

**Online Identities and Linguistic Practices: A
case of Arab Study Abroad Students in the UK
on Twitter**

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Online Identities and Linguistic Practices: A case of Arab Study Abroad Students in the UK on Twitter

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Abstract

Online Identities and Linguistic Practices: A case of Arab Study Abroad Students in the UK on Twitter

This research investigates the online linguistic practices of five Arab study abroad students in the UK who are Twitter users. These students deploy rich and diverse linguistic repertoires, which include Standard Arabic (Fus'ha), Classical Arabic, colloquial Arabic (Ammyah), as well as different English repertoires and digital affordances (emoji). The study explores and demonstrates how these individuals use their diverse linguistic repertoires to communicate ideas and construct online identities. In addition, it investigates participants' attitudes towards different online linguistic practices. Lastly, this study explores the impact of mobility, understood geographically as moving to study in the UK, and socially as becoming sojourners, on these practices, thus expanding our understanding of how these two aspects of contemporary life interact.

Online ethnography is used as the methodology in this research. This includes observing participants' Twitter accounts for nine months and conducting interviews with them to seek interpretations of, and comments on, their online practices. Thus, the study makes a methodological contribution to researching online practices of Arab sojourners in the UK. Previous studies (e.g. Al Alaslaa, 2018; Albirini, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2010; Eldin, 2014; Kosoff, 2014) have relied heavily on text analysis, making assumptions about individuals' intentions when they analyse their repertoire use. To address this limitation, this study interviews the participants to allow them to comment on how and why they use their linguistic repertoires in order to delve into their language ideologies and aspects of online identity construction.

The findings show that the participants predominantly used two categories of Arabic: Standard Arabic A (Fus'ha) and Colloquial Arabic (CA) in addition to the use of English and emoji. All these resources are deployed by the participants to construct different macro- and micro-level identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Another main finding is that most participants relied on CA more than any other varieties, despite the common language ideologies that continue to (re)produce and reinforce the status of Standard Arabic among Arabic speakers (e.g. Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2015; Hoigilt, 2018). It was also found that the role of English in this study is not as dominant as has been reported in previous studies on Arab internet users (e.g. Al-Saleem, 2011; Eldin, 2014; Kosoff, 2014; Strong & Hareb, 2012). Finally, the analysis reveals that mobility does not seem to have a significant impact on the participants' online linguistic practices.

This study contributes to the literature on digital communication, language attitudes, and identity, and to our wider understanding of these areas. More importantly, it adds to recent debates in sociolinguistics regarding concepts such as 'multilingualism', 'linguaging', 'code-switching' and 'translinguaging'. Moreover, the current study will have some potential practical implications. Thousands of Arab students come to study in the UK annually. Knowing how these students communicate on social media will inform university educators about their ideologies and attitudes to the languages they speak. Also, the findings help to change some of the common perceptions among Arab individuals about linguistic practices of Arab sojourners in the UK.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. About the study

This study explores the online linguistic practices of five Arab study abroad students in the UK who are Twitter users. These students employ a wide variety of linguistic resources, including Standard Arabic (Fus'ha), Classical Arabic, Colloquial Arabic varieties (Ammyah), as well as different English repertoires and semiotic resources (emoji). Therefore, the study aims to explore how these individuals deploy their rich and diverse linguistic repertoires to communicate ideas and construct different online identities. The study's participants are mobile individuals who have crossed different geopolitical borders (Urry, 2007). They left their home country to study in a new country and live in liquid diverse societies in the UK (Bauman, 2000). Blommaert and Dong (2010) point out that living in a new country in a different society can affect how people use languages. In addition, Blommaert and Dong (2010) assert that regular online communication with the home country can create new forms of linguistic practices. Thus, the current study aims to respond to increasing calls for researching language online in contexts of mobility. While doing so, it uncovers participants' attitudes towards their linguistic repertoires, and how they use them on social media websites. Online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2013a) is used as the methodological approach in this research. It includes observing the participants' Twitter accounts for nine months and conducting interviews with participants to seek interpretations of their online practices.

At a personal level and as a study abroad student currently in the UK and previously in Australia, I have been intrigued by the impact of mobility on language. For example, I continue to notice changes in my own linguistic practices which are continually emerging. At the same time, I informally observe the online accounts of my friends, who were also studying in the UK. Their accounts reveal the regular use of English, code switching between Arabic and English, the use of Arabizi (writing Arabic words using Roman alphabet) and emoji in addition to different Arabic repertoires. Such observations of how language manifests itself online in contexts of mobility (e.g. study abroad) have provided the impetus and curiosity that drive the motivation behind the academic inquiry presented in this thesis. The inquiry investigates the following research questions:

- 1- How do Arab study abroad students in the UK use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter?
- 2- How do Arab study abroad students project online identities on Twitter?
- 3- What are the attitudes of Arab study abroad students in the UK towards language use and identity in online communication, and the role of mobility in this?

1.2. The study's rationale and contribution to knowledge

With the massive increase in users of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook around the world, plenty of studies have been conducted to investigate the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites from different perspectives (Al-

Jarf, 2010; Al-Saleem, 2011; Al Alaslaa, 2018; Albirini, 2016; Alfaifi, 2013; Eldin, 2014; Hallajow, 2016; Kosoff, 2014; Mashhour, 2016; Salia, 2011; Sinatora, 2019). While most of the above-mentioned studies looked at users' online linguistic practices by focusing on one area such as language use, code switching (CS), and identity, this study encompasses these areas when investigating participants' linguistic practices on Twitter in order to get a deeper, and more complex understanding of online linguistic behaviour. In addition, this study explores the participants' language attitude and their impact on online linguistic practices as I interview the participants to ask them about their world of language and what values they attribute to the different repertoires they use in their online communication. Overall, considering these different thematic areas offer the potential for an expansive picture of the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites. That said, it is crucial to acknowledge that language use, whether online or offline, is highly personal and is expected to significantly vary from one individual to another. Therefore, while the study does not claim to offer a generalisable or exhaustive presentation of online communication among Arab users, it seeks to present an in-depth exploration of a case study of five Arab students in the UK.

Conceptually, a plethora of previous online studies have utilised the notion of code switching, which is a well-established concept in sociolinguistic research (e.g. Auer, 1988; Blom & Gumperz, 1972; Myesr-Scotton, 1988). This concept has been used to provide categories and to analyse patterns of switching (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2006; Dabrowska, 2013; Halim and Maros, 2014; Sebba, 2003). In contrast, this study brings a translanguaging paradigm which treats language in a fluid, dynamic and transformative

way (García & Wei, 2014), bearing in mind that multilingual practices of bilinguals online are individualised, and dependent on a wide range of repertoires (Androutsopoulos, 2013). As such, the study acknowledges an argument made by Dovchin (2015, p. 1) who mentions that online practices should be regarded as “ ‘translingual’”. To that end, the present study contributes to, and furthers, the ongoing debate regarding CS and translanguaging by many scholars (e.g. Bailey, 2012; e.g. Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; Flores & Lewis, 2016; García & Wei, 2014; Jaspers, 2017; Jaspers & Madsen, 2019; MacSwan, 2017; Wei, 2017).

Another important point is related to the use of semiotic resources (emoji) in digital communication. While the use of emoji has been almost neglected by most research on online interaction of Arab users of social networking sites, this study considers emoji as an essential digitally afforded repertoire crucial for meaning making.

Moreover, the study makes a methodological contribution to research exploring online practices of Arabs online. Previous studies (e.g. Al Alaslaa, 2018; Albirini, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2010; Eldin, 2014; Kosoff, 2014) have heavily relied on text analysis, making assumptions with regard to actual online linguistic practices. To avoid this, I interview the participants to allow them to comment on how they use their linguistic repertoires in order to delve into their language ideologies and aspects of their construction of online identities. Therefore, the study utilises both texts analysis and interviews.

1.3. Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. The remainder of this introduction looks at the context of the study. Section 1.4 discusses the complexity of the term 'Arab' which does not simply refer to Arabic-speaking individuals. The section also discusses the complex sociolinguistic variation within Arabic as a named language.

Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature as well as some concepts that are related to this project. I start by talking about the sociolinguistics of mobility and globalisation. After that, I present a discussion of old and recent sociolinguistic discussions on code-switching, languaging, and translanguaging. Next, I discuss the concept of identity and its relationship with language. Then, I address language attitudes and language ideologies and their impact on individuals' linguistic practices. The chapter addresses digital communication and social networking sites before presenting a detailed description of Twitter and its features. The chapter ends with reviewing studies that have explored the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites.

Chapter 3 describes in detail the development of the research design and addresses the methodological considerations and justifications that have shaped this practical part of the study. In Chapter 4, I present the main findings of the study. The chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the participants' linguistic practices as observed in their Twitter accounts. It also discusses how different linguistic repertoires were deployed by these participants to construct different aspects of identity.

Chapter 5 discusses the significance of the research findings in relation to the existing literature in order to have a better understanding of how and why Arab study abroad students use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter as reported in the previous chapter. Finally, Chapter 6 outlines the main contributions of the present study, and discusses some research reflections, limitations, as well as suggestions for future research.

1.4. Arab and Arabic language

1.4.1. Who is an Arab?

The term 'Arab' is complex to define because of the inconsistency in how it was used by early famous Arab historians and writers such as Ibn Khaldun (Mansfield, 1992). Before Islam, the term was used to refer to the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula (Mansfield, 1992). After the rise of Islam, the term was used to describe those who can speak Arabic clearly without mistakes (Mansfield, 1992; Webb, 2016). The spread of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula resulted in the spread of the Arabic language which meant that many Muslims speak it in addition to their first languages. The term then developed an ethnic dimension. After many people from Arabian Peninsula travelled to other parts of the Muslim world and had children there, an Arab was defined as "someone whose lineage can be securely established as an Arab even if he cannot speak correct Arabic" (Webb, 2016, p. 180).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the term has been used to describe someone that lives in the Arab world, an area that stretches from the Atlantic coast of North Africa to the east of the Persian Gulf of Asia and ends at the border of Iran to the

east and Turkey to the north (Dawisha, 2016). Gradually, the term developed a political dimension. For example, the establishment of the Arab League in 1945 marked the inclusion of 22 countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The Arab League defines an Arab as “ a person whose language is Arabic, who lives in an Arabic speaking country, who is the citizen of an Arab country, and who is in sympathy with the aspirations of the Arabic speaking peoples” (Alshaer, 2012, p. 291). This definition is not unproblematic because Arabic is not the native language of people in some of the members of the Arab League such as Somalia, Djibouti, and Comoros. For example, Somali is the mother language for 95% of Somali people (Warsame, 2001). Another issue with this definition is that it excludes Arab people who consider themselves Arabs despite living in non-Arabic countries like the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and other European countries.

Overall, the previous discussion demonstrates that there is no single definition for this term. The word ‘Arab’ carries linguistic, ethnic, and political connotations and its use continues to spark debates on who is included and excluded under the word “Arab”. While I intend to problematise this term, I am going to use the word ‘Arab’ to refer to academic sojourners in the UK who identify Arabic as their main language.

1.4.2. The Arabic language

The Arabic language is the native language of the majority of people in the Arab world. Nevertheless, according to Zaidan and Callison-Burch (2014, p. 171), this term

(Arabic language) is a “loose term” because it is used as an umbrella for different varieties of Arabic. These varieties can be divided into two main categories: Standard Arabic and Colloquial Arabic.

