

The transfer of L1 attitudes towards L2 varieties: A preliminary investigation

Sara A. Obeid*
Hawaii Pacific University, USA

Abstract

With English becoming the lingua franca of the world, there is an increasing need for a better understanding of the different spoken non native varieties of it on the part of both instructors and learners. However, researchers in the field of language teaching have paid little attention to investigating second language learners' attitudes toward different non native varieties of the target language especially those learners whose mother tongue is a diglossic language. This paper investigates the possibility of a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic, one of the very well known diglossic languages, to English among Arabic speaking learners of English. Three different groups participated in questionnaire surveys and evaluation forms based on the matched guises technique. The first group contained ten Arabic speakers of English. The second group contained ten other non native speakers of English. The last group contained ten native speakers of English. When analyzed and compared, the results suggested that there was a dialectal attitude transfer from Arabic to English among Arabic speakers of English.

Introduction

In a project entitled (Attitudes towards Accents) by the OOI, it was found that (three quarters of people in the US think they hear a lot more accents in everyday life and on TV and radio than they used to, and 67% enjoy hearing a variety of accents.) However, the question is whether this acceptance encapsulates other speech communities across the globe today. The purpose of this paper is to explore the attitudes of Arabic learners of English towards the different varieties of English and whether these attitudes were transferred from Arabic to English. This will be done by evaluating the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of : a'di Arabic *the colloquial variety of Arabic spoken in the center of Saudi Arabia/ currently living in Saudi Arabia towards three different varieties of English; British English, American English, and Saudi English. No shed light on factors that may influence the learners' attitudes toward varieties of English, & also surveyed their own dialectal attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic; 1 classic<Standard Arabic and 1 colloquial Arabic. Further, & also compared the Arabic learners' dialectal attitudes with the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of English and ten non native speakers of English coming from languages that do not have diglossia!



Obeid, S! A! *, - . / The transfer of ?- attitudes towards ?+ varieties; A preliminary investigation!

Hawaii Pacific University TESOL Working Paper Series / , @- . +!

Website: <http://www.hpu.edu>

A Email: sobeid@hpu.edu Address; #ES>? Program, CP DD-, --77 =ort Street Call, Honolulu, H& EF7-@, USA!

distinguished the two varieties as one being well defined and the other being ill defined! However, the well defined variety in Arabic was colloquial Arabic because it is acquired as a native language, and the ill defined variety was classical Arabic or, as named by Chomsky, Modern Standard Arabic!

understanding of its different varieties on the part of both instructors and learners! 4achru's *-EE+/ three circle model of World Englishes provides a strong argument supporting the need for acceptance of English as an international language, with all its different varieties, rather than a standard that should be met by second language learners! He divided World Englishes into three concentric circles; the inner circle, the outer circle, and the Expanding circle! #he inner circle refers to countries where different varieties of English are used as the mother tongue such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and Australia! #hese are considered some of the norm providing countries! #he outer circle refers to countries like India, South Africa, and Nigeria, where English has been used for a long time for (institutionalized functions standing as a language of wide and important roles) *4achru N : elson, +, , -, p! -@/! #hose countries are considered to be the norm developing countries! =inally, the Expanding circle refers to countries where English is learned as a foreign language for mainly international communication purposes, including countries such as China, Iran, Japan, and Saudi Arabia *4achru, -EE+!

4achru's three circle model indicates that there are more second language *?+/ speakers of English than native speakers! Second language learning studies indicate that adult ?+ learners rarely achieve native like speech and that reaching a native like pronunciation among learners who have passed the critical period of language acquisition is close to impossible *Coyer, +, , D N Scovel, +, , /! Based on these results, it is safe to say that the majority of spoken English around the world does not subscribe to the rules and criteria of its native standard varieties!

However, there is a tendency among ES? learners to subscribe to certain standards for their own speech! In a study with a hundred ES? adult learners in Canada, Jerwing *+, , @/ found that the majority considered speaking with perfectly native pronunciation to be the goal of their language learning process! #immis *+, , +/ surveyed around four hundred ES? learners from forty five countries and reported that the majority preferred to acquire a native like pronunciation! Scales, Wennerstrom, Oichard, and Wu *+, , F/ also revealed that 8 of the ES? learners who participated in their study aspired for native like pronunciation, although only twenty nine percent of them were able to identify the American accent!

