The "White Dialect" of young Arabic speakers from Qassim (Saudi Arabia)
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<div align="right">**Chapter 8**</div>

The sociolinguistics of the White Dialect

Introduction

As shown above, the term *al-lahdʒih al-beiðˤaː*[11] 'the White Dialect' (WD) is used extensively by the young Qassimi Arabic (QA) speakers to refer to specific ways of speaking they switch to when they feel their dialect is too local for speakers of the other Arabic varieties to understand or to appreciate. However, more in general, the term "White Dialect" appears to be used to refer to various ways of speaking. Thus, as discussed in the preceding chapter, the speech that was referred to as the White Dialect by the young QA participants of this investigation is not exactly the same as that referred to by Arabic scholars and media presenters.

This chapter discusses the White Dialect in its QA definition from a sociolinguistic point of view. It consists of three parts. The first part (Section 8.1) discusses the label "White Dialect". The second part (Section 8.2) discusses the position of the WD within the sociolinguistic context of Arabic. The last section (8.3) provides a description of the WD, including how speakers formulate their WD speech.

8.1 The White Dialect in a general sociolinguistic perspective

From a linguistic point of view, the term "White Dialect" may not be the most appropriate label, as the WD does not fit the definition of a dialect. WD is not specific to a certain region or social group, nor is it a unified linguistic form that is shared by all its users. The WD of the QA speakers shows linguistic elements and features from other regional Arabic dialects within Saudi Arabia, such as Riyadh Arabic (RA) and

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[11] This is the QA pronunciation. In SA it is called *al-lahdʒah al-baidˤaːʔ*.

Hijazi Arabic (HA), and other Arabic dialects outside Saudi Arabia, such as Egyptian Arabic (EA) and Kuwaiti Arabic (KA), as well as from Standard Arabic (SA) and sometimes other languages such as English. That is to say, the WD is fluid, and subject to seemingly less-structured intra-speaker and inter-speaker variation.

It is unknown why this way of speaking is called "White Dialect", nor who coined the label. The term *lahdʒah* 'dialect' may have been used to indicate that this variety is a colloquial form of Arabic, as Arabic speakers in general refer to varieties that are not SA as "dialects". As for the association of this variety with the colour white, this could possibly stem from the associations that this colour carries in the Arab culture. In a study comparing colour connotations between Arabic and US culture, Qtaishat and Al-Hyari (2019) reveal that the colour white may convey contradictory meanings in Arabic culture in general, symbolising both positive and negative concepts. For instance, *ʕein-uh beidˤa:* 'his eye is white' is used to describe someone who is blind, while *al-galb al-ʔabjadˤ* 'the white heart' describes an honest and pure character. Therefore, calling the WD "white" does not automatically imply a specifically positive or negative association. On the other hand, it might be a way of indicating that it does not belong to any other variety, that is, it is colourless and identity-free, as suggested by Farraj (2016). A study by Al-Rojaie (2020a) aimed to investigate the emergence of a national koine in Saudi Arabia, which was likewise labelled the "White Dialect" by some research participants. Al-Rojaie reports that these speakers call the variety "White Dialect" because it is "accent-free" and does not contain "stigmatised linguistic feature[s]" (2020a, 41).

Being used extensively by the young generation in the QA community, one might consider the WD to be a sociolect. However, even though the term "White Dialect" is used by the QA speakers to refer to a way of speaking that they use besides their QA, this is characterised by its enormous inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation; that is, it is not the same for every single speaker, and it is not the same for the same speaker on a different occasion. Moreover, it is not specific to a certain social-economic class, or gender in a community. QA speakers seem to use the term "White Dialect" to refer to the many different forms that they shift to. Even though these varieties are not linguistically homogeneous, speakers do identify them

collectively. In other words, speakers are aware that WD does not refer to a single monolithic linguistic form. A female QA speaker in Al-Rojaie's study (2020a) described the WD as a variety that is similar to RA, but that also adopts other features from other dialects. Moreover, some of the participants in the current study acknowledged that the WD refers to a very flexible variety, as they mentioned that they adjust their WD based on where they are (Chapter 7, Theme 1).

Since the young speakers' use of the WD is dependent on the situation, one might consider WD to be a style or a register. The terms "style" and "register" both refer to situational linguistic variation. According to Kortmann (2020), it is not easy to differentiate between register and style as they both refer to varieties which are mainly "determined by the relevant communicative situation" and they both refer to the linguistic items that speakers choose, or are expected to choose, in a specific communicative situation. Kortmann distinguishes the two terms based on different functions fulfilled by situational linguistic variation. He states that stylistic variation is determined by a speaker's personal choices and artistic preferences, while variation in register is mainly determined by the "functional-communicative context"; as such, variation in style is "less predicted" than variation in register (2020, 203). As a fluid way of speaking, the WD is often used for a specific functional communicative purpose, but this may vary. Some speakers use the WD to ease communication with other Arabic speakers, some use it to hide that they are from Qassim, and some use it for prestige or other purposes (discussed in chapter 7, Theme 2). Therefore, the label "register" might be more suitable than "style" for describing the WD.

