# The "White Dialect" of young Arabic speakers from Qassim (Saudi Arabia)

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**Chapter 7**

## What young Qassimi speakers say about the White Dialect

### Introduction

This chapter addresses some issues that lie beyond the linguistic analysis of the White Dialect (WD). In this chapter, I discuss the perspectives of three different groups regarding the WD: the young Qassimi Arabic (QA) speakers (i.e., the young participants in this research), people in the media, and Arabic linguists

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part is dedicated to the perspectives of the young QA speakers, which are ascertained by analysing the open interview conducted for this investigation (i.e., the third stage of data collection mentioned in Section 2.2.3). The first part concludes with a brief comparison of the results of the analysis in this chapter with the results of the linguistic analysis in Chapter 6. The second part concerns the WD according to public discourse. The chapter concludes by addressing the three research questions presented above.

### 7.1 PART 1: Young QA speakers' perspectives on the WD

### 7.1.1 Introduction

One of the main goals of the research interview conducted for this investigation (see Section 2.2.3) was to get the perspective of the young QA speakers themselves regarding the WD. As discussed in Chapter 2, the research interview was the final step in the data collection process for this research. After having submitted their recorded social media posts, the 20 participants in this investigation were all interviewed

individually in a face-to-face meeting. The interview comprised several questions that were similar to the main research questions presented above. The rationale for this was to enable a direct comparison between speakers' perceptions of the WD and the results of my analysis. All participants across the two gender groups were asked the same questions. Since the interview was open-ended, some participants were asked additional questions to elicit extra information concerning certain points that they had mentioned, or to clarify certain answers.

### 7.1.2 Method

Due to the heterogeneity of the data collected from the interviews, I used the thematic analysis approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the data. This approach involves six phases of analysis. The table below shows the six phases and how are they applied in this research.

| Phases of thematic analysis | How the phases were applied in this study |
|---|---|
| 1. Familiarising oneself with the data | I transcribed all the data. After transcribing all the recorded interviews, I read the transcriptions several times and wrote down my initial ideas. |
| 2. Generating initial codes | I coded all the transcribed data. First, I coded the semantic content (i.e. what is expressed directly by the speaker), followed by the latent content (i.e. the underlying assumptions and concepts that were not uttered directly by the speaker). |
| 3. Searching for themes | I organised the codes into initial themes. Some of the themes were driven by the research questions, while others were driven by the data itself. |

| 4. Reviewing themes | I generated a thematic map to check whether the themes fitted with all the coded data. At this stage, I noticed that some of my themes needed to be subdivided, while others needed to be eliminated from the analysis as there was insufficient evidence to support them. |
| --- | --- |
| 5. Defining and naming themes | I considered the themes from a general perspective, and how they fit into the bigger picture of the research. I also defined the themes with names that clearly describe the nature of each one. |
| 6. Producing the report | I produced the report, providing my analysis along with extracts from the interviews to support my narrative. |

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the process of finding the main themes may be conducted in two ways: inductive or theoretical. The inductive approach means that the themes are derived from the data. In other words, in the inductive approach, the analyst codes the data without attempting to integrate these codes into an existing theoretical framework. By contrast, the theoretical approach to thematic analysis means coding with the intention to fit these codes into a particular theoretical framework. Braun and Clarke add that choosing the most suitable approach depends on the purpose of coding. If the researcher codes in order to answer certain questions, then the theoretical approach is appropriate. If the researcher codes in order to find themes beyond these questions and to progress to a deeper analysis, then the inductive approach is appropriate.

In the thematic analysis of the interviews in this study, I follow an inductive approach. Four main themes were identified in this study, which will be presented in the following section. It is important to mention that some of these themes comprise a combination of semantic and latent codes, while others only comprise semantic codes.

### 7.1.3 Analysis

**Theme 1: The ideology of the White Dialect**

The term "ideology" will be used in the following to refer to speakers' beliefs regarding the WD, which may or may not align with reality; that is, the beliefs could be proven correct or incorrect. The ideology of the WD varies between speakers. This difference might be caused by the fluidity of the WD, as discussed in Chapter 6. In particular, when the speakers were asked to describe their WD, their answers varied. The majority of the speakers (11 out of 20) think of it as a dialect that has emerged from their attempt to speak the Arabic variety that is spoken in the capital Riyadh (Riyadh Arabic, henceforth RA). The following excerpts from the interviews serve to illustrate this view. The code following the citation refers to the participant who gave it (see 2.2.1).