In addition, several second language learning attitudinal studies have shown that ES? learners also have different attitudes toward different native English varieties! Oayard, Gallois, Oay, Weatherall, and Sullivan *+, , +/ found ES? learners particularly from Europe or Southeast Asia prefer Standard American English more than any other native English variety! Another study conducted by Oayard *-EE, , -EE. , +, , -/ showed that New Zealand English was ranked the least favorable by ES? learners among all the other inner circle varieties including Australian English, Standard American, and Standard British! Walton Puffer, Altenboeck, and Smit's *-EE6/ study indicated that the ES? learners who participated in their study not only favored British English but also performed better when they listened to speech samples of both : S and : : S of Standard British English and Standard American English! In her study T. -rand . addy of Eng 's *+, , . /, Evans compared the dialectal attitudes of different ES? learners living in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand towards the four different varieties of English and found that British English is also ranked the highest on status by forty five to fifty nine percent of the participants! Evans noted that this is due to the association between British English and the notion of correctness and prescriptiveness in regard to different varieties of English!

Research Question

Given that Arabic speakers hold distinct attitudes toward language varieties in their native language, and that learners of English may hold certain attitudes toward different varieties in the target language, is it possible that the attitudes of Arab English learners toward the two main varieties of Arabic, Classical Arabic and Colloquial Arabic, are transferred to their attitudes towards different varieties of English? This paper explores this question by comparing the dialectal attitudes of ten different Saudi native speakers of Arabic towards three different varieties of English; British English, American English, and Saudi English with two other dialectal attitudes. The first one is their own dialectal attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic; Classical Arabic and Colloquial Arabic. The second one is the dialectal attitudes of ten native speakers of English and ten non native speakers of English coming from languages that do not have diglossia towards the same three English varieties!

Methodology

Participants

Thirty people participated in this study. The participants were divided into three groups. The first group included ten female native speakers of Arabic holding a bachelor's degree in English and Translation from King Saud University (KSU), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Their ages ranged from twenty five to twenty eight. Some of them have visited both the United States of America and England but never lived in an English speaking country. The second group included ten female native speakers of Standard American English pursuing their bachelor's or master's degree at Hawaii Pacific University, Honolulu, Hawaii. Their ages ranged from twenty five to thirty five, and they came from different states in the United States. Finally, the third group included ten female non native speakers from countries that did not have a current diglossic situation; Japan, China, Austria, and Norway. They were also pursuing their bachelor's or master's degree at Hawaii Pacific University, Honolulu, Hawaii. Their ages ranged from twenty five to thirty six.

Instruments and Data Collection

For this study, three different female speakers were recorded reading the same script using different varieties of English; Standard British English, Standard American English, and Saudi English.

of +!E and +!6 respectively, and the lowest on intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of @!@, +!7, and @!F respectively!

Saudi English speaker was ranked the highest on .68 of the positive traits proposed on the evaluation form; beauty with an average of D!-, intelligence with an average of D!F, wealth with an average of @!@, and class with an average of D!+. In addition, the rankings of the other non native speakers on the remaining positive traits were very high compared to the ranking of their Arabic speaking counterparts. Finally, the attitudes of the native speakers also were not as negative as the Arabic speaking participants. They ranked the Saudi English speaker the highest on D+8 of the positive traits on the evaluation form; friendliness with an average of D!+, education with an average of D!+, and honesty with an average of D!+ *see #table D/!

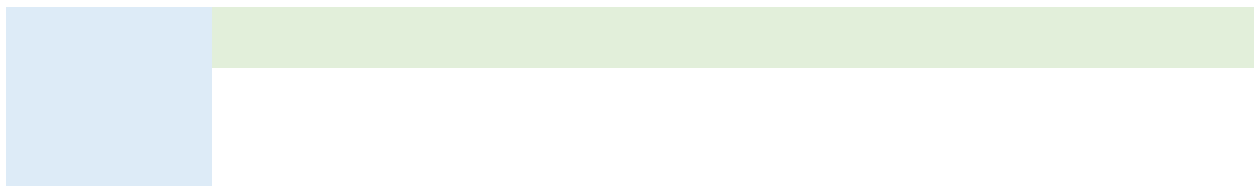
#table D

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes vs. Other Non native Speakers and Native Speaker toward Saudi English

	=riendly	Short	Well educated	Oautiful	?a%y	Honest	Smart	1owardly	Oich	1assy
: ative speakers of English	D!+	@!@	D	@!F	+	D!+	D!+	+!-	@!-	@!E
>ther non native speaker of English	@!E	@!-	@!E	D!-	-!F	D	D!F	-!6	@!@	D!+
Arab speakers of English	@!F	+!F	+!+	@!F	@!@	@!7	-!E	@	+!F	+