1.4.2.1. Standard Arabic (SA)

Standard Arabic (SA) is a term used to refer to the official language in all Arab countries (Albirini, 2016; Khamis-Dakwar, Froud, & Gordon, 2012). It is the only variety of Arabic that is taught in schools and has its grammatical and spelling rules that are standardised across the Arab world (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014). It is the variety that is used in formal situations like in government offices, educational institutions, and publications. According to Albirini (2016, p. 10), SA as the term “covers both Classical Arabic and... Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)”. While the former is found in the religious texts (Quran and prophet’s sayings) and old Arabic poetry (Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2009), the latter is the language of publications, public speaking, and broadcasting on television and radio (Ryding, 2005). In terms of the differences between the two varieties, while Classical Arabic has more complex syntactic features, MSA has a wide range of styles and vocabulary because it includes new words and styles from the current period (Ryding, 2005). In sum, it can be said that MSA is viewed as a modern and “simplified version” of Classical Arabic (Badwan, 2015, p. 15).

It is essential to note that, according to Bassiouney (2009) and (Suleiman, 2011), categories such as SA, CA, and MSA are western inventions because *Fus’ha* is the only Arabic term that covers all these categories. Thus, following Albirini (2016), the current study uses SA as a term for all the tweets written in *Fus’ha*. Categorising the post as to

whether the post was written in SA or Classical Arabic is conducted during the latent coding stage when I examine the meaning and the mood of each tweet (See section 3.8.1.3.3).

1.4.2.2. Colloquial Arabic (CA)

Colloquial Arabic (CA) refers to a wide range of non-standardised regional dialects that are spoken in informal conversations. Various Arabic terms such as *Darijah*, *Lahjah*, or *Ammyah* are used to refer to each one of these dialects (Zughoul, 1980) which vary across the Arab world (Bassiouney, 2009; Hoigilt, 2018). Many approaches are proposed to classify these dialects. One approach is to divide them into Western and Eastern dialects (Barkat, Ohala, & Pellegrino, 1999; Embarki, Yeou, Guilleminot, & Al Maqtari, 2007; Hachimi, 2013). The Eastern dialects include the dialects of Gulf countries, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Palestine. The Western group includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania. The most popular classification Versteegh (1997, p. 145) divides Arabic dialects into five different groups: Dialects of the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries), Mesopotamian dialects (Iraq), Syro-Lebanese dialects (Lebanon and Syria, Jordan and Palestine), Egyptian dialects, and Maghreb dialects (Morocco Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania). However, Albirini (2016, p. 31) notes that despite the popularity of this classification, most sociolinguistic studies are based on “country-specific dialects” for practical reasons.

It is worth mentioning that although those colloquial varieties of Arabic differ considerably, there is a certain level of mutual intelligibility between these dialects depending on two main factors. The first one is related to geographical distance (Al-Sahafi, 2016). To explain, people from countries that are geographically close (e.g. Syria and Lebanon) are likely to understand each other's varieties. In contrast, when the distance is greater (e.g. Yemen and Morocco), Arab individuals are expected to face some difficulty in understanding the colloquial varieties of one another.

The second factor is related to the role of TV and movies in making some dialects more understood than others. In fact, the dominance of Egyptian movies, TV shows, and plays in most Arabic TV channels helps the Egyptian Arabic to be the most understood variety of Arabic (Albirini, 2016; Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014), whereas one of the major reasons for the difficulty of the western dialects for most Arab speakers is the absence of western Arabic TV series and movies in Arab TV channels (Hachimi, 2013).

Another factor is related to the impact of colonisation on some Arab countries such as Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco where the colonial languages (e.g. French) have been incorporated in the regional varieties of these countries (Albirini, 2016). One piece of evidence for this impact is that many French loanwords are used normally in the local varieties of these countries (ibid). This contributes to making these varieties difficult to understand by individuals from other Arab countries. However, while other Arab countries were under colonisation such as Egypt and Palestine by the British, and Syria and Lebanon by the French, the local varieties of these countries were not affected by the colonial languages. The geographical proximity to other Arabic-speaking countries, in

addition to the pan-Arab national spirit that was developed in countries like Egypt and Syria (Albirini, 2016; Suleiman, 2003) especially in the time of the late Egyptian president Jammal Abdunnasser have helped to push the colonial languages from being incorporated with the local varieties of these ex-colonies.

1.4.2.3. Standard Arabic vs Colloquial Arabic

There are some significant differences between SA and CA. To begin with, unlike SA, these dialects are not taught in schools, but they are socially acquired since birth (Albirini, 2016; Hoigilt, 2018). Also, unlike SA, CA does not have a recognised official status in all Arab countries (Albirini, 2016). Another point is that while SA is always considered by most Arab individuals as a strong marker of a pan-Arab identity (Albirini, 2011, 2016; Hoigilt, 2018; S'hiri, 2002), many Arabs think that CA represents a local, national identity (Albirini, 2016). Besides, SA always holds a prestigious status as it is the language of the Quran and classical Arabic poetry, and the language of the government's high officials (Al-Wer, 1997; Hoigilt, 2018). On the other hand, CA is always viewed as the language of illiterate and uneducated individuals (Hoigilt, 2018). Thus, the majority of Arab individuals have a more positive attitude towards SA than CA (Al-Sahafi, 2016; Zughoul, 1980). Nevertheless, Theodoropoulou (2018) argues that certain Arabic colloquial varieties are now gaining prestigious weight which is mainly linked to social class within national boundaries. For example, the Egyptian Arabic of Cairo is linked to education and culture (Bassiouney, 2015). It is worth mentioning that although CA is not the default variety for writing (Khamis-Dakwar et al., 2012; Kindt & Kebede, 2017; Zughoul, 1980), studies on

digital communication practices, including this one, suggest that many Arab online users largely depend on CA (Brustad, 2017; Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014).

There are some major linguistic differences between SA and CA. For example, while CA has only the singular and plural forms, SA has the dual form beside the singular and plural forms (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014). In addition, “SA has two plural forms, one masculine and one feminine, whereas many (though not all) dialects often make no such gendered distinction” (ibid, 174). Another difference is related to the negation system. In SA, there are five words used for negation (*laa, maa, lam, lan, laysa*), whereas the negation in CA is expressed through the use of *maa, mahi*, and *mahu* in Gulf dialects, or *muš* in Egyptian Arabic (Albirini, 2016). Moreover, while SA is richer in terms of vocabulary (Zughoul, 1980), CA is more flexible because it adapts words and expressions from foreign origins (Ryding, 2005). Additionally, although most CA vocabulary is divergent from their SA roots in terms of their structure (Khamis-Dakwar et al., 2012), many words have the same structure in both varieties (Belnap & Bishop, 2003). Therefore, phonology plays the main role in distinguishing between the two varieties because some sounds in SA are pronounced differently in CA (Albirini, 2016). To explain, a word like the word قال (he said) has the same structure in CA and SA. However, it is pronounced (qala) in SA, whereas it is pronounced (gal) or (?al) in CA. Hence, while it is easy to determine whether it belongs to SA or CA when it is spoken, the classification is much harder in the written form (Belnap & Bishop, 2003). This is indeed a challenge that I faced in this study which deals with Twitter’s written posts. I explain how I dealt with this in section 3.8.1.3.3

Despite these differences, the relationship between SA and CA is commonly described through the linguistic phenomenon known as diglossia, which was proposed by Ferguson (1959). According to Van Herk (2012, p. 128), diglossia may be defined as “ A situation in which two distinctly different language varieties co-exist in a speech community, acting as social registers, in which the high variety is used in formal situations and the low variety among friends”. In that sense, Ferguson (1959) stated that SA represents the high variety which is used in formal situations like political speech, religious events, and publications. On the other hand, CA is the low variety which is used in informal situations such as when communicating with friends or family.

Ferguson’s model was heavily criticised for neglecting the fact that the distinction between the H and L varieties is not always fixed (Fasold, 1995). In the Arabic sociolinguistic context, there are numerous “intermediate varieties” between the high (SA) and low (CA) (Albirini, 2016, p. 21). While some researchers such as Mitchell (1982) and Ryding (1991) identify a third variety (Educated spoken Arabic) beside SA and CA. Meiseles (1980) differentiates between four varieties of Arabic: standard Arabic, oral literary Arabic, educated spoken Arabic and plain vernacular. Therefore, diglossia is criticised for not considering that there is a lot of switching and borrowing between these varieties of Arabic (Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2009). Moreover, Bassiouney (2009) argues that diglossia is not enough to describe the situation in some Arab countries (e.g. Tunisia) where some individuals are fluent in French which they use in their everyday communication. Thus, alternative models have been suggested such as Heteroglossia, Triglossia or Polyglossia (Albirini, 2016; Alsaifi, 2016). These terms describe the situation

when more than two varieties or languages are used for different purposes (Alsaifi, 2016). Therefore, the current study adopts Polyglossia as a model because Arab study abroad students in the UK use rich and diverse linguistic repertoires which include Standard Arabic, regional Arabic varieties, as well as different English repertoires.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the study, its research questions and the rationale for conducting the study. I also discussed the complexity of the term 'Arab' and how it has been used through time. Finally, I presented a detailed description of different varieties of Arabic which shows the complexity of Arab sociolinguistic context. Next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature as well as some concepts that are related to this project

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This doctoral project looks into the online linguistic practices of Arab study abroad students in the UK and how these practices contribute to the construction of students' online identities. In this chapter, I start by placing the research within the growing sociolinguistic paradigm: sociolinguistics of mobility and globalisation. In this section, I discuss the notion of mobility by talking about two points: the possible impact of living in an English-speaking country on participants' online linguistic practices and the notion of virtual mobility which might also influence their linguistic practices.

In the next section, I present recent sociolinguistic discussions regarding the complexity of linguistic practices in the age of superdiversity and its impact on different perspectives for analysing linguistic practices like code-switching (henceforward CS) and translanguaging. This discussion is vital to enable me to conceptually approach participants' linguistic practices. After that, I provide a detailed review of CS and translanguaging in sections 2.3 and 2.4 respectively.

Following that, I discuss the concept of identity, which has a strong relationship with language. Studying identity enables a deeper understanding of the linguistic practices of online users. I begin the section by discussing the concept of identity and its relationship with language, before exploring online identity specifically.

In section 2.6, I engage with the language attitudes literature which is necessary to understand the nature of online practices. To do that, I address the concept of 'language ideologies' which has an impact on language attitudes. This section begins by

looking at the nature of language attitudes before discussing the difference between attitude and behaviour. After that, I discuss the concept of language ideologies and finish this section by talking about language attitudes and ideologies in the Arabic context.

The current study investigates the online practices of five Arab study abroad students by analysing their language use on Twitter. The scope of this study falls within the remit of 'Digital communication', an area I explore in section 2.7. In order to understand the nature of participants' interaction on Twitter, I have to begin this section by talking about digital communication and its features. Next, I talk about the most dominant practices of Arab Internet users. After that, I present the concept of social networking sites before focusing on Twitter which is the context of the current study.

In the final section, I present studies that have explored the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites. Reviewing these studies can provide me with some valuable contextual and conceptual insights. At the same time, they have enabled me to identify different ways of researching online practices.

2.1. Sociolinguistics of mobility

The participants in this study, Arab study abroad students, might be affected by mobility which means, in their case, the physical movements across different borders (Urry, 2002, 2007) as they left their home country to study in the UK. Mobility research stems from the assumption that geographical mobility entails the expectation that individuals might be under pressure to change their linguistic practices in order to fit the linguistic expectations of the new place (Badwan & Simpson, 2019; Blommaert, 2010;

Canagarajah, 2013; Simpson & Cooke, 2009). These researchers, however, presented different views on the impact of the new place in individuals' linguistic practices.