> "In my mind, I think that I speak the dialect of Riyadh, but somehow, they know that I am from Qassim. I believe this is the White Dialect." FN5

> "The White Dialect is that [which I speak] when I try to hide my Qassimi dialect and try to speak the dialect of Riyadh." MN1

> "The White Dialect is that [which] is understood by everyone. In other words, I speak a similar dialect to Riyadh people." FN1

> "I try to speak the dialect of Riyadh. I avoid the Qassimi long vowels and use the Riyadh vocabulary." FR4

> "When I go to Riyadh and try to speak like them, they tell me: you are Qassimi. I try to soften my dialect and avoid the use of *ts*, but it shows against my will." MR4

Other speakers (4 out of 20) state that the WD is actually another term for RA. Their belief is based on the fact that Riyadh is a multi-dialectal city and their perception that the WD is a result of this dialectal mix. They define the WD as "the dialect of Riyadh", which all Arabic speakers are able to understand. This can be seen in the following excerpts from the interviews:

"The dialect of Riyadh is the White Dialect. I believe it is the most understood dialect." MR2

"It is the dialect of Riyadh because it is neutral. People there are mixed."FN3

"My children will speak the White Dialect because I am going to live and work in Riyadh." FR2

"The White Dialect is the dialect of Riyadh people. Those people have ethnic origins before they become Riyadh citizens." MN2

Meanwhile, other interviewees (5 out of 20) describe the WD as a dialect without a homeland. It is only these speakers who see it as a dialect of flexible forms. Their description of the WD focuses on the purpose of its use, which is to be understood by all listeners. They also describe it as an intermediate dialect that does not belong to anyone. This view can be seen in the following interview excerpts:

"The dialect of Riyadh is not the White Dialect. The White Dialect is the dialect that is understood by all people." MN4

"The White Dialect is the dialect that is understood and used by all people. It depends on where you are; if you are in Riyadh, you change it to be similar to the Riyadh dialect, if you are in Mecca, you adapt your dialect to fit with

Mecca people. The people of Riyadh give up their dialect for the White Dialect. It is the meeting point of all the Saudi dialects." MR1

"Part of it is making my dialect similar to the Riyadh dialect. The Riyadh dialect does not represent me as I am not one of them. I use the White Dialect because I want people to understand me." FR5

"It is the dialect that does not have any aspects that are specific to a certain region. It is similar to the dialect of Riyadh, but my White Dialect is not the dialect of Riyadh." FR1

"It is not a Qassimi dialect or a Riyadh dialect. It is a mix from here and there." FN4

Even though the WD speakers vary in their ideology, they all agree on one point: the WD is related in one way or the other to RA. This relationship could be attributed to their perception of the linguistic situation in Riyadh as multi-dialectal, or because of the political influence of RA as the dialect spoken in the capital. However, even though the speakers differed in their descriptions of the WD, they were all in agreement when asked how the dialect is formed. They all reported that it represents the process of avoiding sounding Qassimi, by avoiding the use of vocabulary or linguistic features that are exclusive to Qassimi Arabic. Some of the interviewees also reported that the WD involves the use of some Standard Arabic (SA) and English lexical items, depending on the situation. Their perspective on how the WD is formed is revealed in the following excerpts:

"I speak normally without Qassimi vocabulary and avoid using *ts*." MR5

"I avoid Qassimi speech. I say *laha*: instead of *lah*." (*laha*: ~ *lah* 'for her') MR3

"I try to make the dialect lighter; no Qassimi words or sounds." MN5

During the interviews, the verb *atsaːtsiː* was used multiple times by the female participants. Literally, this term refers to the use of *ts* rather than its variant *k* in the stem or in the 2SG.F pronominal suffix. Metaphorically, the term is used to refer to the use of pure QA in speech. The sound *ts* in QA seems to be a stereotypical feature in QA, as it was the first sound provided by all the participants when they were asked to mention the main characteristics of QA. This is illustrated by the excerpts below:

> *al-lahdʒih al-beiðˤa hiː muħaːwalat innits maː tiguliːn innits tahardʒiːn b-al-kaːʃ bidaːl al-tsa*
> 'The White Dialect is the attempt that you make to try not to use *ts*. Use *k* instead.' FN5