"Style" is a term that has been interpreted differently among sociolinguists and variationists. For instance, Labov's (1972) concept of style refers to the way speakers adjust their own speech under certain social circumstances. In his work on stylistic variation (1984), Labov refers to five principles of style. The first of these was that "there are no single style speakers"; in other words, speakers regularly and consistently shift between styles in their speech. Secondly, "styles can be ranged along a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech"; that is, style shift is greatly affected by speakers' attention to their own speech. Thirdly, "the vernacular, in which the minimum attention is paid to speech, provides the most

systematic data for linguistic analysis"; Labov describes the vernacular as what speakers acquire when they are young, which forms the base for all speech styles. The fourth principle is that "any systematic observation of a speaker defines a formal context where more than the minimum attention is paid to speech": that is, speakers shift away from their vernacular in formal situations. Lastly, in the fifth principle, Labov states that "face-to-face interviews are the only means of obtaining the volume and quality of recorded speech that is needed for quantitative analysis." Based on these five principles, every way of speaking can be considered a style, thus the WD can be considered a style as much as pure QA or SA.

Coupland (2011) criticises Labov's view of style. He states that, in Labov's work, "style was treated as a methodological problem more than a theoretically important issue in its own right" (2011, 140). Coupland argues that if speakers adjust their speech styles toward prestigious speech norms when they are paying attention to their speech, then this indicates that people within the speech community share one perception of their speech, namely that it is associated with low prestige. This observation, according to Coupland, shows that style is a theoretical issue, not just a methodological one. On the other hand, style was defined by Bell (1984) as the changes that speakers apply to their speech based on their audience. This follows a cognitive approach similar to that of Labov, in addition to considering social communicative factors. Smakman (2018) defines style as the various ways of speaking that result from the linguistic change that speakers apply to their language due to several factors, such as the degree of formality of the situation, the social status of their interlocutors, and the goals that they wish to achieve in a conversation (such as to persuade or discourage). Note that Smakman's definition of style seems to cover the notions of both style and register as distinguished by Kortmann (2020).

One should also bear in mind that style shifting by Arabic speakers differs from style shifting in other languages, considering the number of linguistic varieties an Arabic speaker may have at her or his disposal. Due to the diglossic nature of Arabic and the existence of inter-dialectal code-mixing, it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a speaker is style shifting or code-mixing, especially considering that code-mixing can be a feature of a certain style. Trudgill (1983, 114) describes

code-switching as a process that occurs between two distinct varieties in a diglossic context. However, Arabic code-mixing might have more than two distinct varieties in a diglossic context. When an Arabic speaker adjusts their speech in formal situations, then this most likely involves code-mixing of different Arabic varieties that the speaker considers to be standard or formal varieties.

In my view, the most fitting description of the WD is that it is a linguistic strategy for Arabic speakers to adopt linguistic features from the range of different Arabic varieties available to them, to produce a spontaneous form of Arabic that serves their particular communicative motives.

8.2 The White Dialect in the sociolinguistic context of Arabic

When considering the sociolinguistic situation of Arabic in order to understand the WD as a phenomenon, a number of important topics emerge that relate to the sociolinguistic context of Arabic, such as diglossia, code-mixing, and variation. These themes may shed light on the WD and its use by the young QA speakers.

8.2.1 Diglossia

Ferguson (1959) states that SA and Arabic dialects are in a diglossic relationship. SA is the "high" variety (H) used in formal situations, writing, media and education, while the Arabic dialects are the "low" varieties (L), which are the linguistic forms used in everyday conversation and informal situations. According to Ferguson (1959, 328), when a speaker uses an H variety in an informal setting or an L variety in a formal situation, he/she becomes a target for "ridicule", as the use of H and L varieties is associated with specific sociolinguistic rules that should not be violated. In his model, Ferguson introduces twelve main domains for the use of H and L varieties, which are described in the following table.

High variety (Standard Arabic)	Low variety (Arabic dialects)
- religious speech in a church or mosque	- instructions to waiters, servants and workmen
- personal letters	- radio (soap opera)
- parliaments, political speech	- conversations with family, friends and colleagues
- news broadcasts	- captions on political cartoons
- university lectures	- folk literature
- newspaper editorials, news stories, captions on pictures	
- poetry	

Over time, Ferguson's model has received much criticism. With respect to Arabic, Albirini (2016, 21) summarises the criticisms of Ferguson's model in two points. First, there are a range of existing "intermediate varieties" and linguistic levels that lie between SA and the Arabic dialects, i.e., between the H and the L varieties. Second, it is possible for SA and the colloquial Arabic varieties to coincide in the same context or domain, as when speakers codeswitch between SA and their dialects (discussed later in Section 8.2.2).