The data presented so far suggested that the Arabic speaking participants had stronger and more negative attitudes towards Saudi English. The question is, what may explain the Arabic participants'

negative traits associated with status which were laziness and cowardice with an average of D!+ and +!6 respectively and the lowest on all the positive status traits which were education, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of -!F, +!6, +!D, +!+, and -!. respectively *also see #able .!/ With 1lassic Arabic being the high variety in the whole Arab world including Saudi Arabia, and : a'di Arabic being the low variety, it was anticipated that the Arabic speaking participants would rank the 1lassic Arabic speaker highly on all the status traits, in other words, the traits that show overt prestige *Ceyerhoff, +, , F!/ However, it was not anticipated that they would also rank her the highest on all the other positive solidarity and appearance traits which were friendliness and beauty with an average of D!E and D!- respectively! #he Arabic speaking participants also ranked her the lowest on all the positive traits which were friendliness, education beauty, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of @!6, -!F, -!F, +!6, +!D, +!+, and -!. respectively and the highest on all the negative traits which were laziness and cowardice with an average of D!+ and +!6 respectively! #his showed that the Arabic speakers participating in this study had e9tremely negative attitudes towards the 1ollo\$ual<: a'di speaker! #his can be attributed to the fact that both Arabic speakers were recorded reciting the same te9t *see appendi9 O+!/ #he te9t used for the purpose of this study was an academic te9t, and hearing it read using collo\$ual Arabic may have been perceived by the Arabic speaking participants as ignorant and improper, hence the negative attitude!



following question; (is it a good thing or a bad thing to have an accent speaking English?) with (yes it's a good thing, but classic is classic,) referring to any standard varieties of English! These two participants also contradicted themselves in the evaluation forms ranking the British speaker as the highest on education and class with 1, and 2, respectively, and intelligence with 2, and 1,! The remaining eight Arabic speaking participants described British English using almost the same words and phrases they used to describe Classic Arabic: (Very hard,) (Difficult,) (Lassy,) (It sounds like reading an old literature book,) (Normal,) (I like it but prefer to speak with an American accent because it's easier!)

On the rating form, a strong correlation between the Arabic speaking participants' attitudes towards Classic Standard Arabic and their attitudes toward British English was found! The correlation values between the two sets of ratings were .1 on friendliness, .16 on height, .1E on education, .16 on beauty, .16 on la%iness, .16 on intelligence, .1F on honesty, .16 on cowardice, .17 on wealth, and .16 on class! In addition, the British speaker and the Classic Standard Arabic speaker were ranked the highest on the same traits; education, honesty, intelligence, wealth, and class, with an average of 2!6, 2!@, 2!., @!7, and 2!.. *British speaker/ and 2!E, 2!-, 2!F, @!E, and 2!7 *Classic Standard Arabic speaker/ *see #able F/!

#able F

Arabic Speakers' Attitudes towards Classic Standard Arabic vs. British and American English

	=riendly	Short	Well educated	Oeautiful	?a%y	Honest	Smart	1owardly	Oich	1lassy
Classic Standard Arabic	D	+!6	D!E	@!6	-!.	D!-	D!F	+	@!E	D!7
British English	@!F	+!F	D!6	@!.	-!F	D!@	D!.	-!.	@!7	D!.
Correlation Results	.!.	.!@	.!E	.!6	.!6	.!F	.!7	.!6	.!7	.!6

A strong correlation was also found between the Arabic speakers' attitudes towards Colloquial: a'di Arabic and their attitudes toward Saudi English on most of the traits on the evaluation form! The correlation values between the two attitudes are .1+ on friendliness, .1F on height, .16 on education, .1F on beauty, .1F on la%iness, .1+ on honesty, .16 on intelligence, .17 on wealth, and .1F on class! In addition, both the Arabic English speaker and the Colloquial: a'di speaker were ranked the lowest on education, intelligence, wealth, and class with an average of +!+, -!E, +!F, and +!, and -!F, +!D, +!+ and -!., respectively *see #able 6/!

#able 6

Arabic Speaking Participants' Attitudes towards Colloquial: a'di Arabic vs. Saudi English

	=riendly	Short	Well educated	Oeautiful	?a%y	Honest	Smart	1owardly	Oich	1lassy
Colloquial: a'di Arabic	@!6	@!6	-!F	-!F	D!+	+!6	+!D	+!6	+!+	-!.
: a'di English	@!F	+!F	+!+	@!F	@!@	@!7	-!E	@	+!F	+
Correlation Results	.!+	.!F	.!6	.!F	.!F	.!+	.!6	.!@	.!7	.!F

Thus, there seems to be a clear parallel in the Arabic participants' attitudes toward Classical Arabic and British English as well as colloquial Arabic and Saudi English! This parallel in attitudes can most plausibly be explained by a transfer of social perception about language varieties!