> *antiː ʃaxsˤijjih kibiːrih b-tagˤidiːn itsaːtsiːn*
> 'You are an elite person, are you going to use *ts*?' FN3

**Theme 2: Reasons for using the White Dialect**

The codes in this theme comprise both semantic and latent codes. In other words, some of the reasons for using the WD were uttered directly by the speakers, while others were identified through their discourse. The majority of speakers mentioned more than one reason for using the WD. However, all 20 participants mentioned that the main reason for using the WD is to ease communication. They believe that QA has many linguistic features that might not be understood by people who do not speak the dialect, as demonstrated by the following extracts from the interviews:

"It is a dialect that eases communication." MN1

"I use the White Dialect because it is easier for the people I am talking to." FR4

"I try to pay attention to the way I talk in order to be understood by the person in front of me." MR5

Four of the 20 speakers mentioned hiding where they come from as a reason for using the WD. They mentioned that at the beginning of the conversation it is better if the interlocutor does not know where they are from. For some speakers, the possibility to hide their Qassimi origins seems to be associated with the expression of their individuality. This is illustrated in the following examples:

"I have to change my dialect to hide my identity." MN2

"When I was younger, I used to talk like old Qassimi women. Now, I have enrolled in the university. I have changed. I will be a doctor. I have to use the White Dialect." FR1

"Old Qassimi speakers speak like us with different vocabulary, but we are more intelligible than them. Their generation did not mix with others. Their social surroundings are limited, but we have social media." MR2

"My White Dialect does not indicate whether I am from Qassim or Riyadh. I do not hide that I am Qassimi because I am ashamed of it, but because I have mixed with others and have changed." FR5

Another reason for the use of the WD, mentioned by 7 of the 20 participants, is that it provides them with more social value and acceptance. Speakers believe that the sense of formality that the WD adds to their conversations confers social value,

especially in the context of a classroom or a governmental institution. For them, QA is too local and informal, meaning that it might bring a sense of impoliteness to the conversation. This issue will be examined from a different perspective under Theme 3 below. The following are excerpts from the interviews relating to this point:

"They might understand my QA, but I see it as more polite to use the White Dialect with them." FN1

"The White Dialect is more formal when giving a presentation. They will not respect me as much [if I use Qassimi Arabic] as when I present using the White Dialect." FN2

"If you grow socially, you have to change your Qassimi Arabic." FN3

"The reason is: it is prestigious and more formal [*rasmijjih ʔakθar*]." MR4

"I do not like to speak Qassimi Arabic outside Qassim. If they know that I am from Qassim, they will not accept me." FR2

"My sister uses [the White Dialect] to be socially accepted. If they know that you are Qassimi, they label you." FR3

"In formal situations I use the White Dialect, especially when I meet someone for the first time. They will not accept me if I tell them that I am Qassimi, especially at the beginning of our conversation." FN5

Speakers' fear of social rejection seems to be caused by their awareness of the stereotypical images of Qassimi people among Saudis from other regions. Based on the speakers' answers in the interviews, the Qassimis are known as being rich and smart, but also stingy, racist, narrow-minded, religiously intolerant and opportunistic. This seems to be the main reason for the use of the WD, as it was found both in the

semantic and latent codes. Some of the speakers believe that these are just stereotypes that were created by the other Saudis, while others consider these stereotypes as reflecting true characteristics of Qassimi people. It emerged very clearly that the younger generation wish to present themselves as being open and accepting of other people, and they aimed to show this by giving up their QA. This perspective is revealed in the following quotations from the interviews:

"The reputation of the Qassimi people is very bad. A White Dialect user might not want to be judged." FN3

"Qassimi Arabic is related to intolerance. Its people are not accepting of others." MN3

"The stereotypical image of the Qassimi people is religious extremism" MR1

"The Qassimi man is so rich, he is conceited." MN4

"They view us on social media as being too religious, complicated, and intolerant, and as having obtained all the important positions in the country. I want them to know that we, the new generation, are different from the older one." MN5

"I want to distance myself from the stereotypical image of being intolerant." MR3

"For example, you are going to meet some people for the first time: you do not want them to have in their minds the same things that the people of this particular dialect are famous for." FN4