Blommaert (2010) uses the notion of scale to discuss the relationship between linguistic practices and mobility. Blommaert (2010) mentions that when someone is moving, he or she is not moving to an empty place because the new place is always another person's space which is always filled with a set of linguistic norms. This movement involves moving from local (home country) to global (new country) scales. Blommaert (2010) also states that the connection between the two scales is hierarchical which means that adopting the norms, traditions and expectations of the higher (global) scale is the way to have understandable communication in that scale. Based on that, it is supposed that living in the new country will have a strong impact on individuals' linguistic practices and their attitudes to these practices (Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Deumert, 2014). Nevertheless, Prinsloo (2017, p. 374) criticises this scalar perspective for not giving enough emphasis to the "local or placed linguistic specificity or complexities". Therefore, instead of using the notion of scales as a noun, Canagarajah and De Costa (2016) argue for treating it as a verb which refers to scaling practices among individuals in social life. This also includes considering scales as a process instead of a product because it gives regard to " how scales are renegotiated, co-constructed, and taken up in diverse competing social groups and institutions" (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016, p. 3). Moreover, Badwan and Simpson (2019, p. 5) argue against assuming the hierarchical relationship between scales as it "can disempower people as agentive individuals". Thus, they propose the notion of 'a flat ontology' which considers linguistic repertoires as equal

and does not accept the superiority of the linguistic norms of global scales (Badwan & Simpson, 2019). They state that the notion of a flat ontology can help us to “talk about places as unpredictable spaces whose meanings are socially (re)constructed” (Badwan & Simpson, 2019, p. 6) Moreover, we should also keep in mind that mobility is not limited to physical existence as Urry (2002, p. 256) explains that mobility can also be “virtual” through the use of online technology platforms where people can challenge the geographical distance. In other words, the existence of mobile phones and computers allows us to travel to different places and interact with people that they are not around us physically (Deumert, 2014). This leads us to the notion of ‘connectivity’ (Doutsou, 2013) because when people feel separated from their home country when they travel, they have regular contact with the home country using digital technologies (Blommaert, 2010). This regular contact can create new forms of linguistic practices (Blommaert & Dong, 2010), or can help people, in some cases, to sustain established linguistic practices. This form of contact also challenges rigid scalar approaches to language because when people move to global scales, they can still communicate successfully using their local scales through digital communication.

Based on the previous discussion, mobility might have an impact on the linguistic practices of the participants in the present study. They use English in their daily life because they left their home country (Arabic-speaking environment) to study in the UK (English-speaking environment). In addition, they can communicate online with individuals from the home country or other Arab speaking countries using different

varieties of Arabic. Therefore, the present study wants to explore the impact of mobility on participants' online linguistic practices.

It is worth mentioning that the types of mobility discussed above have a strong impact on the field of sociolinguistics as many scholars have problematised concepts such as 'multilingualism', 'language', and 'code-switching'. The next section sheds some light on some critical debates and implications of what Blommaert (2010) refers to as 'sociolinguistics of globalisation' or what Jaspers and Madsen (2019) name 'new sociolinguistics'.

2.2. Linguistic repertoires research

'Linguistic repertoires' is a common sociolinguistic concept that is always associated with the work of Gumperz (1964, 1972) who defines it as 'the totality of linguistic resources (i.e. including both invariant forms and variables) available to members of particular communities' (Gumperz 1972, p. 20). However, Blommaert and Backus (2013) argue for a shift towards linking linguistic repertoires with individuals instead of linking them to communities especially in the age of superdiversity.

The concept of 'superdiversity' is a term used to describe social, cultural, and linguistic diversity resulting from the growing number of immigrants after the cold war (Vertovec, 2007). Other scholars use the term 'hyper-diversity' to describe the "intense diversification of the population, not only in socio-economic, socio-demographic and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities" (Tasan-Kok, Van Kempen, Mike, & Bolt, 2014, p. 8). This hyper-diversity and the development of

communication technology such as the Internet have changed how people see communities and social behaviours (Blommaert & Backus, 2013). As a response, many scholars have talked about linguistic fluidity (Jaspers & Madsen, 2019). Thus, they have started to raise many questions regarding the traditional understandings of some concepts such as language or bilingualism.

To begin with, understanding bilingualism as an idea has been changed and developed through time. Canagarajah (2015) and García (2009) have talked about the development of bilingualism as a concept through time by discussing different models of bilingualism. The first model, subtractive bilingualism, suggests that learning a second language will make the first language weaker. The main criticism of this model is that it indicates that there is a kind of conflict between languages (Canagarajah, 2015). The second model is the additive model, which indicates that the second language is added at the same time that the first language is maintained (García, 2009). This model considers that a bilingual individual has a linguistically balanced competence in both languages (Canagarajah, 2015). In the third model, recursive, the language is not added completely at one time but through practice at different times, and in different situations (García, 2009). Those languages, in an individual's repertoires, can support each other (Canagarajah, 2015). According to García (2009), this model suggests that bilingualism is something linear and each language is treated separately. García (2009) proposed the model of dynamic bilingualism and what Canagarajah (2015) calls the translingual model. The main idea of this model of bilingualism is that bilingualism includes a more "dynamic cycle" where bilinguals use their available linguistic resources depending on different

contexts and situations (García, 2009, p. 53). Garcia also argues that the complexity of the twenty-first century forces people to communicate in dynamic ways that challenge traditional categories like first language or second language (García, 2009).

In terms of language, many scholars have questioned the traditional conception of languages as objects with clear boundaries (Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011). Reagan (2004) argues that the idea of the existence of named languages with static boundaries such as English, French, Chinese, or Arabic is problematic for two main reasons. The first one is that any language is continuously changing over time. Secondly, language changes from speaker to speaker, from one social class to another, and it also changes across different situations. Makoni and Pennycook (2005) push Reagan's argument further by proposing that the concept of language is an invention and understanding languages as entities with fixed boundaries is the result of colonialism. In the same vein as Reagan (2004), Canagarajah (2013) argues that languages are connected to each other and have a mutual influence on each other. He stresses that Individuals use all their available linguistic resources in their daily communication without separating between named languages. Canagarajah's view aligns with those of Jørgensen et al., (2011) who say that it is not always possible to draw clear boundaries between some languages or to decide what separates different dialects of the same language. Therefore, Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) distinguished between two understandings of the notion of language. The first one sees languages as "the names of enumerable things that are socially or socio-politically constructed, maintained, and regulated" (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 6) such as Arabic, English, or French. The other perception understands languages

as “entities without names, as sets of lexical and structural features that make up an individual’s repertoire and are deployed to enable communication” (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 6). Based on these two perceptions, instead of speaking English or Arabic, for example, some researchers suggest that the person engages in a process of ‘linguaging’ which refers to the situation where “language users employ whatever linguistic features are at their disposal with the intention of achieving their communicative aims” (Jørgensen, 2008, p. 169). This includes using “sets of linguistic resources that may, or may not, agree with canonically recognised languages, codes or styles, and that these resources are deployed alongside other semiotic resources” (Jaspers, 2017, p. 4). Thus, Jørgensen (2008, p. 169) argues that “The behaviour is fundamentally the same, we are all languagers”.

To conclude, as a result of recent sociolinguistic debates on ontologies of language, many scholars claim that adopting a code-switching lens for analysing individuals’ linguistic practices might not help to understand the complexity of linguistic practices of bilinguals (e.g. Bailey, 2012). Consequently, various terms have been proposed by different scholars to describe the practices where there is a kind of flexible use of different linguistic repertoires. These terms include flexible bilingualism (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011a), polylinguaging (Jørgensen et al., 2011), translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013), metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2011) and translanguaging (García, 2009; Wei, 2011). The main idea of all these terms is that language is a social discursive practice without clear boundaries (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Translanguaging in particular has received more attention than other

related terms (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; Jaspers, 2017). The main idea of translanguaging is that various linguistic repertoires used by speakers cannot be simply assigned to one language or another (García & Wei, 2014).

However, translanguaging and its related ideas have been criticised by a group of researchers (e.g. Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; Flores & Lewis, 2016; Jaspers, 2017; Jaspers & Madsen, 2019; MacSwan, 2017). These scholars argue that there is no need for a new theory for analysing language practices. For example, Flores and Lewis (2016) state that the claim that language practices associated with superdiversity are new is not entirely true as there is empirical evidence which indicates that some communities have engaged in these practices for centuries. Moreover, CS, which is a complex practice, has received much attention from researchers in sociolinguistics since its establishment (Flores & Lewis, 2016). Furthermore, Jaspers and Madsen (2019) maintain that the notion of separate languages is hard to deny. A major reason for this is the existence of many studies that have proven that individuals switch from one language to another (Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; MacSwan, 2017). Another criticism is related to the basic idea of translanguaging which indicates that it focuses on linguistic repertoires instead of focusing on languages. Bhatt and Bolonyai (2019) criticise this idea by saying that these linguistic repertoires are still recognised as belonging to specific named languages. This can lead to a paradox as noted by Seargeant and Tagg (2011) who, although they problematise the notion of languages as discrete entities, mention that it was necessary to analyse the linguistic repertoires through identifying different languages and varieties. Therefore, Bhatt and Bolonyai (2019, p. 3) claim that “translanguaging as a theoretical

construct does not offer any significant progress in our understanding of bilingual language use that is not already covered by the term code-switching”.

However, Wei (2017) argues that translanguaging presents a new perspective to understand practices that are usually described as codeswitching. To explain the difference between these two perspectives, he explains that a code-switching lens assumes that there is a shift between one language to another and that this shift comes in different patterns. In contrast, a translanguaging perspective suggests that an individual uses his or her linguistic repertoires in a dynamic way to the extent that it might be difficult to establish patterns for switching between languages or varieties (Wei, 2017). Based on that, I propose that adopting either code-switching or translanguaging alone is not enough to understand the online linguistic practices of my participants. Indeed, relying on CS alone cannot attend to nor unpack the complexity of online linguistic practices which also entail the use of non-linguistic digital resources such as emoji and emoticon. Evans (2017, p. 19) contends that “Emoji represents a powerful system of communication; while not a language, it nevertheless fulfils some of the functions associated with language”. Therefore, Pennycook (2017, p. 49) argues digital affordances such as emoji need to be incorporated in the post-human understanding of linguistic repertoires. Commenting on this, he explains that “the notion of repertoire in such contexts can consequently be understood as an emergent and interactant affordance of the online space rather than an individual or communal capacity”.

I have argued that translanguaging as a conceptual lens enables the inclusion of linguistic and non-linguistic repertoires as part of the linguistic analysis of online practices.

In addition, translanguaging allows for directing the attention to the fluidity of online linguistic practices. However, it is important to note that it is not possible to consider all online linguistic practices as translingual practices because there are instances where individuals give regard to named languages and make conscious decisions on shifting the keyboard script from one language to another. Therefore, in this study, I use a conceptual framework for analysing the online linguistic practices of my participants which uses both notions: 'CS' and 'translanguaging'. To demonstrate, I use CS for cases where there are patterns for shifting between one language or variety and another. However, I use translanguaging for cases where the participant switches back and forth between different languages or varieties to the extent that it is difficult to find a pattern for that switching. Having outlined my approach to these two conceptual lenses, I now present a detailed review of the literature on CS and translanguaging.

2.3. Code-switching

CS is a general term used to describe the use of elements from two languages in the same conversation. Although it is widely believed that the first research which investigated CS in depth was a study conducted by Blom and Gumperz (1972), CS as a term was first used by Vogt in his article 'language contacts' in 1954 (Benson, 2001). It is important to say that views on CS have changed since the first time it was investigated. Instead of considering it as a form of "language corruption", CS has long been regarded as a valid area of investigation (Matras, 2009, p. 101).