Conclusion

In this paper I first discussed the diglossic situation in the Arabic language in the Arab world with regard to Classical Arabic being the high prestige variety and colloquial Arabic being the low prestige! Based on that outline the question arises as to whether those attitudes towards the two main varieties of Arabic are transferred to their attitudes towards different varieties of English among Arabic

#he te9t that was chosen for this study was an academic te9t and was used for both recordings;

=ishman, H! *-E6+!/ The socio-ology of English <an interdisciplinary social science approach to English in society!
Owley, Cass; : ewbury House!

Hussein, C! *-E. F!/ A 'ite. At a 'watanya. fe a 'adab a ', . aser! J amascus, Syria; Al Oesalah 1 o!
&nayatullah, S! *-EDE!/ Arabic as the religious language of Muslims! + % I, wor d, />@/, +D+!

4aye, A! *-E6+!/ Remarks on diglossia in Arabic; Well defined vs! ill defined! Linguistics, A , @+ D7!

4achru, O! *-EE+!/ The Outer tongue <English across cultures *+nd ed!// Urbana; University of Illinois
Press!

4achru, O! O!, N : elson, 1! ?! *+, , -!/ World Englishes! &n A! Ourns N 1! 1 offin *Eds!/, Ana 'ing
English in a - dba " nte A *pp! E +. /! ?ondon and : ew York; #he >pen University!

Coyer, A! *+, , D!//

Appendix A

Different Arabic Dialects in the Arab world

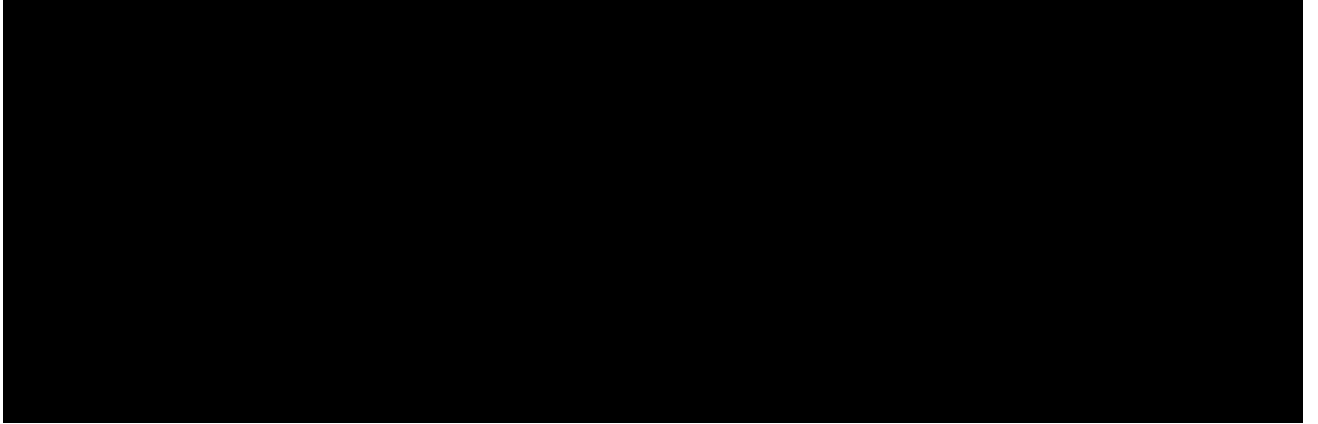


Appendix 01
English Recorded Script

Saudi Arabia, officially known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,^{2d3} is an Arab state in Western Asia constituting the bulk of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north, Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates to the east, Oman to the southeast, and Yemen to the south. It is the only nation with both a Red Sea coast and a Persian Gulf coast, and most of its terrain consists of arid inhospitable desert.

*Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia/

Appendix 02
Arabic Recorded Script



*Retrieved from

[https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/8J78A68JE87D8J780@8J780E8JE8778J78A=8JE87A8J78AE /](https://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/8J78A68JE87D8J780@8J780E8JE8778J78A=8JE87A8J78AE/)

Appendix 1 " 2
Pre listening : on UArab Participants I uestionnaire

Personal Information ' uestionnaire

What is your nameP

XX

How old are youP

XX

Where are you fromP

XX

What is your level of educationP

XX

What languages do you speakP

XX

&s there a standard variety of your languageP

XX

&s your dialect close to the standard variety of your languageP

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

What is your English levelP *Good/ *5ery good/ *E9cellent/ *: ative like/ *: ative/

&n a few words, what do you think of Standard Oritish EnglishP

XX

XX

XX

&n a few words, what do you think of Standard American EnglishP

XX

XX

XX

&s it a good thing or a bad thing to have an accent speaking EnglishP

XX

XX

XX