A few speakers revealed that they use the WD as a form of modest behaviour: believing that the Qassimi people do in fact hold a higher position in society, they felt it necessary to adapt their dialect to convey a lower social status that they perceived as equal to that of their interlocutors. Meanwhile, a few other speakers use the WD as a way to protect themselves from the negative judgments that others may have of the Qassimi people. The following excerpts illustrate these attitudes:

> "I have to use the White Dialect because people hate us. They are jealous of us. We obtained most of the important positions in the country." MR4

> "I do prefer, at the beginning, that he does not know where I am from. Once he gets comfortable and he starts to know my manners, I tell him that I am from Qassim and I switch back to Qassimi Arabic." FN5

> "My uncle works in Al Qurayyat[9]. He said: when they ask about my origin, I do not tell them that I am Qassimi. They hate Qassimis and would like to kill them." MN4

> "When people know that you are from Qassim they might try to deceive you, especially when you try to purchase something—you are rich." MR5

**Theme 3: The White Dialect in the diglossic situation of Arabic**

Arabic-speaking societies are typically diglossic. This diglossia involves two varieties of the language: Standard Arabic (SA), the formal or 'high' form of the language used in official contexts and media, and colloquial Arabic, which is the informal variety of Arabic used in daily life. In this study, the participants revealed that the WD is the formal way of speech that they use the most, or would most like to hear, in classrooms and in governmental institutions. For them, 'pure' SA speech confers a negative type of formality on a given situation. However, the WD is also used in informal situations;

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[9] Al Qurayyat is a city located in the northern area of Saudi Arabia.

this contrasts with the situation in the typical diglossic Arabic situation, where colloquial Arabic is the preferred choice when the context is informal. Thus, within Ferguson's H and L model of diglossia (1959), the WD would still be a diglossic L variety, but a prestigious and more formal variant of it. It is used as a spoken form in formal settings, such as in universities; at the same time, it is used informally in daily conversations. Nonetheless, while the WD seems to be a more prestigious (or 'higher') variety than QA, it is not at the same level as SA, since it is not used across all H domains. For example, it is used by university professors as a spoken form, but not in written materials and papers. In fact, it is used as a written form only in informal settings on social media. The QA speakers mentioned that they prefer the WD to QA in informal written contexts, as certain Qassimi sounds (such as *ts* and *dz*) do not have representative letters in the Arabic writing system.

The position of the WD as a prestigious variety is not stable in all contexts, and the WD speakers are aware of this instability. On the one hand, some speakers revealed that they often switch      to QA when they tell jokes or try to be sarcastic; moreover, using the WD with Qassimi friends or family members would elicit a negative attitude and might make them the target of mockery or teasing. On the other hand, the participants report that their friends are accepting, and sometimes supportive, of the practice of switching to the WD when talking to people outside the QA community or in formal contexts. The speakers also report that using some SA and English words or phrases in the WD does not affect its level of formality. This theme is exhibited in the following extracts from the interviews:

> "If the professor uses Qassimi Arabic in the classroom, I will feel like he is joking. I will not take him seriously. The Qassimi dialect is what I use over a cup of tea while chewing seeds[10]." MN2

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[10] The phrase "chewing seeds" has a cultural association of informality in the Qassimi community. Chewing seeds is an activity that friends or family members enjoy during social gatherings or while watching TV.

"Sometimes, I use a few English words, depending on the subject." MN1

"Sometimes I unintentionally use a few SA words when I lose control of what I'm saying, then I go back to my White Dialect." MR3

"I have a Syrian friend. I spontaneously switch to the White Dialect when I talk to her, sometimes even when we are joking." FR1

"In writing, if I say *ʃ-axba:r-ah* ['how is she'], they think that I am talking about a male although I am talking about a girl. The one who is reading cannot hear my pronunciation. I can avoid the issue of misunderstanding by using *-ha* [i.e., using the RA form of the pronoun]

"He who uses pure Qassimi Arabic is always funny. I feel it is a dialect that provides its speaker with charisma, especially in telling jokes." FR2

"The sound *k* does not fit in a joke, while *ts* makes a joke funnier. It becomes very spontaneous." FN5

"I feel annoyed by those who change their speech among us. Speaking neatly is good, but do not be pretentious." FN1