A large volume of studies has been conducted to investigate CS from different

perspectives. Nevertheless, most of these studies have focused on CS that is happening in speaking (Pahta, 2004; Sebba, 2012). One possible reason for this focus is that written language tends to have fixed rules of orthography (Milory & Milory, 1991), which might discourage people from switching between languages in their writing. However, Sebba (2012) expressed his disagreement with this opinion by arguing that there is a large number of new and old (from ancient and medieval times) written data that includes texts written in more than one language. Alothman (2012) suggests that the lack of attention to CS in writing could be the result of the belief that CS occurs only in informal speech, and therefore, written language was not deemed appropriate for analysing CS. However, recent developments in Internet technology have enabled the analysis of informal online interactions (Baron, 2003; Crystal, 2001). In other words, because of the informal nature of new digital platforms and the affordances they offer, internet users can now produce written texts that resemble spoken language. This has enabled many researchers to explore the nature of CS in all modes of online communication (e.g. Androutsopoulos, 2007; Durham, 2003; Georgakopoulou, 1997; Paolillo, 1996; Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002). Also, CS has been investigated in the context of social networking sites (the context of the present research) such as Facebook and Twitter (e.g. Dabrowska, 2013; Eldin, 2014; Halim & Maros, 2014; Kosoff, 2014; Seargeant, Tagg, & Ngampramuan, 2012). Before reviewing the literature on CS on Facebook and Twitter, it is important to talk about CS, how it differs from borrowing, code-mixing, and some of the analytical approaches to CS.

2.3.1. What is code-switching?

CS can be defined as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems” (Gumperz, 1982, p. 59). Another definition was proposed by Grosjean (1982, p. 145): “the alternate use of two or more languages in the same utterances or conversation”.

While Grosjean’s definition refers to switching between two languages, the other definition includes also switching between different varieties. It can be said that CS does not exist exclusively between two languages (e.g. English and Spanish). It also occurs between different varieties (e.g. Standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic). Some researchers have used the term ‘style-shifting’ to refer to switching between different varieties or styles of the same language. However, following Albirini (2016) and Muysken (2000), I will use the term ‘CS’ whether the switch is happening between Arabic and English, or across different varieties of Arabic.

CS between languages or varieties is normal linguistic behaviour for the majority of individuals. According to García (2009); Ritche and Bhatia (2013), it occurs spontaneously when individual speakers are communicating with each other. Switching between different languages or varieties is a strategy that enables people to communicate socially and culturally in more appropriate ways (O’Neal & Ringler, 2010). However, some individuals may have negative feelings about CS. Some of them believe that CS is an insult to their language because they consider it as a ruined version of their language. In addition, a large number of bilinguals themselves also could have negative attitudes towards CS. They see it as unacceptable linguistic behaviour, and sometimes

they try to apologise after doing it (Ritche & Bhatia, 2013). As a result, some bilinguals may try to avoid CS especially when they communicate with those who have very strict attitudes towards languages such as parents and teachers (Grosjean, 1982).

2.3.2. Code-switching and borrowing

CS is different from another linguistic phenomenon called borrowing. Borrowing may be defined as “the incorporation of lexical elements from one language in the lexicon of another language” (Muysken, 1995, p. 189). To explain, the borrowed word will follow the grammar of the new language (Callahan, 2004). However, it can be argued that it may not always be easy to decide whether the practice under investigation is borrowing or CS. Thus, according to Callahan (2004), some scholars have suggested considering quantity as a way to differentiate between both phenomena. That is, while borrowing occurs in a form of a single word, CS involves more than one word. Yet, this way of distinguishing between the two practices may be insufficient. Grosjean (1982, p. 308) points out that “A code switch can be of any length (a word, a phrase, a sentence)”. In a similar line, Myers-Scotton (1993a) argues that numerous studies on CS have documented many cases where the CS consists of only one word. Poplack and Sankoff (1984) propose four criteria for distinguishing between borrowing and CS: frequency of use, native-language synonym displacement, morphophonemic and/or syntactic integration, and acceptability.

-Frequency of use

The foreign word will be considered as a form of borrowing if it is used more frequently by many speakers of the recipient language. In contrast, if it is not used regularly, it will be treated as CS.

-Native-language synonym displacement

Poplack and Sankoff (1984) mention that this may be the most solid rule to discriminate between borrowing and CS. Based on this measure, the foreign word will be only regarded as a borrowed word if it does not have an equivalent in the recipient language to the extent that this word will replace another word for a similar concept in that language.

-Morphophonemic and/or syntactic integration

This principle suggests that the foreign word will be treated as a borrowed item if it follows the phonology and the morphology of the recipient language, such as if it is used with prefixes and suffixes.

-Acceptability

Finally, a word from a different language will be regarded as borrowing if it is widely accepted by native speakers of the recipient language to the extent that this word will be recorded in the dictionaries of that language.

It is important to note that, according to Poplack and Sankoff (1984), considering all these criteria when deciding if a case is borrowing or CS may not always be straightforward. For example, a foreign word may be used widely in the context of

another language, but only because it is used in CS. Moreover, a foreign word may take the morphological or phonological patterns of the recipient language only because the speaker does not have enough competence in the language where that word comes from. Acceptability can also be confusing especially in situations where the recipient language is “inferior” to the source language (Poplack & Sankoff, 1984, p. 104). Despite all these points, Poplack and Sankoff (1984, p. 105) maintain that the four criteria as a whole are useful in differentiating between CS and borrowing because “as a borrowed word is more and more used, it tends to become phonologically and morphologically integrated, to displace competing recipient language forms,' and at least eventually, to be accepted by its native speakers”.

Overall, it is significant to note that people normally borrow a word from another language when they need to name new concepts or inventions that are acquired from abroad (Campbell, 1998). This is exactly what is happening in Arab societies with names of products of modern technology. For example, most Arab Twitter users now use some English words such as ‘hashtag’ “and ‘thread’ because these do not have Arabic equivalents. Therefore, I will differentiate between borrowed words and CS in the current study. Hence, the majority of words related to Twitter and information technology will be categorised as cases of borrowing.

2.3.3. Types of code-switching

Numerous scholars have proposed different ways to classify types of CS. Most of them have tried to identify these types based on the place of switching in the

conversation. One of the most popular approaches is suggested by Myers-Scotton (1993a) who divides CS into inter-sentential and intra-sentential. The first type involves switching from one language to another between sentences. In contrast, in the case of intra-sentential CS, the switch happens within the same sentence.

Another classification is suggested by Muysken (2000) who divides CS patterns into three types: alternation, insertion, Congruent lexicalisation. The first type (alternation) means switching between two complex structures of different languages across sentences (Muysken, 2000). This definition is like inter-sentential CS. The second one (insertion) refers to the use of simple lexical items from one language into the structure of another language in the same sentence (Muysken, 2000). This description is similar to the description of intra-sentential CS. Thirdly, congruent lexicalisation refers to “a situation where the two languages share a grammatical structure which can be filled lexically with elements from either language” (Muysken, 2000, p. 6). It means that the switch is between different varieties and of the same languages.

The definition of intra-sentential CS may seem identical to the description of what some researchers call ‘code-mixing’ which may be defined as “the embedding or mixing of various linguistics units, i.e., affixes, words, phrases, and clauses from two distinct grammatical systems or subsystems within the same sentence and the same speech situations” (Bokamba, 1988, p. 24). In other words, what is happening in CS is that the speaker begins using one code in the first sentence and moves to another in the second sentence. In contrast, the speaker in code-mixing uses elements from both languages in the same sentence (Bokamba, 1988). Meisel (1989) claims, in code-mixing, the speaker is

mixing elements from the two languages because he or she does not have the ability to distinguish between them. Nevertheless, Auer (1998, p. 16) argues that both CS and code-mixing “co-occur” in some conversations to the extent that it is difficult to separate the two. Moreover, according to Myers-Scotton (1993a), using both terms may cause unwanted confusion. Hence, a large number of scholars have adopted CS as a term to describe both phenomena (Albirini, 2016). Following that, and since the unit of analysis in the present study will be each tweet written by the participants, I will adopt code-switching as a general term to refer to the cases that involve shifting between two languages or varieties in the same tweet.

2.3.4. Code-switching in digital communication

Many researchers have documented the use of CS between different languages and varieties by individuals in different online modes. However, research has shown that CS is more frequent in some modes than others. Lee (2007) found that CS was more common in ICQ¹ compared with emails by the same participant. She explained that this could be the result of the formality of emails compared with ICQ which is designed primarily for informal communication. She also said this is due to the synchronous nature of ICQ, whereas the communication in emails is asynchronous². This was supported by

¹ An online instant messaging tool.

² In synchronous communication, the interaction is happening in real time where all participants are online and respond immediately after the message from another user is posted. In asynchronous communication, in contrast, people interact even if they are not online at the same time. It is possible for the recipient of a message to read and reply to it at any time (Beißwenger & Storrer, 2008).

Paolillo (2011) who claims that CS is likely to be more regular in synchronous online modes than in asynchronous ones. This is because while the interaction in the former is similar to the offline interaction because it includes a quick conversation between users, each user can take a longer time to respond in the latter which may prevent the online interaction from resembling the typical offline interaction (Androutsopoulos, 2013a). It is important to note that although this indicates the popularity of CS in synchronous modes, it does not mean that CS does not happen in asynchronous communication modes as we will discuss later in this section. However, Androutsopoulos (2013a) argues that this makes the occurrence of CS in the asynchronous modes is an interesting area for investigation.

In terms of patterns of CS in digital communication modes, most studies have used the three most popular sociolinguistic models to study CS. The first model suggested by Blom and Gumperz (1972) who distinguish between two types of CS. The first type is situational CS, which occurs because of changes in the situational factors such as topic, setting, interlocutors. The second type is metaphorical CS, which is used to achieve specific communicative purposes without any change in the situational factors. Gumperz (1982, pp. 75-80) categorises these purposes into six functions: quotation, addressee specification, interjections, reiteration, message qualification, personalisation versus objectivisation. In addition, Gumperz (1982, p. 98) argues that CS can serve as a contextualisation cue when people talk because “it generates the presupposition in terms of which the content of what is said is decoded”. Another model is the markedness model by Myers-Scotton (1988, 1993b) which assumes that “code choices are understood as

indexing rights-and-obligations... between participants in a given interaction type” (Myers-Scotton, 1993b, p. 84). These choices are taken based on the rationality of the social actors in a given situation (Myers-Scotton, 1999). The third model is the conversational approach by Auer (1984, 1988, 1995, 1998). Auer (1998) argues that to analyse CS, we should focus on all the details of its occurrence in the conversational situation. In other words, understanding the meaning of CS or “why” it happens requires that we should first examine “how” the switch is made in the conversation (Wei, 1998, p. 163). It is essential to note that these models have focused on CS in the offline context which is different from the online context. Nevertheless, Androutsopoulos (2013a) states that studying the nature of CS in various online modes cannot be done independently of these offline sociolinguistic models.

As an early attempt, Paolillo (1996) examines the practices of CS in a web forum used by Punjabi speakers living in the US, Canada, and the UK for discussing `issues related to Punjabi culture. Paolillo depended on the markedness model (Myers-Scotton, 1988, 1993b). Paolillo (1996) considered English the unmarked (expected) choice and Punjabi the marked (not expected) choice. However, Van Gass (2008) argues against the use of markedness model to examine CS in some online domains such as Internet Relay Chat (IRC)³. She explains that the fact that the interaction in these modes is characterised by anonymity makes approaching CS based on markedness relations problematic because

³ IRC is a shared, written, online dialogue that takes place in close to real time (Barnes, 2013).

these relations cannot be negotiated if the user does not know the identity of the person he or she is communicating with. Thus, Van Gass (2008) decided to use Auer's conversational approach to study Afrikaans-English CS among South African university students in their use of IRC. Van Gass (2008) argues that this approach could be the most suitable model for approaching CS in IRC communication which resembles the flow of offline conversation. The analysis revealed that CS was used for quotation, emphasis, and interpretation. The conversational approach was also used by Themistocleous (2015) who focused on CS between Standard Greek (SG) and the regional variety of the Greek community in Cyprus (CG) in IRC. The findings showed that although Greek-Cypriots used to write in SG, they started adopting CG in their online writing. Results also showed that language use online follows the same pattern of linguistic practices among the Greek-Cypriot speech community. In other words, these chatters write in CG and switch to Standard Greek for indicating authority or showing prestigious or religious positions. Nevertheless, Auer's model has been criticised by some scholars for several reasons. For example, Myers-Scotton and Bolonyai (2001, p. 5) mention that the complete reliance on the structure of the conversation ignores the impact of "the wider social context" on the conversation because as Gafaranga (2005) stresses that the conversational structure is usually a product and not the source of social linguistic norms. Hence, it might be difficult to analyse CS without studying the linguistic norms that lead individuals to choose a specific structure in a particular conversation.