As for the first point of criticism, intermediate levels of Arabic have been identified by several scholars. For instance, Blanc (1960) identifies two colloquial Arabic forms that lie between classical Arabic and the plain colloquial, which he refers to as "elevated colloquial" and "koineised colloquial". Similarly, Cadora (1992) identifies a level between SA and the colloquial Arabic which he refers to as "intercommon spoken Arabic". One of the most discussed intermediates is "educated spoken Arabic" (ESA) Mitchell (1982) defines ESA as an existing "unregistered" level of mixed Arabics that provides the foundation for a "koineised Arabic" for Arabs from different countries to communicate with one another. In a later work, Mitchell (1986) provides a description of the specific features found in ESA and recognises the instability of these features. Ryding (1991), on the other hand, defines ESA as an elevated prestigious regional Arabic that is used for communication in various Arabic-speaking communities. Meiseles (1980) defines ESA as colloquial form in which the speakers attempt to avoid linguistic features associated with their local dialects

through a process of koineising their Arabic or borrowing from Classical Arabic (CA)[12], or sometimes both. He adds that this level of Arabic is the main linguistic form used for communication by educated Arabic speakers from different regions. Karim (2016) defines ESA as the "mid-way" between SA and vernacular forms. He describes ESA as a variety of Arabic that uses standard forms and shared linguistic features among the different Arabic dialects in informal contexts.

Badawi (1973) proposes a model to reflect the five levels of spoken Arabic in Egypt. He highlights that educated speakers are capable of skillfully shifting from one level to another based on the situation. These levels are explained below; note, however, that Badawi's model is a reflection of the linguistic situation in the spoken Arabic of Egypt of his time, which may differ from the spoken Arabic of other countries or even from the present situation in Egypt.

1. Inherited Arabic, i.e., CA: mostly used in written contexts and spoken only by religious scholars, although not in spontaneous religious speeches but only in prepared or pre-recorded religious speeches on radio or television. Grammatically, it is a well-defined form.

2. Modern literary Arabic, i.e., Modern Standard Arabic (SA): a modernised and modified form of CA. It is the form of SA that is used in written and spoken media by television news reporters and in political speeches.

3. Colloquial of the cultured or educated: the spoken form of colloquial Arabic that is used mostly by educated people in formal discussion, university lectures, television interviews and political speeches.

4. Colloquial of the basically educated: a colloquial form of Arabic used by both educated people and illiterate people in informal situations, as well as in everyday conversation among friends and family.

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[12] Classical Arabic is the language of traditional scripture and scholarship. Its modernised form is called Standard Arabic.

5. Colloquial of the illiterate: a pure vernacular form that is only used by illiterate people. Its use in the media is restricted to certain situations, such as in comedy programmes that emphasise the use of linguistic forms as a subject of humour.

Badawi (1973) also highlights that the boundaries that delineate these five levels are not fixed, as the levels may blend and mix with each other. In fact, the above descriptions of the different intermediate levels of Arabic all seem to reflect two key characteristics of these levels that lie between the SA and the Arabic dialects; namely, their fluidity and instability. These two features might be a reason why it is difficult to provide definitions for each level. However, scholars seem to be in alignment on the following two points:

-   Even though the intermediate levels are spoken forms, they are sometimes used in contexts where a H variety would be appropriate.
-   The intermediate levels involve code-mixing between SA and the colloquial forms.

Bassiouney (2009) states that it is difficult to provide rules for the intermediate levels only in terms of the relationship between SA and the various Arabic vernaculars, as this method does not take into account the differences that exist between the various Arabic dialects. Albirini (2016) also seems to concur with this point of view. Even though he agrees with Badawi's observation regarding the gradient nature of Arabic speech in terms of a continuum between SA and colloquial Arabic, Albirini notes that defining a given variety as a specific level of language used by a specific group is "difficult" (2016, 23-24).

One might assume that the WD is one such intermediate level between SA and the vernacular forms. However, it should be noted that SA is just an optional component of WD speech, and that much of the variation in WD is not related to the relative importance of SA elements in the speech. Thus, it is questionable if it is on a

continuous scale with Standard Arabic on the top. Thus, the WD is different from intermediate Arabic as defined by Badawi and others, in that it is not related to its position vis-à-vis SA. This is easily shown by our results (Chapter 6) that show that speech involving many SA features and speech that uses mostly dialectal features can both be referred to as WD by its users.

