arabic varieties, including three Saudi dialects (QA, RA, and HA) and other Arabic varieties (such as SA, KA, and EA). However, the occasional use of other varieties, in addition to the nature of the WD as a fluid form, seems to indicate that the WD may include more varieties than just QA, RA, HA, SA, KA, and EA, depending on speakers’ exposure or attitudes to these other varieties. Therefore, with a larger group of participants and more extensive data collection, there will no doubt emerge elements from further varieties in the WD speech of young QA speakers besides the ones mentioned above.