Georgakopoulou (1997) combines the frameworks of interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Gumperz, 1982) and ethnography of communication (e.g. Saviile-Troike, 1989) to

investigate CS practices of 7 Greek native speakers living in London in their email messages. Georgakopoulou asserts that these models can help understand linguistic practices in social communication because they are both interested in language use in situational and socio-cultural settings. The aim was to explore self-presentation and self-alliance in emails. Results showed that CS (between English and Greek,) and style switching between different Greek varieties were used by the participants as devices for self-presentation and self-alliance.

Gumperz's framework, especially metaphorical CS, is widely used in many studies investigating CS in the message boards of a personal website (Sebba, 2003), diasporic websites (e.g.Androutsopoulos, 2006), and web forums (e.g.Androutsopoulos, 2007). These studies documented several functions for CS in online communication which suggests that CS occurs in online interaction is not a random activity by the users (Androutsopoulos, 2013b). These functions were also documented in social networking sites. For example, Dabrowska (2013) analysed Facebook posts written by Polish-English and Hindi-English speakers and found that Polish users switched to English for quotation, introducing humour, reaching non-Polish speakers, and shortening long Polish phrases. The main reasons for switching to English by the Indian group were indicating emphasis, expressing emotion, and for a quotation. Similarly, Androutsopoulos (2013b) found that CS between Greek, German, and English occurred in Facebook posts written by Greek students living in Germany. He concluded that those students switched between languages depending on the topic they discussed or the person they were interacting with. Another study was conducted by Halim and Maros (2014) to explore the functions

of CS in Facebook posts written by some Malay-English bilingual users. It was found that these functions comprise seeking emphasis, clarifying a message, and showing emotions.

In terms of the Arab context, several studies have examined linguistic practices of Arab users across different online modes and have found several functions of CS in online interaction (e.g. Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Bianchi, 2013; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003; Warschauer et al., 2002). For instance, Warschauer et al. (2002) investigated CS in email and chat and found that participants switched to Egyptian Arabic to express personal emotions especially when they felt that those emotions could not be expressed clearly in English. Another study was conducted Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) who studied CS between Arabic and English in mobile text messages among Jordanian University students. The results showed that Arabic was used for greeting, quotations, and cultural and religious functions. In contrast, English was used for showing prestige, mentioning academic terms, and for discussing taboo or offensive topics. CS by Arab individuals on Twitter and Facebook have been also documented by a group of researchers (Alfaifi, 2013; Eldin, 2014; Kosoff, 2014; Salia, 2011). These studies are discussed in detail when I talk about studies focusing on the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites (section 2.8.).

Based on the previous discussion, the present study will use Gumperz's notion of metaphorical CS as a base for analysing cases of CS. This entails keeping in mind all CS functions recorded in the studies mentioned earlier in this section when analysing CS between Arabic and English. In addition, since the data involves cases of CS between different varieties of Arabic, I will rely on the functions suggested by Albirini (2011) who

studied the reasons for switching between SA and CA. Reasons for switching from CA to SA include emphasising an important point in a speech, asking for emphasis and attention, introducing quotations, changing to a serious tone, producing rhyming stretches of discourse, taking a pedantic role, and introducing a pan-Arab and pan-Muslim identity. By contrast, switching from SA to CA is used for shifting to a comic tone, simplifying ideas, insulting others, presenting everyday sayings, underestimating a specific section of the conversation, and introducing indirect quotations (Albirini, 2011).

At the same time, my conceptual framework for analysing online linguistic practices incorporates the notion of ‘translanguaging’ and the methodological paradoxes that come with translanguaging which I discuss in the next section.

2.4. Translanguaging

Cen Williams, a well-known educator, used the Welsh word “trawsieithu” to describe the pedagogical use of two languages inside the same lesson in Welsh schools (Baker, 2011; García & Wei, 2014; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012b). Then, “trawsieithu” was translated into English as ‘translanguaging’ (Baker, 2011). Williams (2002) states that in translanguaging, the child receives the information in one language (e.g. English) and uses it in another language (e.g. Welsh). Williams (2002) also stresses that translanguaging can be very beneficial for children who are fluent in both languages and might be not appropriate for children who are at the beginning of their second language learning.

Baker (2006, 2011) has discussed the advantages of translanguaging for students. First, it provides them with a deeper understanding of the subject taught. The ability to write about a topic in one language after discussing it in another language could be difficult unless the students have a deep understanding of that topic. In addition, translanguaging may lead to children having more cooperation between the school and the home, because the parents can help their children in their first language. Moreover, another advantage for translanguaging is that it enables students to develop their second language because they communicate with fluent first-language speakers inside the class. Finally, it also allows the student to improve their second language, as it can prevent the student from trying to do the less challenging tasks in their second language and do the majority of the work in their first language. Furthermore, Lewis et al. (2012b) state that the popular use of translanguaging could lead to a change in the negative attitudes towards bilingualism. Instead of the common belief in the past that the use of two languages could cause a kind of confusion in the learner's mind, it could be seen as an approach to facilitate learning.

2.4.1. Development of translanguaging

After the success of translanguaging in Welsh schools, the term has been developed outside the educational context by many scholars (Canagarajah, 2011a; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012a; Lewis et al., 2012b; Wei, 2011). García (2009, p. 45) used 'translanguaging' to refer to "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds".

Translanguaging as a social practice can be defined as “the use of one’s idiolect or linguistic repertoire without regard for the socially and politically defined boundaries of named languages (Otheguy et al., 2015, p. 303). Similarly, Canagarajah (2011a, p. 401) defines translanguaging as “the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system”. The above-mentioned definitions present different perspectives of translanguaging. While Baker (2011) assumes the existence of two separate languages in the bilingual’s mind, the other definitions believe that all the linguistic abilities the bilinguals have are integrated into one system. García and Wei (2014) stress that translanguaging does not mean that there are two separate languages. It seems that García and Wei’s view goes in line with the view put forward by Grosjean (1989) who indicates that the bilingual is not “two monolinguals in one person”.

García (2009) considered that translanguaging, rather than explaining the bilinguals’ language practices from the perspective of the language itself, tries to understand these practices from the viewpoint of the users. Furthermore, Wei (2011) states that translanguaging in its nature is dynamic because it has the ability to move between different kinds of linguistic contexts and systems (speaking, writing, listening, reading, remembering). He also mentions that the suffix ‘languaging’ indicates that language is treated as a verb. He used ‘translanguaging space’ to refer to bilingual practices. He argues that translanguaging could make a space for multilingual users to use a combination of their personal experience, beliefs and ideology, and their intellectual ability to create the meaning.

Canagarajah (2011a) argues that translanguaging is a natural phenomenon for multilingual students. García (2009) stresses that translanguaging enables us to see language as a tool for communication between bilinguals. It does not concentrate just on the language itself. Furthermore, García and Wei (2014) claim that communication in multilingual family events does not occur without translanguaging. According to Canagarajah (2015), translanguaging does not mean that linguistic abilities are the same. He states that all of us have the ability to translanguage even if we do not have the same level of proficiency in all languages.

2.4.2. Translanguaging outside the school context

Some scholars have explored translanguaging outside the school contexts. Using observations and interviews, Wei (2011) explored the linguistic practices of three Chinese youths in London. The findings indicated that translanguaging enabled these multilingual users to create a social space for using a combination of their personal experience, beliefs and ideology, and their intellectual ability to create meaning. Wei (2011) maintains that translanguaging by its very nature is dynamic because it enables people to move between different kinds of linguistic contexts and systems (speaking, writing, listening, reading, remembering). The use of interviews in this study helped to provide a clear image of the beliefs and attitudes of the participants towards language use. It was noted that even though Wei used observations and interviews, the findings were presented only based on what the participants said about how they used their repertoires during the interview. As a result, it was not clear how and why observations were used in this study. Another

comment on this study is that it would have been more useful if the study had actually presented some examples of translanguaging.

Creese, Blackledge, and Hu (2016) also used ethnography to investigate the speech of two bilingual butchers in Birmingham, UK. They analysed how they interacted with customers, with other butchers, and with each other, and noticed regular movements between languages. Words and expressions from English and different varieties of Chinese were used in a flexible way by the participants. According to the authors, languages in many cases were not considered by the participants the most important part of the conversations. They concluded that translanguaging and translation are general practices of individuals in multilingual contexts.

Furthermore, Creese, Baynham, and Trehan (2016) observed the practices of immigrant couples in some British cities and distinguished between three types of translanguaging. First, interlingual translanguaging, which includes moving across more than language. The second type is intralingual translanguaging includes movement between different registers, such as technical/specialist registers. Finally, intersemiotic translanguaging which includes translanguaging between semiotic modes, such as using different gestures and mimes in buying and selling. However, one might say that it is not always possible to decide what to label certain cases of translanguaging. For example, there could be more than one type in a single case of translanguaging such as when a tweet includes movement across languages in addition to the use of emoji. Hence, in the current study, I will use translanguaging to refer to any flexible use of participants' linguistic repertoires without considering these types.

While the above studies focused on face-to-face interactions, other studies have investigated the online practices of bilinguals on social media such as the study conducted by (Androutsopoulos, 2013b). He examined practices of seven Greek students in Germany on Facebook and found that these practices in social media depend on a wide range of repertoires. Androutsopoulos (2013b) suggests using the term 'Networked multilingualism' to name the multilingual practices of individuals when they are communicating with other individuals via the Internet. Similarly, Dovchin (2015) explored the linguistic practices of four Mongolian university students on Facebook. The findings indicated that participants' online practices included the use of various linguistic and cultural repertoires. Dovchin (2015, p. 1) argues that:

“the online mixed youth language practices should be understood as ‘translingual’ not only due to their varied recombination of linguistic and cultural resources, genres, modes, styles and repertoires, but also due to their direct subtextual connections with wider socio-cultural, historical and ideological meanings”.

To conclude, all these studies showed how multilingual individuals utilise translanguaging as a way to facilitate their learning. Moreover, it is used in communication between multilingual individuals outside the school context. However, it is important to note that analysing translanguaging depending only on the context without interviewing the users themselves could lead to a poor and personalised understanding of translanguaging (Canagarajah, 2011b). It is therefore important to involve the users themselves to explore how and why they translanguage in order to

understand the value of these translingual practices. This is a key premise that underpins the methodological design of the current project.

Having covered the literature of code-switching and translanguaging, the following section covers the relationship between language and identity which has become unpredictable because of the impact of globalization (Rampton, 2019).

2.5. Identity

Identity is a complex concept that has been the subject of investigation in many different disciplines such as psychology, sociology, history, linguistics, and sociolinguistics (Albirini, 2016; Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Bucholtz and Hall (2010, p. 18) define identity as “the social poisoning of self and other”.

Fearon (1999) distinguishes between two types of identity: personal and social. According to Fearon (1999, p. 11), “personal identity is a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways”. On the other hand, identity can be seen as a social category, when a group of people is categorised by a certain label such as American, Muslim, father, homosexual, citizen, worker (Fearon, 1999)

In the field of sociology, identity was traditionally viewed as something fixed (Hall, 1990). What that means is that in the personal aspect of the identity, every individual has one identity, which is built during adolescence, and does not change over time

(Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004). In terms of social identity, it was thought that members of a particular society shared a unified identity (Cerulo, 1997).