8.2.2 Code-mixing

Considering the linguistic varieties available to Arabic speakers, it is plausible that code-mixing is a constant trait of their speech. Code-mixing in the Arabic context relates to the diglossic situation of the language. That is to say, code-mixing in Arabic occurs between the H variety, i.e., SA, and the L varieties, i.e., the colloquial forms. Code-mixing in Arabic occurs in formal situations such as in religious and political speeches, as well as in everyday conversations. In domains generally associated with H varieties, such as political and religious speeches, SA is the most accepted variety among Arabic speakers (Holes, 2004). However, in certain situations, SA and the dialectal varieties are mixed in such formal domains. In his analysis of the political speeches of the former Egyptian president, Gamal Abd al-Nasir, Holes (1993) observes that Abd al-Nasir was fully aware of his linguistic choices and their impact on his audience. In his speeches, Abd al-Nasir used SA to express political power over the audience, and EA to convey his solidarity with the audience. Mazaranni (1997), in analysing the speeches of three former Arab presidents, finds that those presidents switched to the dialect when they wanted to kindle emotions in their audience. Similarly, in religious speeches, code-mixing between SA and dialectal forms serves specific functions. According to Saeed (1997), religious preachers use SA in their speech in order express a moral concept or to quote religious scripture and switch to the vernacular for such purposes as simplifying ideas, mentioning inconsequential topics, or adding a touch of humour. Furthermore, Albirini (2011) believes that the function of code-mixing between SA and colloquial Arabic varieties in formal situations also includes the highlighting of speakers' attitudes toward the topic being discussed. According to Albirini, in an H variety context, SA is employed to express

positive attitudes towards a given topic, whereas dialectal forms are employed to express negative attitudes or to add jokes and insults to the speech.

Code-mixing also occurs in informal contexts, such as daily conversations. Albirini (2016) differentiates this type of code-mixing from that which occurs in political and religious speeches. Code-mixing in informal speech may be a way to increase mutual intelligibility among speakers of different dialects, but Albirini also points to the fact that code-mixing in informal contexts is not always for the purpose of increasing intelligibility (2016, 248).

The WD indeed involves the use of elements from several codes in one single sentence, as shown by the data analysed in Chapter 6. Speakers mix three or more Arabic varieties, which may, but must not, include SA. Unlike in typical contexts of code-mixing in Arabic, the use of SA in the WD does not seem to add a degree of formality or prestige. In other words, SA does not necessarily mark prestigious speech within WD. In a WD context, speakers seem to use few linguistic elements from their vernacular, more elements from the variety that they consider the main, prestigious variety (i.e. SA or RA), and few elements from other Arabic varieties or other languages such as English (for further discussion, see Section 8.3.2).

In the WD speech that was produced by the young QA speakers, the result is sometimes a blend of SA and colloquial forms, and at other times it is a mix of different colloquial Arabic forms with only very few elements from SA. The linguistic choice in code-mixing seems to be personal rather than contextually determined. However, it is important to note that the WD is not exclusively a form of code-mixing between the various Arabic varieties: it also involves the introduction of new linguistic forms which might be considered linguistically unacceptable based on the linguistic rules of the varieties being mixed (as discussed in Section 6.1.4).

8.2.3 Arabic varieties

The Arabic sociolinguistic landscape comprises different linguistic varieties that vary between and within the countries where Arabic is spoken. Sometimes, multiple Arabic varieties exist within one geographical region. Some of these Arabic varieties share lots of linguistic features, whereas others differ to such an extent that mutual intelligibility is low. On the other hand, SA is largely the same in all Arabic countries, and—as their shared language of education—may constitute a common ground to speakers of different dialects. As discussed above (Section 8.2.1), the sociolinguistic situation of Arabic is one of diglossia, involving a complex coexistence of many different varieties. In the diglossic context of Arabic, the possible varieties that a speaker might use include: SA; vernacular Arabic that could be a local, ethnic, or regional dialect; a standard dialect which could be a national dialect or a koineised form; and intermediate levels of Arabic that lie between SA and the vernacular forms. In addition to the various varieties of Arabic, other languages also occupy space in the Arabic sociolinguistic landscape, such as English, French, Berber (Amazigh) and Kurdish (Albirini, 2016).

The sociolinguistic context of Arabic can be characterised as including both standard and prestige forms. Ibrahim (1986) calls for an explicit distinction between standard and prestige varieties of Arabic. Moreover, Ibrahim asserts that SA is not a prestige variety, as prestige varieties are related to social factors such as higher social class, which is a trait that SA does not confer on its speakers. According to Ibrahim, the prestigious value of SA depends on the accepted attitudes to "correct" or "good" language (1986, 115). In almost every Arabic-speaking country, there exists a prestigious colloquial variety (or varieties), whose value comes from the socioeconomic, political or social influence of the region from where the variety originates. For instance, for Jordanian Bedouin women, the prestige variety is represented by urban dialects spoken in big cities (Abdel-Jawad, 1986). In Iraq, Christian speakers from Baghdad use the Muslim Baghdadi dialect as a prestige variety in formal situations with non-Christians (Abu-Haidar, 1991). Similarly, in his research into language change and variation in Bahrain, a country that is home to both

Sunnis and Shiites, Holes (1984) finds that the direction of language change is strongly influenced by the Sunnis, as the political and financial power of Bahrain is held by the country's Sunni royal family. Likewise, the younger generation of Qatari Bedouins, especially women, tend to give up their Bedouin linguistic features in favour of those associated with prestige and upper-class speech (Ahmad & Al-Kababji, 2020).