"I feel like it all depends on the situation. If I am surrounded by Qassimi people, I will speak in Qassimi Arabic, but if there are other Arabs, I have to speak in an Arabic that they can understand." MN3

"One of my old friends speaks with me using *ts*, but when a new Qassimi friend comes to her she switches to *k* … she's too shallow." FN4

"With my close friends, we all *intsa:tsi:* [use *ts*], but with the other girls in the university I use the sound *k*. However, in my voice messages on

WhatsApp I avoid the sound *ts* even if I am sending [a message] to my mother. Someone might be around my mother and hear my voice message." FN2

"I unintentionally switch with people. For example, if I sit with an old Qassimi woman, I have to use pure Qassimi Arabic and no English words at all. Did you notice? When I just said 'an old Qassimi woman' I used -*ha* [i.e. using the RA form of the pronoun] — that is my true dialect. Qassimi Arabic reveals itself when I am talking to my close friends, but in a classroom presentation, I feel it does not fit." MR1

**Theme 4: Attitudes towards the White Dialect**

The WD users express three different attitudes towards the WD: positive, negative, and neutral. Positive attitude is expressed when the WD is used in the appropriate contexts, such as in classrooms and governmental institutions, while negative attitude is expressed when the WD is used with close friends and family. As for the neutral attitude, this emerges when the speakers feel that the use of the WD is optional. This optionality is seen when speakers are aware of the people who may overhear their conversation—for instance, when a QA speaker has a conversation with a family member that takes place outside the Qassim region, such as at a restaurant in the capital Riyadh or at the airport. In this case, switching to the WD is a personal choice. The following examples illustrate a neutral attitude towards the WD:

"If my brother speaks with me in Riyadh city using the White Dialect, I do not feel it is something negative, even though I do not feel that it is a necessity. For me, my dialect is part of my personality, why would I change it for the [other] people?" FR2

"When I go to Jeddah city to [visit] Qassimi relatives who live there, of course *atsa:tsi:* [I use *ts*]. Sometimes I switch to the White Dialect." FR1

"In Riyadh with Qassimi people, of course I will speak in Qassimi Arabic …
In the southern areas, I might speak in the White Dialect." MR4

### 7.1.4 Discussion

Taken together, the four themes discussed in this part suggest that QA is an in-group code that is only accepted when talking to other QA speakers within the Qassim region, while the WD is the out-group code that is used with non-QA speakers and in a few formal settings within Qassim (such as when giving presentations at university and in governmental institutions). The four themes also suggest that the young QA speakers' attitudes to the WD encompass two main dimensions: communicative necessity, and negative attitudes to QA. In using the WD, young QA speakers seem to seek other communicative functions beyond mutual intelligibility. They seem to be aware that QA is not that difficult to understand for speakers of other Arabic varieties, especially within Saudi Arabia. However, the WD seems to be necessary to achieve fully effective communication with non-QA speakers—a purpose that QA fails to fulfil. Through the analysis of the four themes, it is clear that young QA speakers associate the QA dialect with negative characteristics that they believe hinder their social growth or affect their social status. Yet, by using the WD rather than shifting to an existing prestigious dialect (such as RA), it seems they can express their individuality as Qassimis who diverge from the stereotyped character of Qassimi people.

It is informative to briefly compare the findings of the current analysis with those in Chapter 6, with regard to the definition of the WD. As described under Theme 1 above, the young QA speakers offered three different definitions of the WD: first, that it is the result of their attempt to speak RA; second, that "White Dialect" is simply another term for RA; and third, that it is a dialect without a homeland. Compared to the results discussed in Chapter 6, the first definition comes closest to the reality of the WD; however, it is still not a fitting description for the phenomenon. As discussed in Chapter 6, the WD speech of the QA speakers indeed contains features from RA,

but it also has other features from Hijazi Arabic (HA), Kuwaiti Arabic (KA) and Egyptian Arabic (EA). If the WD was merely the result of QA speakers' attempts to switch to RA, then it is unclear why their speech would include these other varieties. As for the third definition proposed by participants, it does not seem to fit the WD: in Chapter 6 it was demonstrated that, while the WD may include features that do not belong to any variety (such as the formation of plurals), most of the features in a given WD sentence belong to specific varieties spoken in certain geographical areas.  In sum, the three definitions provided by WD speakers do not correspond fully with the results of the WD analysis in Chapter 6. As for how the WD speech is formulated, the opinions provided by the QA young participants largely concurred with our findings in Chapters 5 and 6. In particular, they were all in agreement regarding the fact that WD speech involves shifting away from the stigmatised QA feature *ts*, which is indeed part of the WD formulation process (discussed in Section 8.3.2).