However, many scholars have developed a post-structuralist, performative understanding of identity. Hall (1990) claims that identity should not be regarded as “an already accomplished fact”. Rather, he stresses that we should consider identity “as production which is never “complete”, always in process (Hall, 1990, p. 222). In the same vein, Giddens (1991, p. 52) argues that “identity is not something that it is just given as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action system but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual”. It seems that both Hall and Giddens share the same thinking of the social constructionists’ perspective (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Hall, 1996), which considers identity as a continuing process, which “is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 194). Therefore, an appropriate definition of identity could be the one that was suggested by Mathews (2000, p. 17):

“the ongoing sense the self has of who it is, as conditioned through its ongoing interactions with others. Identity is how the self conceives of itself and labels itself”.

Identity is socially constructed, which means that identity is something we achieve with the relation with others through the process of identification (Stets & Burke, 2000; Woodward, 1997) which is a term used to describe “the process of identifying with others either through the lack of awareness of difference or separation or as a result of perceived similarities” (Woodward, 1997, p. 14). Another important point is that since identity is

derived from various sources such as gender, race, social class, religion, and nationality (Woodward, 1997), it may be logical to say that in various social situations, we could play different identity roles (Burke, 1991). A person might be a student at university, a father at home, a member of staff at work, or a Muslim at the mosque. Gee (2000) distinguished between four types of identities. The first one is natural identity which refers to the biological features of the individual (e.g. man, woman). The second type is institutional identities (e.g. being a professor in a university). Another type is discourse identities which refers to how other individuals recognise some qualities of a particular person (e.g. charismatic). The fourth type is affinity identity which refers to the person's affiliations with a particular group. This led many scholars to think of the idea of the multiplicity of identities rather than one singular identity (Baker, 2011; Barton & Lee, 2013; Grossberg, 1996).

2.5.1 Language and identity

There is a strong relationship between language and identity. Joseph (2004, p. 12) claims that "the entire phenomenon of identity can be understood as a linguistic one" because the way an individual speaks can provide us with much information about his or her identity. Similarly, Heller (1982, p. 308) states that language could be considered "a symbol of ethnic identity, and language choice is a symbol of ethnic relations as well as a means of communication". In a similar vein, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) argue that language choice can be considered as an act of identity. In other words, instead of

talking about their identities explicitly, people sometimes enact their identities through the way they use the language.

However, there have been many changes over time in terms of how the relationship between language and identity is conceptualised (Drummond & Schleef, 2016). Early research on identity, particularly in studies of language variation, (e.g. Labov, 1966; Macaulay, 1977; Trudgill, 1974) considered identity as something fixed, stable and it was based on belonging to large social groups (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Drummond & Schleef, 2016). This perception of identity has been criticised by various scholars who have argued that identity is constructed and negotiated through language (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). For example, Cameron (1997) argues that considering language use as a reflection of social identities ignores the fact that linguistic norms are used by individual speakers. In other words, individuals within these broad social categories do not share the same, stable identity that can be linked to language (Drummond & Schleef, 2016).

Recent sociolinguistic studies treat identity as something constructed through stylistic practice, instead of considering that linguistic practice is a reflection of social identities as it was thought in research in earlier research (Eckert, 2012). Pennycook (2003) discusses the relationship between language and identity by talking about the notion of performativity. According to Pennycook (2003), individuals do not use languages or varieties because of their identity, but rather perform their identities through their use of varieties and languages. This view was also supported by (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) who maintain that identity can be considered as “the product rather than the source of

linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 585). Therefore, identity researchers started to go beyond social categories, and talk about ‘*Social meaning*’. Moore and Podesva (2009, p. 448) define social meaning as “the stances and personal characteristics indexed through the deployment of linguistic form in interaction”. That means every specific linguistic feature has a particular social meaning. For example, pronouncing (ing) with “g” (e.g. eating) may indicate education or intelligence, and pronouncing without “g” (e.g. eatin) may indicate ignorance or lack of education (Campbell-Kibler, 2007). Thus, plenty of scholars tried to address the relationship between language and identity by discussing concepts such as ‘Style’ and ‘Stance’.

According to Bucholtz (2009, p. 146) style can be defined as “a multimodal and multidimensional cluster of linguistic and other semiotic practices for the display of identities in interaction”. The underlying assumption of the idea of style is that the person does not always speak in the same way all the time (Bell, 1997). Style is normally used when discussing the difference between situations (Campbell-Kibler, Eckert, Mendoza-Denton, & Moore, 2006) because individuals speak differently in multiple situations, and each one of these situations can convey distinct social meaning (Bell, 1997).

The concept of stance may be defined as “a person’s expression of their relationship to their talk, and a person’s expression of their relationship to their interlocutors” (Kiesling, 2009, p. 172). In other words, stance acts like a contextualization cue that tells interlocutors about the nature of the role the speaker wants to present

regarding the form and content of his or her words (Jaffe, 2007, p. 56). For example, a professional academic may construct their identity through a range of stances like knowledgeability, objectivity, and intellectual flexibility (Ochs, 1993). It is essential to note that the main idea of stance is that the relationship between language and identity is not direct, but rather depends on the interlocutor's understanding of how certain social acts and stances are associated with particular social identities (Ochs, 1993).

There are three types of stance: evaluation, positioning, and alignment. The evaluative stance is "the process whereby a stance taker orients to an object of stance and characterizes it as having some specific quality or value" (Du Bois, 2007) by using words like *horrible* or *perfect*. Positioning refers to "the act of situating a social actor with respect to responsibility for stance and for invoking sociocultural value" (Du Bois, 2007, p. 143). The stancetaker positions himself or herself through taking an affective stance, when he or she presents his or her emotions as in "I am glad", or epistemic stance when he or she presents himself or herself as a knowledgeable person like in the sentence "I know" (Du Bois, 2007). Alignment can be defined as the act of calibrating the relationship between two stances, and by implication between two stancetakers (Du Bois, 2007) as in "I agree with you". However, Du Bois (2007, p. 163) noted that these types can exist together in a single act "I evaluate something and thereby position myself, and align or disalign with you". It is significant to note that the current study will consider the concept of stance as an important tool in order to explore the participants' identities.

Overall, every one of us has a group of changing identities that can be shaped and negotiated depending on the language we use in a particular situation (Joseph, 2010).

Therefore, one can argue that every time Arab students in the UK use their rich linguistic repertoires online, they participate in a process of identity formation, and negotiation. The current study will use the five principles for analysing identity proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005). In the following lines, I will present these principles and talk about the importance of them regarding my study.

First, the emergence principle indicates that instead of considering identity the source of linguistic practices, identity emerges through these practices. This is important for my study especially when the participants' linguistic practices do not follow the social category they are normally assigned to (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Second, the positionality principle suggests that identities include macro-level social categories and micro-levels of identity that are formed from time to time in interaction. This is also significant because when I address participants' online identities, I have to look for micro-level identities (e.g. funny or wise person) in addition to the broad social categories (e.g. Arab, Muslim). Third, the indexicality principle, indicates that identity may be constructed through the use of diverse linguistic practices such as the explicit mention of certain identity categories, the use of stances or styles, and the use of specific linguistic structures and systems. Applying this principle in my study means that I will examine participants' identities by focusing on identity labels (e.g. I am an Arab), particular linguistic practices (e.g. CS), the use of different languages or varieties (e.g. SA, CA or English) in addition to different stances the participants take in different occasions. Fourth, the relationality principle is that Identity is not constructed individually but through different relationships between self and other. This principle is important in my study, especially when

examining participants' stances such as when they evaluate what other users write in their tweets or when they align with other Twitter's users. Finally, the partialness principle is "Identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 588). This principle is crucial for my analysis because understanding that the construction of identity is not always determined entirely by the intention of the producer makes me more careful when dealing with participants' responses when I ask them about the relationship between a particular linguistic practice and a certain aspect of identity.

2.5.2 Language and identity on social networking sites

Since the beginning of the spread of online communication modes, some scholars have started to talk about identity in online communication. For example, Turkle (1996, p. 342) says that "computer-mediated communication can serve as a place for construction or reconstruction of identity". In addition, she points out that the Internet can give the opportunity for many users to adopt multiple and diverse identities (Turkle, 1996). Moreover, McKenna and Bargh (1998) found that the Internet helped some members of newsgroups to reveal some aspects of identities they may not be able to present in their real lives. One reason for that is the ability of individuals to use anonymity in their online communication (Vásquez, 2014). Indeed, the Internet allows its users to decide what they want to reveal or not about their age, nationality, gender, and so on

(Suler, 2002). Gonzales and Hancock (2008) argue that social networking sites enable online identity formation by showing some personal information and interacting with the audience (friends and their connections). This interaction with a particular audience might be the only thing that encourages users to perform their identity (Schreiber, 2015). Thus, after the beginning of the widespread use of social media platforms, many researchers have explored identity in social media. These include (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006; Gonzales & Hancock, 2008). However, a major limitation of these studies is that they investigated identity by focusing only on the information of the profile section of users of these sites (Vásquez, 2014). Marwick (2005), argues that focusing on information found in the profile section might not be appropriate because the choices for creating the profile are controlled by the site's categories. This could lead the user to present him or herself in a way that is created by the website, not the user (Marwick, 2005). Vásquez (2014, p. 67) maintains that "Individuals posting online clearly have a much wider range of discursive resources at their disposal to perform identity, which inevitably extends beyond the boundaries suggested by a particular platform's profile structure". Therefore, many studies have been conducted to explore identity in social media by not focusing only on information found in the user profile, but also looking at online linguistic practices. For example, Schreiber (2015) observed the linguistic practices of a Serbian university student (a hip-hop artist) on Facebook for seven months. The aim of the study was to examine how the participant uses multiple varieties of English and Serbian, images, and video to shape his online identity. The findings showed that the participant presents himself as a member of global hip-hop community

by providing some information about hip-hop music, posting some links to videos of hip-hop music, and using slang expressions associated with hip-hop culture.

Similarly, using online ethnography, Dovchin (2015) observed the linguistic practices of four Mongolian university students in their Facebook interaction for two periods (five months, and three months). The study analysed the data using the “transtextual” analytic framework suggested by Pennycook (2007). These tools included asking the users themselves for interpretations of their practices. The results revealed that the linguistic practices of each one of the participants were used to express his or her individual identity. For example, the practices of a 19-year-old hip-hop fan showed his identification with both hip-hop culture and his home country. His daily posts included posts that had expressions that are normally associated with hip-hop cultures, in addition to his use of certain expressions from his native language to show that he was proud of the language of his home country.

Birnie-Smith (2016) also used online ethnography to investigate the online practices of four Chinese-Indonesian users of Facebook and Kaskus (a well-known Indonesian online forum). The focus of the study was on the impact of the participants’ audiences on their language choice and construction of their identity. The participants’ profiles were observed for two months, and three semi-structured interviews were conducted with each one of them. It was found that participants used their linguistic repertoires to construct their group identity in Kaskus. Nevertheless, their linguistic repertoires were employed on Facebook to present their personal identity. This distinction is the result of the fact that the two sites are not similar in terms of their levels

of anonymity. While the participants in Kaskus are normally presented with a high level of anonymity such as the use of pseudonyms which might lead them to use the language of the group to show their unity with his group, Facebook is more personal which might encourage individuals to express their individual identity. The use of both observation and three interviews could allow gaining a deep understanding of participants' linguistic practices. Yet, the questions in the three interviews were mainly general questions about their language use in social media, their friends online, language attitudes, and their language ideologies. Participants were not asked for interpretations for particular linguistic practices. Another point is that while the researcher mentions that she analysed online linguistics practices using discourse analysis, she did not tell us how she analysed the interviews.