Inter-dialectal communicative practices among speakers of different Arabic varieties typically involve a process of levelling, in which marked features among dialects are eliminated. Using prestigious forms of Arabic may be one way to attain this levelling (cf. Versteegh 2014). According to Blanc (1960), in inter-dialectal contact, speakers may give up certain features in their dialect in favour of features from other dialects that are more prestigious. On the level of actual conversation, Holes (1995) defines levelling as the linguistic process that occurs due to the dialectal differences between two speakers who attempt to use shared linguistic features and eliminate local ones. Gibson (2002), in his investigation of phonological and morphological change in Tunisian Arabic, states that the influence of SA on dialectal change is only at the level of the lexicon, and does not affect the phonological or morphological levels. He also adds that the direction of linguistic change is towards the urban dialect of Tunis. Many other linguists who have investigated levelling in Arabic dialects are in agreement with Gibson's point of view (e.g., Ibrahim, 1986; Abdel-Jawad, 1986; Al-Wer, 1997); they consider that levelling in Arabic dialects does not always move towards SA, rather, it may move towards the prestigious linguistic forms of other Arabic-speaking countries or regions.

In the diglossic situation of Arabic in Saudi Arabia, the WD seems to be a colloquial form that could be used in daily conversation. It is important to note that the motives underlying linguistic choices do not seem to be related exclusively to prestige based on political and socioeconomic factors. In research carried out in perceptual dialectology by Al-Rojaie (2021), participants revealed other factors underlying the choice of a certain perceived Arabic variety, which were associated with clarity, intelligibility, and the absence of regional and local identity in that particular variety.

8.3 The White Dialect as a linguistic phenomenon

8.3.1 Qassimi Arabic speakers: sociolinguistic profile

In the interviews, young QA speakers reported that they use the WD in certain situations when they feel that QA is too local and SA is too formal. This seems to indicate that the WD serves as an intermediate level of Arabic on the scale of linguistic prestige (section 8.2.1). In his perceptual dialectological investigation of the Saudi national koine, Al-Rojaie (2020a) came across the term "White Dialect" when he asked his participants about the name of this national koine. In his study, Al-Rojaie used a "draw-a-map task", where he provided his participants with a map of Saudi Arabia showing limited geographic information; that is, only the major cities and a few smaller cities were marked. He collected his data using two questions: (1) What is the dialect closest to the Saudi national dialect? and (2) What is the dialect closest to the SA? (2020a, 33). Al-Rojaie also conducted post-survey discussions with his participants to investigate four emergent issues: the name of this national koine, the reasons why a certain area was chosen as closest to the koine, the linguistic characteristics associated with the koine, and the attitudes towards it. His results show that most of his participants acknowledge the emergence of a Saudi national koine, which they associate with RA through features that they say characterise RA, such as "clarity" and "simplicity", lack of stigmatised features, and not being associated with a specific regional identity. Al-Rojaie states that the Saudi national koine is dominated by RA, which is itself the result of dialectal contact between the regional dialects of internal migrants from all parts of the country and the indigenous dialect of the city of Riyadh city. He also adds that this koine, which he also terms "urban RA", has become the new urban variety of Saudi Arabia and "representative of Saudi national identity to many people" due to its political value as the variety spoken by political figures and the royal family (2020a, 46). According to Al-Rojaie, this national koine is a stable form. Interestingly, some of his participants referred to this as "White Dialect". This is different from the lack of stability in the way of speaking that was

called WD by the young QA speakers. Al-Rojaie does not refer to this koine as "White Dialect" himself, but rather reports that some of his young participants identify RA as the WD, about whom he said—slightly condescendingly—that they "lack awareness of dialect variation that other age groups have due to less experience and contact with other speakers in the area" (2020a, 38). A middle-aged Qassimi female participant in Al-Rojaie's investigation said "I agree that the White Dialect is very similar to the dialect spoken by the Riyadh people, but there are some words and sounds adopted from other dialects" (2020a, 45). The fact that some young participants in Al-Rojaie's study used "White Dialect" for RA highlights that the term WD may not refer to the same phenomenon everywhere for all speakers (see also Chapter 7).

To understand the WD—in the QA sense of the term—as a phenomenon, one should first address the varieties that are available to young QA speakers. Generally speaking, young QA speakers have three Arabic varieties at their disposal: QA, which is the vernacular form of Arabic that speakers use every day in informal situations with friends and family; SA, which is used in schools and written contexts; and the kind of Arabic that one may find in mediatized contexts and that presents an intermediate form in between SA and dialectal Arabic. Qassimi children acquire QA from their parents and the people around them. At the same time, they start to acquire SA from (pre-schooler directed) television programmes even before enrolling in school. This linguistic situation differs from that experienced by their parents, as children's television programmes were not available during their parents' childhood. In other words, young QA speakers are very fluent speakers of SA compared to their parents who only started to learn SA once they enrolled in school or started receiving religious education. Young QA speakers are also exposed to other varieties of Arabic, such as RA, HA (spoken in Saudi Arabia), KA, EA (used in the media), and other languages, particularly English. English also plays a role. According to Omar and Ilyas, Arabic speakers in Saudi Arabia switch to English when using certain phrases that carry emotional content, that they feel would "sound better in another language" (2018, 83). For instance, they use 'thank you' instead of *ʃukran* and 'welcome' instead of *marħaba:*.