**7.2 PART 2: White Dialect according to public discourse**

The term *al-lahdʒah al-baidˤa:ʔ* 'the White Dialect' is used extensively by TV presenters and social media influencers to refer to their speech style. Even though they do not all speak in exactly the same way, there is general consensus that it involves code-mixing between SA and dialectal forms. As for the purpose of using what they call WD, there seems to be agreement that it is a meeting point for the various spoken Arabic dialects; in addition, some believe that the use of the WD stems from a low level of fluency in SA among media presenters.

In this section, I discuss opinions and descriptions of the WD as imagined in public discourse, including both Saudis and non-Saudis. These are all taken from written articles authored by these people, with the exception of one that was expressed in a YouTube video. Note that, since the views were mostly extracted from written articles and not live recordings, it was not possible to provide examples of how these people use the WD in their spoken media communication, or to determine if their views correspond with how they actually use the WD.

Ghlees (2014), a linguist and a journalist, states in an online article in Sabr digital newspaper, that Arab television presenters are not supposed to use their vernacular in the media; by using a form of Arabic that might not be intelligible to all Arabic speakers, the presenter's status may be negatively impacted. Ghlees also adds that since SA is not an easy form of Arabic for all speakers, television presenters use the WD; he describes this as a very simplified form of SA without case-marking [*iʕra:b*], and which avoids the use of salient consonants in certain words—for example, a KA speaker speaking in this manner would use SA *dʒ* instead of KA *j*. Ghalom (2014), an Arabic poet and author, states in an online article that the WD is a language that does not need Arabic dictionaries to be understood, as it is directed to both uneducated people and highly educated intellectuals. Rahmah (2015), a journalist, states in an online article that the WD is a new dialect that is used in the media, such as in television interviews, songs, online forums, press interviews, responses to readers, and much more. Rahmah sees the WD as basically a form of SA, but involving a mixture of several dialects with some English terms and some modern youth expressions. She also adds that the need for the WD arose or increased with the enormous openness provided by modern means of communication: as people encountered the difficulty of understanding local dialects, they invented the WD to ease communication. She adds that the label "White" gives the impression that it does not carry a particular identity. In his online newspaper article discussing why Saudi advertising content fluctuates between SA and WD, Alfelou (2020), a copywriter & economy reporter in an online magazine, states that "White Dialect" is a relatively recent term that has been invented by people in the marketing sector, who wish to direct their content to consumers both in Saudi Arabia and other Arabic-speaking countries. Alfelou defines the WD as a dialectal form that is highly mixed with SA, and which is understood by all Saudis. Al-Osaimi (2022), a Saudi sport reporter, describes WD in an online article for alarabiya.net as a mixture between SA and the vernacular forms, and comments that this WD has provided the people of different Saudi regions with mutual intelligibility, in contrast to the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia three decades ago. Al-Osaimi states that the WD is affected by the dialects

spoken in Riyadh (i.e. RA) and Mecca (i.e. HA), which are the two most culturally dominant cities in Saudi Arabia.

In a video uploaded to his YouTube channel, Khaled Alnajjar (2021), a freelance voice commentator who has worked in thirteen Arabic channels and three radio stations, discusses what he believes to be the nature of the WD. He describes it as a form of "normal" SA without word-final case marking and with the possibility to use dialectal consonants and lexical items. Alnajjar states that WD speech should not be considered SA speech, and that it should not be used for formal voiceovers. In addition, he refers to the WD by a different name, namely *al-fusˤħa: an-na:ʕimah* 'soft SA'. The following extract is part of an example of WD speech that he provides in this video:

(1) a. *nuraħħib      bikum      fi:     haða:    al-liqa:ʔ     al-dʒadi:d*

　　　1PL.welcome PREP.2M.PL PREP M.SG.DEM DET-interview DET-new.M.SG
　　　*ʕabr ʔiða:ʕat   kaða wa  kaða*
　　　PREP broadcast DEM  and  DEM
　　'We welcome you to this interview via such-and-such broadcast'

b. *natakallam b-ʔislu:b ħur biɣair  quju:d     wa bi-luɣah     fusˤħa:*
　　1PL.talk    PREP-style free without restrictions and PREP-language standard
　　'We talk in a free style without restrictions, using Standard Arabic'

c. *ma allaði:   jamnaʕ      an  jaku:n  l-il-fan     ħurmah  wa*
　　NEG REL.SG.M 3SG.M.prevent CONJ 3SG.M.be PREP-DET-art sanctity  and
　　*quju:d*
　　restrictions
　　'What prevents art from having sanctity and restrictions?'

d. *marħaba aʕtˤʕi:-na        raʔj-ak        law  samaħt      fi:*
   hello   IMP.SG.give-1PL.DOopinion-2SG.M.POS CONJ 2SG.M.allow PRE
   *haða:*
   DEM
   'Hello! Please give us your opinion on this'

e. *qul        haða:    liqa:ʔ   ħur jixlitˤ      il-jimi:n  b-il-jasa:r*
   IMP.SG.M.say M.SG.DEM interview free  3SG.M.mix DET-right PREP-DET-left
   'Say this is a free interview that mixes the right side with the left'

Alnajjar's examples correspond to his description of WD speech in the media. They are indeed SA sentences without case marking and a few dialectal consonants. The pure SA counterparts of these five WD examples are provided below, with the differences between the WD and pure SA forms indicated in bold:

(a) *nuraħħib**u** bikum  fi: ha:ða: l-liqa:ʔ**i** l-dʒadi:d**i** ʕabr**a** ʔiða:ʕat**i** kaða: wa kaða:.*

(b) *natakallam**u** bi-ʔislu:b**in** ħurr**in** biɣair**i** quju:d**in** wa bi-luɣat**in** fusˤħa:*

(c) *ma: allaði: jamnaʕ**u** ʔan jaku:n**a** li-l-fan**ni** ħurma**tun** wa quju:d**un***

(d) *marħaba**n** aʕtˤʕi:-na: raʔja-k**a** law ʔaðinta fi: ha:ða:*

(e) *qul ha:ða: liqa:ʔ**un** ħur**run** jaxlitˤ**u** l-jami:n**a** bi-l-jasa:r**i***

However, Alnajjar does not provide many examples of WD speech that include code-mixing between SA and dialectal forms. This can be attributed to his fluency in SA. The word *samaħt* 'allow' in example (d) can be considered SA, but in most pure SA sentences, the verb *ʔaðinta* is used instead. Of the five examples above, (e) is the only one that shows the mix between SA and dialects that Alnajjar mentions. In particular, the first vowel in *jixlitˤ* and the determiner and first vowel in *il-jimi:n* are borrowed from Alnajjar's mother tongue, Jordanian Arabic, and may also exist in other Arabic varieties. Meanwhile, the rest of the sentences given by Alnajjar are SA-

oriented; in other words, their grammatical structure and most of their lexical items come from SA.

The WD has not received much attention from linguists in general, and most Arabic linguists who have discussed it as a phenomenon do not provide a linguistic analysis of the WD that they are discussing. Rather, they speak about it in general terms, providing their observations but no analysis of WD speech. As a result, most of their descriptions do not provide a clear definition or analysis of what the WD actually is, but can serve here as primary sources for how they see the WD. To my knowledge, there are only two papers that are entirely dedicated to the topic. One is by Bin-taleb (2020) an Arabic linguist from Saudi Arabia, and the other is by Farraj (2016), an Arabic linguist from Egypt. In general, all accounts of the WD by Arabic linguists, including these two, refer to something similar to Educated Spoken Arabic (ESA) or intermediate levels of Arabic, as commonly analysed in Arabic linguistics (see 8.2.1). All of those who discussed the WD seem to agree that the WD moves towards clarity and simplicity for all the Arabic speakers by giving up dialectal forms and involves borrowing from SA. Bin-taleb (2020) highlights that the definition of the WD is not clear among its users. Nonetheless, she expresses her own attitude towards the WD as a linguistic phenomenon: she states that if the WD refers to a simplified form of SA that avoids complex or high-register lexical items, then it does not constitute a "threat" to SA, but if the WD refers to a mix between SA and the various Arabic dialects, then it is "a disaster" that might affect SA negatively (2020, 9). Farraj (2016), on the other hand, perceives the WD positively and defines it as a spoken middle Arabic dialect that depends heavily on the use of common Arabic vocabulary, such as is understood by speakers of the different Arabic varieties, and which falls in the middle between SA and the Arabic dialects. Both Bin-taleb (2020) and Farraj (2016) approach the WD in relation to SA. Bin-taleb views the WD based on personal views without providing a linguistic analysis on how WD affects SA; meanwhile, Farraj provides some linguistic features of the WD, but these seem to be based on casual observation, and no linguistic analysis of WD speech in a specific community is provided.