Taking all these studies into consideration, it seems evident that social media provides an opportunity for researching online identity construction with a focus on the complexity of language in online spaces, and the negotiation of linguistic and cultural norms.

2.6. Language attitudes, ideologies, and practices

Investigating participants' language attitudes is very important to understand the nature of their online practices. In order to do this, I must talk about the concept of language ideologies to highlight the relationship between attitudes, ideologies and

practices as these three concepts are strongly related to each other. Dyers and Abongdia (2010, p. 120) describe the concept of language ideologies as “the mother of all language attitudes”. At the same time, individuals’ linguistic practices may have an impact on their linguistic beliefs and attitudes (Rampton & Holmes, 2019).

2.6.1 The nature of language attitudes

Ajzen and Fishbein (1980, p. 4) define an attitude as “a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution, or event”. This definition can be applied to language because individuals normally respond favourably or unfavourably to languages, varieties, accents, literacy practices, and word choice (Garrett, 2010). Therefore, language attitudes can be defined as “the socio-psychological evaluative reaction to a certain language or to the speakers of that language” (Albirini, 2016, p. 78). Investigating language attitudes can provide us with a lot of information about the shared thoughts and beliefs about language(s) and variety(s) in a specific speech community (Baker, 1992).

Attitudes have three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural (Baker, 1992; Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2003). The cognitive component is related to belief and thoughts. For example, an Arab individual might think that learning English will help him or her to get a better job. The affective component deals with feelings like the hate or the love of a certain language or variety. The behavioural component involves “readiness for action” (Baker, 1992, p. 13). For example, a person with a positive attitude towards a certain language may try to learn that language. Baker (1992) argues that, in

some cases, there may be a kind of disagreement between the cognitive and affective components of attitude. For example, a person may have negative feelings towards a certain language. At the same time, this person may also think that he or she should learn that language in order to have a better job. In the next section, I am going to discuss the complex relationship between attitudes and behaviour.

2.6.2 Attitudes and behaviour

The attitudes a person has may have an impact on that person's behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Based on that, if a person has a positive attitude towards a certain linguistic practice such as CS, this practice may occur regularly when he or she speaks. In addition, it is widely assumed that it is possible to identify an individual's attitude from the behaviour of that person (Garrett et al., 2003). However, this relationship is not always straightforward as a contradiction may exist between attitude in behaviour in some cases (Baker, 1992). Several explanations have been suggested for this contradiction. First, the absence of agreement between attitude and behaviour could be a result of failing in collecting reliable data regarding attitudes (Garrett et al., 2003). To explain, because attitudes are hidden and "cannot be directly observed" (Baker, 1992, p. 11), the most common way to know a person's attitude is by asking direct questions about language attitudes using questionnaires or interviews (Garrett, 2010). The issue is related to what people decide to say when they are asked about their attitudes (Garrett et al., 2003). For example, some individuals instead of talking about their real attitudes, they may report socially acceptable attitudes, or they may describe attitudes that are similar to what they suppose the researcher wants to hear. The second point is related to the

behaviour itself which, according to Baker (1992), may change from one context to another. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) mention that in certain cases the social context may prevent individuals from behaving in harmony with their attitudes. For example, a person might avoid behaving in line with his or her attitude because he or she might be afraid of possible hostile reactions of other people in the society. In other cases, some people may adjust their behaviour to gain some benefits. A person applying for a job may speak in the interview in a way that is different from the variety which he or she has a positive attitude towards, in order to increase the possibility of getting the job. (Garrett et al., 2003). Finally, it is essential to say that although people sometimes have the desire to act in accordance with their attitudes, some circumstances might not allow them to do so (Garrett et al., 2003). A perfect example would be an Arab individual who holds a positive attitude towards SA, but his or her lack of education may prevent that person from using SA.

2.6.3 Language attitudes and language ideologies

Irvine and Gal (2000, p. 35) define language ideologies as "the ideas with which participants and observers frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them". An example of language ideologies is the belief that a particular language or variety is normally associated with prestige or education. However, Rampton and Holmes (2019) differentiate between dominant and emerging ideologies, where the former refers to

mainstream social beliefs about the language, and the latter, in contrast, refers to the ideologies that emerge as a result of practices. Overall, Dyers and Abongdia (2010) state that a useful way to understand the concept is by considering the four dimensions that are suggested by Kroskrity (2000, pp. 8-21):

- language ideologies represent the perception of language and discourse that is constructed in the interest of a specific social or cultural group.

- language ideologies are profitably conceived as multiple because of the multiplicity of meaningful social divisions (class, gender, clan, elites, generations, and so on) within sociocultural groups that have the potential to produce divergent perspectives expressed as indices of a group membership.

- members may display varying degrees of awareness of local language ideologies.

- members' language ideologies mediate between social structures and forms of talk.

Studying language Ideologies is significant because these ideologies do not focus on language only, but also links between language and social phenomena (Gal, 1992). For example, Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) argue that language ideologies are important for carrying out linguistic analysis because they can help to relate language to social and personal identity.

There is a strong relationship between language attitudes and language ideologies. Someone's attitudes might be a product of common ideologies of the society

where that person lives (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010). As argued by Dragojevic, Marko, Giles, and Watson (2013), language attitudes are not the result of the current time but are a product of many beliefs that can be traced back centuries. Besides, while attitudes are concerned with personal level, ideology may be described as a “global attitude” of people in a particular community (Baker, 1992, p. 15). Overall, it can be claimed that behind each group of language attitudes is a clear language ideology which “has its roots in the sociopolitical and historical environment of particular communities” (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010, p. 132). Finally, the following table provides a summary of the major differences between both concepts.

Language ideology	Language attitudes
Group/community beliefs	Individual thoughts, feelings, reactions
Develops in interests of powerful groups	Possessed by individuals
Shaped by socio-historical events	Rooted in individual experience
Long-term, deeply rooted and resistant to change	Can be both short- and long-term, but more mutable than ideologies
Strong effect on language learning and motivation	May affect language learning and motivation, but not always
Play a central role in language policies and their successful implementation	May play a role in the creation of language policies, but not their implementation
Conscious, overt assessment of languages and their speakers	Often unconscious, covert assessments; sometimes distinguishes between languages and speakers of those languages

Table 2.1 Differences between language attitudes and language ideologies (Dyers & Abongdia, 2010, p. 132).

2.6.4 Language attitudes and language ideologies in the Arab context

Language ideologies play a major role in Arabic sociolinguistic contexts. Hoigilt (2018) claims that the differences between SA and CA are ideological in addition to the functional differences. According to Bassiouney (2015, p. 109), most language ideologies in the Arab world are linked to “self-image” in addition to some of the historical and political factors. These ideologies have a direct impact on Arab individuals’ language attitudes in the sociolinguistic context in the Arab world. In this section, I discuss attitudes and ideologies about SA, CA, and English in the Arab world. Attitudes and ideologies about code switching (Arab/English and SA/CA) are also discussed. Lastly, I will talk about attitudes towards the use of Arabizi (writing Arabic using the Roman alphabet).

First, many studies have found that most Arab individuals usually hold more positive attitudes towards SA than CA (Albirini, 2016; Almahmoud, 2013; Assaf, 2001; Ennaji, 2007; Haeri, 2003; Hussein & El-Ali, 1989; Mizher & Al-Haq, 2014; Saidat, 2010). For example, Ennaji (2007) explored the language attitudes of 124 Moroccan individuals. He found that the majority of his participants have a positive attitude towards SA. The participants also showed negative attitudes towards Moroccan Arabic which was considered by them as a corrupted language. Similarly, Saidat (2010) investigated the language attitudes among 119 Jordanians from different cities and different ages and genders and found that the participants have a favourable attitude towards SA despite reporting their lack of fluency in SA.

The attitude towards SA might be a result of a group of dominant beliefs among Arab individuals, in addition to some language policies in the Arab world. To begin with, SA normally holds a prestigious status because it is associated with Islam (Albirini, 2016; Bassiouney, 2015). The fact that the Quran, the holy book of Muslims, is written in SA makes most Arab people view SA as a sacred language (Anderson, 2006). Also, SA holds a prestigious status because it is the language of old literary works. Therefore, the majority of Arab individuals believe in the richness and beauty of SA (Albirini, 2016; Hoigilt, 2018). SA is usually seen as the variety of Arabic that has “a rich body of material – lexical, phonological, and morphological” (Brustad, 2017, p. 66). In addition, some government policies in the Arab world reinforce the status of SA. For example, the fact that schools and teachers are encouraged to use SA as a medium of instruction in some Arab countries (Badwan, 2019) could contribute to the association between SA and knowledge and linguistic superiority (Haeri, 2003). Besides, SA is the variety that is usually associated with authority in the Arab world (Bassiouney, 2012) because it is the language of the government’s high officials. An additional factor for the positive attitude towards SA is the widespread belief that SA is the strong and unique marker of pan-Arab identity (Albirini, 2011, 2016; Hoigilt, 2018; S’hiri, 2002). In contrast, the negative attitude towards CA is also a result of some widespread beliefs among many Arabs about CA. One of these is what Milroy (2001) named ‘Standard Language Ideology’. This includes regarding SA as a pure and correct variety of Arabic, and that CA is a corrupted form of Arabic (Hoigilt, 2018). In addition, CA is usually viewed as the language of illiterate and uneducated individuals.

However, it is important to say that there is a change regarding the attitudes towards SA and CA in the Arab world. In terms of SA, Almahmoud (2013) explored language attitudes among 260 Saudi university students and found that although the participants reported a positive attitude towards SA in general, they had a negative attitude towards the use of SA in education because they believe that SA should be used in religious contexts and literature but not science and technology. The participants also mentioned that people have negative attitudes towards them if they use SA in informal situations. Saidat (2003) states that the reason for this attitude is the common idea that people will make fun of individuals who use SA in casual conversation. Similarly, Bassiouney (2015) states that some Egyptians have negative feelings about SA. She mentions that this attitude is the result of how many SA speakers are represented in most Egyptian films. These characters are usually portrayed “as belonging to a lower class, as well as being inflexible and unyielding” (Bassiouney, 2015, p. 122).

Regarding CA, most recent studies showed that Arab people have started to hold more positive attitudes towards CA. (e.g. Alahmadi, 2016; Altakhaineh & Rahrouh, 2017; Eltouhamy, 2016; Kindt & Kebede, 2017; Mizher & Al-Haq, 2014; Saidat, 2010). For example, Saidat (2010) reported that his participants express that they like using CA because it plays a major role in positive social communication. Also, Kindt and Kebede (2017) mention that the positive attitudes towards writing in CA could be the result of the spread of Internet channels which enable individuals to use informal writing.

Second, research investigating the attitudes of Arab individuals have shown that there are positive attitudes towards English (Albirini, 2016; Alkaabi, 2016; Ellili-Cherif &

Alkhateeb, 2015; Esseili, 2017; Palfreyman & Al-Bataineh, 2018; Reza, 2016; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002). For instance, Shaaban and Ghaith (2002) found that their participants have favourable attitudes towards English because they considered it the language of science and technology. Palfreyman and Al-Bataineh (2018) found that their participants' attitudes towards English are positive because it is the lingua franca that can enable people from diverse linguistic backgrounds to communicate effectively. Overall, it can be concluded that English is viewed positively in the Arab world because it is usually associated with knowledge, globalization, and prestige (Albirini, 2016).

Third, Albirini (2016) mentions that some studies have documented the negative attitude towards CS between Arabic and English. For example, Hussein (1999) investigated the attitudes of 352 college students in Jordan towards switching between Arabic and English. The majority of the participants did not favour the use of English words with Arabic because this might lead to the corruption of SA. According to Saidat (2010, p. 237), CS between Arabic and English can be considered as "a form of Arabic that is considered by many Arabs a language that has no roots and grammar". However, findings from recent studies (Al-Qaysi & Al-Emran, 2017; Omar & Ilyas, 2018) indicate that many Arab individuals view CS between English and Arabic as a positive practice. A possible explanation for this is the wide use of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook which can allow users to engage in informal writing as happening with my participants. A quick look at their Twitter's account reveals that they use CS between Arabic and English in their tweets. Therefore, the aim of the current study is to investigate participants' attitudes towards this practice.