8.3.2 The White Dialect: A Linguistic Strategy

Based on the metalinguistic commentary about the WD by its users (Chapter 7) and the analysis of WD speech (Chapters 5 and 6), "White Dialect" does not seem to be a term that refers to a specific stable Arabic variety. While what they call the WD shows large-scale inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation, speakers nonetheless follow similar strategies in shaping their WD speech. The WD is therefore best seen as a linguistic strategy of shifting away from a vernacular form, which involves convergence towards the prestigious variety as well as code-mixing of various Arabic varieties and other languages. Thus, the formation of WD speech seems to consist of three different processes: de-localisation, adoption of prestigious variants, and admixture. Even though even though the WD is not a dialect in the strict sense, I will keep using the term the WD as it is the label that was given to this linguistic strategy by its users.

The process of de-localisation in the WD is basically the avoidance of features that are considered highly local. This depends of course on the speakers' awareness of stigmatised or salient features in their vernacular. The factors that make certain features in a certain linguistic variety more stigmatised than others are not always known or clear. In general, stigmatisation of linguistic features is related to identity stereotypes and to speakers' attitudes towards these linguistic features. In order to be stigmatised, features need to have a certain salience. Salience, according to Mejdell (2006, 283), is a "perceptual phenomenon" that reveals speakers' and listeners' awareness of certain features in a given variety, and this awareness makes these features more susceptible to change than other, less salient features in the same variety. Mejdell also connects salience to Labov's idea (1972) about how speakers are conscious of certain features in linguistic varieties. In Labov's terminology, features that speakers are aware of in a speech community are referred to as markers, while features that speakers are not aware of are referred to as indicators. Note, though, that while stigmatised features are by definition salient, not all salient features are stigmatised. The investigation of young speakers' perceptions of QA markers (Chapter 7) revealed that speakers tend to have negative attitudes towards certain

markers associated with Qassimi Arabic, specifically the affrication of *k* as *ts* and the affrication of *g* as *dz*, but did not reveal negative attitudes towards other markers of QA. The difference between salient and stigmatised markers is not just apparent in the attitudes towards these features, but has practical repercussions on how they are used: the two stigmatised features *ts* and *dz* were the least-used markers in the WD of the young QA speakers. Similarly, Al-Rojaie comments that young QA speakers did not change their use of certain QA features—such as the use of 1SG.DO suffix pronoun *-n* instead of *-ni* and the use of the 3SG.M suffix *-uh*—because these features "have not been yet associated with a social value" (2013, 57).

The second relevant process is the adoption of a linguistic form that speakers consider higher prestige than their local variant. This prestigious form is either another dialectal form or SA. If a speaker chooses a dialectal form as the prestigious form to shift to, this form is in most cases a national dialect or a prestige variety. In most cases, SA and dialectal forms co-occur in the same WD sentence. To determine the prestigious variety chosen, I counted the lexical items in the sentences participants produced in their social media posts. By analysing the WD sentences using the Matrix Language Frame Model (MLF) (Myers-Scotton 1997) (Chapter 6), I aimed to determine the Matrix Language (ML) of the sentences—that is, the language that provides the grammatical frame—and analyse their system morphemes. Almost all WD sentences have system morphemes from several varieties. In other words, in such sentences there are system morphemes from two or more codes; some of these morphemes belong to a prestigious dialectal variety, while others belong to SA. As such, even though the MLF model succeeds in showing the fluidity of the WD (as in Chapter 6), the existence of more than one Matrix Language in almost all the WD sentences means that the model cannot be used to determine the matrix variety.

On the other hand, counting lexical elements proved to be a fruitful method for determining the oriented variety. By orientation towards a certain variety, I mean here that this variety is most frequently chosen for lexical items in a sentence. Almost all WD sentences produced by the young QA speakers are of two types, either RA-oriented or SA-oriented. Below are examples of the two types, including glosses that illustrate how the lexical element counting method is applied to the data.

(1) *ana: mu: ʕa:rfah   il-waqt   illi jina:sb-ah*

    I   NEG knowing.F.SG. DET-time REL 3SG.M.suit-3SG.F.DO

    neutral RA   RA   RA-SA RA QA&RA-QA

    'I do not know what time suits her'

(2) ma:-fi: tˤiri:gah θa:njah   nigdar niħasˤsˤil ha-l-mukammila:t

   NEG-PREP   way   other.F.SG 1PL.can 1PL.get DEM-DET-supplements

   QA&RA-RA RA   RA   RA   QA&RA- SA

    'There is no other way to get these supplements?'