The WD was discussed in Arabic related podcasts or literally articles and was also described as a middle Arabic. For instance, Al-Shamsan (2019) refers to the White Dialect as *al-luɣah al-baidˤa:ʔ* 'White Arabic' and *al-luɣah aθ-θa:liθah* 'the third language' and describes it as: a simplified form of SA that drops the strict SA grammatical rules and allows the use of dialectal words with Arabic roots. Alsaaeidi (2022) views the WD as the Arabic of globalisation and the media that does not adhere to SA grammatical rules such as case marking. Abdel Nasser (2017) describes the WD as a form of Arabic that has SA as its base and a mixture of different dialects and some English terms commonly used by young people. She adds that WD speakers use lexical items from SA but with different pronunciation, as there are some Arabic consonants that are difficult for non-fluent SA speakers to pronounce.

To summarise, in contrast to the young QA speakers, the majority of public discourse seems to perceive the WD as an Arabic variety that basically moves towards clarity and simplicity by giving up dialectal and adopting more SA borrowings. Moreover, this view seems to correspond to the descriptions provided above by journalists considering that most of the Arabic used in official media is purely SA in written forms, or SA speech that is mixed with dialectal forms for audio and video forms. That is to say, the main language is always SA. Note that this is the opposite of the WD used by the young QA speakers, in which SA does not play a major role in sentence formation (see Chapter 6).

One may conclude from this overview that the term White Dialect is used to refer to different ways of speaking in the public discourse of media persons and linguists than those that are called WD by the young QA speakers that were interviewed for this study.

## 7.3 General Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the perception of the WD by two groups: the young users of the WD (i.e., the young participants in this research), and according to public discourse. From the foregoing discussion, it has emerged that the two groups are not in alignment when it comes to defining the WD. Within the first group—young QA

speakers—there are also differences of opinion on how to define the WD. Some young participants believe it is the form of Arabic that results from their attempt to shift to RA. Other young speakers believe that "White Dialect" is simply another name for RA, while yet others believe the WD to be an Arabic dialect without a homeland. The perception of the WD according to public discourse fall into two groups: those who believe the WD is a mix between Arabic dialects and SA, and those who believe it is a simplified form of SA that dispenses with strict grammatical rules such as number agreement or case marking. Both views seem to be alternatives to what is referred to as Educated Spoken Arabic or Intermediate Arabic by the previous Arabic linguists (the two terms are discussed in 8.2.1). None of these views reflect the reality of the WD as a fluid form that does not necessarily use SA linguistic features (as discussed in Chapter 6). Therefore, the ideology of the WD might have contrasts with the reality of its actual use.

As for when the WD is used, the young QA speakers seem to use the WD as an out-group code used with non-QA speakers both within and beyond the Qassim region. They also reveal that they use the WD with other QA speakers in official governmental institutions and certain formal occasions, such as giving a presentation at Qassim University. In public discourse, a different definition of "White Dialect" is used. It is rather described as the spoken intermediate Arabic form used in media such as television programmes, radio broadcasts and social media, without discussing its possibility for use in day-to-day communication.

Even though the reasons given for using the WD are different within and between these two major groups – young QA speakers and public figures, they align with regard to one point: the WD is used to ease communication between speakers of different Arabic dialects. For the young QA speakers, the WD also helps them to avoid being framed in the stereotypical image of Qassimi people as being intolerant. In addition, they also seem to use it for the prestige it confers As for public discourse, the "White Dialect" – which seems to refer to a somewhat different entity than what young QA speakers call WD – is said to be used because it is easier than pure SA, and is more intelligible for speakers of various Arabic dialects compared to using colloquial forms.