(3) an-nasˤi:ħah alli kill-aha ħiqd   wa ħasad mu: mutaqabbalah

    DET-advice   REL all-3SG.F.POS malice and envy NEG acceptable.F.SG

      SA-SA   QA neutral-RA   SA neutral SA   RA SA

    'The advice that is full of malice and envy is not acceptable'

(4) ði: il-maba:diʔ   θa:bitah   wa   sˤa:midah ma:

    DEM DET-principles stable:F.SG and steady.F.SG NEG

    QA RA-SA   SA   neutral SA   RA&QA

    taqbal   at-taɣji:r

    3SG.F.accept DET-change

     SA   SA-SA

'These principles are stable and steady, and do not accept the change'

(5)*hal iħna: ðˤaru:ri: niħta:dʒ haði: il-mukammila:t*

   Q   we   necessarily 1PL.need DEM.F.SG DET-supplements

   SA HA SA   QA&RA QA&RA RA-SA

   'Do we necessarily need these supplements'

(6) *mu: masʔalat dawa:fiʕ　bas　ka:nat il-waðˤi:fah marrah　marmu:qah*

　　NEG matter　motivation CONJ 3SG.F.be DET-job　　very　　prestigious:F.SG

　　RA　SA　　　SA　　　　　RA　neutral RA-SA　　RA　　　SA

　　'It is not a matter of motivation the job was very prestigious'

(7) *tigdar　　　ta:kil　　min　θala:θ　　la-ʔarbaʕ　　　wadʒba:t*

　　2SG.M.can　2SG.M.eat PREP　three　　　PREP-four　　　　meals

　　RA&HA QA&RA　neutral QA&RA QA&RA-QA&RA QA&RA&HA&KA

　　'You can eat from three to four meals'

The following table shows the total number of lexical items from each variety in the WD examples above.

example no.	SA	RA	QA	neutral	other varieties	classification
(1)	1	5	2	1	0	RA-oriented
(2)	1	7	2	0	0	RA-oriented
(3)	5	2	1	2	0	SA-oriented
(4)	6	2	2	1	0	SA-oriented
(5)	3	3	2	0	1	RA-oriented
(6)	4	4	0	1	0	SA-/RA-oriented
(7)	0	6	5	1	2	RA-oriented

　　　　Based on the lexical item counting method, examples (1) and (2) are clearly RA-oriented WD sentences, while examples (3) and (4) are clearly SA-oriented WD sentences. In some sentences, the numbers of RA and SA lexical elements are equal. In those cases, I have looked at the other lexical elements in the sentence: if there are other dialectal lexical items, I classify the sentence as RA-oriented, as a sentence cannot be SA-oriented while having more dialectal lexical items than SA ones. This

is illustrated above by example (5). There were a few cases in the data where the RA and SA lexical elements are equal but there are not any other dialectal lexical elements in the sentence. I classify such sentences as both SA and RA-oriented, as in example (6). Finally, example (7) is a RA-oriented WD sentence that does not include any SA elements.

An important note to add is that in our data SA-orientation of a sentence seems to be associated with the educational history of its speaker. The QA speakers who provided SA-oriented sentences were mostly those who had received their education in religious schools, while those who provided RA-oriented sentences tended to have family and friends from Riyadh and to visit the city very frequently. This may be a matter of fluency, as religious schools give more exposure to SA than normal public education. Religious schools in Saudi Arabia provide extra Islamic courses that are strictly presented in SA, while in public schools, the language of instruction is more flexible and Arabic dialects are often used within classrooms.

Gender did not seem to play a major role in the choice between a dialectal form or SA. This conclusion is different from the findings of Ismail (2012) in her investigation of gender differences in code-mixing among Saudi undergraduates in formal interviews. In these interviews, Ismail found that Saudi women tended to use more dialectal Arabic forms, while men tended to use more SA forms. She states that this gender-based preference for a certain linguistic form can be attributed to social and cultural norms, as men's and women's speech seem to reflect "their differential entitlement to the public sphere" (Ismail 2012, 274). According to Ismail, SA is used in formal situations and places that are dominated by men, and that Saudi male and female social roles are reflected in their in their code-mixing (Ismail 2012, 274-275).

The data analysed in this investigation also reveal that WD users do not stick to one orientation all the time. A young QA speaker's WD is sometimes RA-oriented and other times SA-oriented. In the social media posts submitted for this investigation, some participants adopt SA in one post, while in another they adopt RA. The following two examples are uttered by the same speaker when talking to a Saudi audience:

(7) *iða: istaʃʕar   aʃ-ʃaxsˤ   ða: aʃ-ʃajʔ   yazhad   bi-d-dunja:*
    CONJ 3SG.M.feel DET-person DEM DET-thing 3SG.M.become PREP-DET-life
    neutral SA   SA-SA   QA   SA-SA   SA   neutral-SA-SA
  'If a person feels this thing, he becomes an ascetic in life'

(8) *al-waːħid   yafʕal-ah   marrah marritein*
    DET-someone 3SG.M.do-3SG.F.DO once   twice
    neutral   SA-QA   RA   RA&QA
    lein   tusˤbiħ   kaʔannaha sidʒin
    CONJ 3SG.F.become CONJ.3SG.F prison
    RA   SA   RA&SA   RA&QA
  'A person does it once, twice, until it becomes like a prison'

In example (7), all elements of the sentence belong to SA, except for the demonstrative marker *ða:* 'this' which comes from QA. Therefore, the sentence appears to be SA-oriented. In example (8), the same speaker uses SA in two verbs: *yafʕal* 'does' (which is suffixed with a QA pronominal form *-ah*), and *tusˤbiħ* 'becomes'. The rest of the sentence is composed of dialectal elements, mostly from RA with a few elements from QA. Therefore, example (8) can be analysed as RA-oriented.

The third process relevant to WD formation involves the admixture of further Arabic varieties or other languages that the speakers are exposed to. Mostly, this is a case of lexical borrowing, with speakers borrowing certain phrases or lexical items from other Arabic varieties or English. One area where code-mixing of this kind can be seen in my WD data is in the forms of negation, as mentioned in Chapter 6: speakers sometimes use the EA negative marker *miʃ,* rather than *mu:,* which is the negative marker in RA, the variety towards which the sentence is oriented. Use of English in the WD seems to be strongly affected by the orientation of the sentence: in SA-oriented sentences, speakers tend to use little or no English vocabulary, while in RA-oriented sentences, speakers tend to extensively use English vocabulary. The admixture process seems to serve two purposes in the WD. One of these is a safe "get-

away" technique; that is, a way out when speakers want to avoid a stigmatised feature in their vernacular but do not know its counterpart in the variety towards which the sentence is oriented. The other function seems to be related to prestige: the WD users seem to code-mix to other Arabic varieties or English in order to express their universality. The admixture process does not seem to be restricted to certain themes or specific structures, and it appears at all levels, as discussed in Chapter 6, where code-mixing was identified both in the structure and the thematic elements of the example sentences. Note that when WD users adopt RA as the variety towards which their sentence is oriented, they may still occasionally employ SA as one of the other codes in the code-mixing process (as also discussed in Chapter 6).

The choices related to the first two processes are similar for all QA users of WD. They tend to avoid the features that they mentioned when asked to identify the characteristics of Qassimi Arabic (Section 2.2.3; Chapter 3), i.e., its markers and stereotypical features. As for the choice of a orientation variety this is determined by the varieties available to the speaker. One option available to almost all Saudi Arabians is SA. Beyond this, the available options may depend on the speaker community involved. In the current study, the other prestigious variety QA speakers adopted was RA: this is the national dialect spoken in the capital city and by the royal family, and it shares many features with QA as they both are Najdi dialects. The situation is different elsewhere, for example for speakers of Faifi Arabic (FA), a Saudi dialect spoken in the south-western part of the country (Alfaife, 2018). In this region, speakers are not as fluent in RA and, according to Alfaifi (2020), their diglossic code-mixing usually occurs between FA and SA.

In summary, by means of these three processes—avoidance of local features, adoption of a prestigious variety, and admixture of other varieties and languages—a very fluid and unpredictable kind of Arabic is produced.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the WD as a sociolinguistic phenomenon. It consists of three parts. The

First part discussed the label "White Dialect" as it does not seem to be a fit description for this phenomenon. The most fitting description of the WD seems to be that it is a linguistic strategy for Arabic speakers to adopt linguistic features from the range of various Arabic varieties available to them, to produce a spontaneous fluid form of Arabic that serves their specific communicative motives. The second part of this chapter discussed the position of WD within the sociolinguistic context of Arabic. A number of important topics that are related to the sociolinguistic context of Arabic are discussed in this part, such as diglossia, code-mixing, and variation.

The third part of this chapter provides a description of how speakers formulate their WD speech. The WD seems to be a linguistic strategy that is formed by means of three main processes. The first process is de-localisation, where speakers shift away from their vernacular by avoiding stigmatised features in their dialect. The second process is the adoption of one variety towards which the sentence is oriented. In the current study, two such varieties were observed: RA and SA. The third process is admixture with various other Arabic dialects and English. In the current study, multiple Arabic varieties were used in the third process; however, four varieties were found among more than half of the participants: Riyadh Arabic, Hijazi Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic, and Egyptian Arabic. Still, it should not be assumed that every young QA speaker uses each of these four varieties, as exposure and attitudes might have an influence over the WD, and these factors may differ among speakers. Considering that the 20 participants in this investigation were picked from the same or similar social circles, they might have similar linguistic exposure. Thus, there is a strong possibility that other Arabic varieties might be included in the mix if the investigation were conducted with a larger group of QA participants from different networks. Further study is also needed to investigate whether exposure and attitudes toward the various

Arabic varieties play a significant role in the use of these varieties in the WD of the QA speakers.