Fourth, studies about attitudes towards CS between SA and CA have found that there are negative attitudes towards this practice, with Arab people expressing their negative attitude towards switching between SA and CA especially in written discourse. It is worth mentioning that little attention has been given to attitudes regarding switching between SA and CA in speaking. Albirini (2016, p. 116) explained that this is because “this practice is so unmarked in everyday interaction to the extent that it does not draw much attention”.

Eid (2002) studied Egyptian female short story writers and found negative attitudes towards SA/CA switching. Similarly, Rosenbaum (2011) says that most individuals in the Arab region do not like using SA and CA in literary works. It may be valid to say the ideology that SA is the correct variety of Arabic and CA is a corrupt form of Arabic (Hoigilt, 2018) is the main reason for the spread of the negative attitudes towards combining between the two varieties. That is to say that Arab people may believe that switching between the two varieties is unrespectable because it means combining SA with the corrupted form of Arabic. Nevertheless, Rosenbaum (2011) mentions that there is a change towards more accepting attitudes, especially in Egypt because it is popular to use CA in novels and short stories among Egyptian authors. In addition, many media activists use a combination of SA and CA when they appear on TV channels. It could be argued that this practice which is described by some Arab individuals as the ‘white variety’ (Abdulhamed, 2015; Albarrak, 2018), in addition to the wide use of informal writing domains (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) could encourage Arab people to have more positive attitudes towards switching between SA and CA.

Finally, several studies have found that Arab individuals have negative attitudes toward the use of Arabizi. Yaghan (2008) explored the use of Arabizi among a group of Egyptian undergraduate students and found that the majority of the participants did not like this practice as it, according to them, could ruin the Arabic language. Similarly, Bani-Ismael (2012) investigated the attitudes of 503 of Jordanian university students towards Arabizi. It was found that the participants had negative attitudes towards writing Arabic words in English alphabet. Mimouna (2013) found that Algerian university students reported negative attitudes towards Arabizi despite using it in their online writing.

2.7. Digital communication on Twitter

Various terms have been used to refer to the field that studies this communication. These terms include computer-mediated communication (CMC), electronically mediated communication, digitally mediated communication, online communication, and digital communication. Tagg (2015) argues that there is no perfect term to capture the complexity of online interactions between people.

The concept of CMC has been used since the 1990s (Crystal, 2011). Over time, the definitions of CMC have changed as a result of the development of digital technology. Herring (2001, p. 162) defines CMC as “the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers”. After the emergence of mobile phone technology, the definitions of CMC began to adapt to this new development. For instance, Baron (2003, p. 10) provides a comprehensive definition:

“CMC refers to a written natural language message sent via the Internet. However, the term can also be applied to other written venues that employ computer-based technology to send messages across a distance, including both email and computer conferencing done through in-house intranet systems and contemporary short text messaging (SMS), which is normally transmitted through mobile phone connections”.

However, the term itself can be criticised because it implies that communication happens only through computers (Crystal, 2011). Hence, new terms began to emerge to refer to the field of communication between individuals using Internet tools. Crystal suggests the use of other terms such as electronically mediated communication or digitally mediated communication. Tagg (2015, p. 5) describes digital communication as “the interactions between people that are mediated by digital communication technology”. She recognises that the term might be criticised because it focuses on the role of technology in online communication. However, she argues that many people hold the view that technology is the major characteristic of this type of communication. According to Tagg (2015), digital communication encompasses all kinds of communication involving the Internet or GSM (Global System for Mobile Communication); devices such as laptops, desktop computers, tablets, or smartphones; or platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. Hence, I adopt the term ‘digital communication’ in the current study.

2.7.1 Features of digital communication

Several searchers have found that one of the most important aspects of online

communication is that individuals try to represent the characteristics of the spoken language, such as emphasis or laughter, in their written online interaction. This can be done through three tools: orthographical practices, emoticons, and emoji.

2.7.1.1 Orthographic practices

Werry (1996) investigated the linguistics features of IRC. The most interesting finding was the wide use of abbreviation (e.g. 'u' for you, 'r' for are). Moreover, due to the lack of paralinguistic cues such as intonation and gestures, individuals created new linguistic tools like the use of capitalization and visual images to make online interaction similar to face-to-face communication. These findings are supported by Crystal (2001) who states that one of the major characteristics of Internet language is the common use of abbreviation by individuals online. He points out that abbreviations are not used with single words or short phrases only, but it can also occur with long sentences. He mentions also that the use of capital letters is noticed clearly in digital writing. Since the default setting in the keyboard is lower-case, any capitalization for a certain letter or a word might indicate shouting or emphasising (Crystal, 2001; McCulloch, 2019). Another popular practice is the repetition of some letters. According to Tannen (2013, p. 108), the goal of repeating some letters in online writing is to "provide emphasis and communicate sincerity and depth of emotion". Similar results were found by Palfreyman and Khalil (2003) who examined the language of instant messages applications (MSN Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, and ICQ "I seek you") between female Arab university students in the United Arab Emirates. Findings indicated that participants used some punctuation marks (?) and (!), repetition of some letters to demonstrate their emotions. Moreover, Baron

(2009) found that some Internet users did not follow spelling and punctuation rules in their online writing, such as neglecting the required apostrophe. Androutsopoulos (2013b) studied the posts of some Greek-background users of Facebook and found that these posts included repetition of letters, punctuation marks, and the 'heart' icon. In contrast, Georgakopoulou (1997) indicates that some features of spoken language (e.g. laughter, stress, intonation) might be difficult to present in email communication because email is mostly used as a tool for communication in formal environments (e.g. works, universities).

Overall, these features occur in online interaction as a result of a conscious, deliberate decision (Kötter, 2003). In other words, paralinguistic features such as gestures, intonation, and laughter happen naturally in the spoken language. In contrast, in online communication, these features will not be used unless the individual has the desire to share his or her feeling with other individuals online.

2.7.1.2 Emoticons

The term 'emoticons' is a mixture of two words: emotion and icon (Dresner & Herring, 2010; McCulloch, 2019). Emoticons can be defined as "visual cues formed from ordinary typographical symbols that when read sideways represent feelings or emotions" (Rezabek & Cochenour, 1998, p. 201). Some scholars point out that individuals use emoticons as a result of the absence of nonverbal cues in digital communication (Crystal, 2001; Rezabek & Cochenour, 1998). For example, people use a smiley face with nose :-)

or without nose :) to indicate laughter, and :-(to convey being sad (Evans, 2017).

2.7.1.3 The use of emoji

Emoji may be defined as “standardized picture-words that are used commonly in informal messages of all kinds” (Danesi, 2016, p. 167). People have become more dependent on the use of emoji in their interaction with other users of the Internet than emoticons (Duerscheid & Siever, 2017). McCulloch (2019) states that the reason for this popularity is that using emoji is more practical as there is a wide range of emoji already available in the user’s device. In contrast, individuals need to install other supporting applications if they want to have a large number of emoticons.

In addition to its basic function, which is to show facial expressions, people also use emoji sometimes to add effective tone to the message (Danesi, 2016; Kelly & Watts, 2015). Emoji are normally used when the tone is not serious, and its most common use is in hybrid writing where there are a text and picture (Danesi, 2016). Evans (2017, pp. 129-135) discussed the functions of emoji in detail. He talked about the substitution function when the individuals use emoji instead of writing something. Moreover, emoji has the reinforcement or emphasising function when the emoji is used to reinforce the meaning of the text (e.g.  after writing “I love you”). Another function is the contradictory function when emoji is added to indicate the opposite of what is the written (e.g.  with a serious post to indicate that the writer is kidding. Also, emoji has the complementing function as when the person adds an emoji at the end of the post to

indicate his or her feeling (e.g. 😞 to convey disappointment). Finally, emoji may also serve as a discourse management (e.g. 🙋 at the end of the post to tell my recipient that my idea is clear and that there will be no more messages about this topic). Herring and Dainas (2017, pp. 2187-2189) talk about six pragmatic functions of emoji. First, mention versus use which refers to the emoji itself in contrast to communicative uses of emoji. Second, reaction which refers to the use of emoji to show an emotional response to what is posted by another user. Thirdly, riffing which means a humorous elaboration on a previous post. Fourth, tone modification refers to the use of emoji to modify what is written in the same post. Fifth, an action which is the use of emoji to describe a physical action like the use of heart emoji to mean love. The sixth function is a narrative sequence which is the use of a group of emoji to tell a story or say something.

2.7.2 Practices of Arab Internet users

2.7.2.1 The use of English

Research investigating the practices of Arab Internet users has documented the widespread use of English. Warschauer et al. (2002) conducted a study to explore language choice online by Egyptian Internet users in emails (formal or informal) and in online chat. The participants were 43 young professionals who worked either in the information technology industry or business and research industries. Findings revealed that there was a dominant use of English, in addition to the use of the colloquial form of Arabic. An interesting finding is that standard Arabic in Arabic script was rarely used by the participants online. Warschauer et al. (2002) state that the reason behind the

dominant use of English by the participants is that they work in environments that rely heavily on English such as information technology companies.

Similarly, in terms of mobile text messages, Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) collected data from 46 Jordanian university students. Participants were all native speakers of Arabic, and they learned English and used it as a medium of instruction. Although all of them mentioned that they had both Arabic and English keypads, the analysis of the data revealed that English was used more than Arabic. Most of the participants indicated that writing English messages could be less time-consuming because English letters are fewer than Arabic letters on the mobile keypad. In addition, some of them mentioned that they used English because they had more experience in typing in English than Arabic. Etling, Kelly, Faris, and Palfrey (2010) explored blogs in the Arab region and noticed that a large number of bloggers wrote in English and used both English and Arabic. They noticed also that some bloggers from the Maghreb and the Levant used a mixture of French and Arabic. The use of English by Arab individuals has been also documented in some studies about Facebook (e.g. Al-Saleem, 2011; Albirini, 2016; Eldin, 2014; Salia, 2011) and Twitter (Kosoff, 2014; Mashhour, 2016; Strong & Hareb, 2012).

2.7.2.2. Arabizi

Many scholars have revealed that Arab Internet users write Arabic words using the Roman alphabet (Al-Jarf, 2010; Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Al-Tamimi & Gorgis, 2007; Albirini, 2016; Kosoff, 2014; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003; Salia, 2011; Strong & Hareb, 2012; Warschauer et al., 2002). The widespread use of writing Arabic words with English letters among Arab Internet users has led to the creation of new terms such as 'Romanised

Arabic', 'Arabic-English', 'Arabish', and 'Arabizi' (Albirini, 2016). It is important to say that the literature indicates that the use of the Roman alphabet is not unique to Arab Internet users. Paolillo (1996) explored language choice on a Punjabi web discussion forum and noticed that the Punjabi language was written in the Roman alphabets. Similar findings were reported by Gao (2001) who found that the Chinese language was written in the Roman alphabet in emails composed by Chinese university students in the United States of America. In addition to Punjabi and Chinese, the use of the Roman alphabet also has been reported with the Greek language in emails (Georgakopoulou, 1997; Tseliga, 2007) and social networking sites (Androutsopoulos, 2013b).

According to Yaghan (2008, p. 39), Arabizi can be defined as "a slang term that describes a system of writing Arabic with English characters". Yaghan discussed some of the characteristics of Arabizi in detail. First, English consonants are used to replace similar Arabic consonants (e.g. *m* for *م*). Particular numbers are used to represent some Arabic consonants that do not have English counterparts (e.g. 7 for *ع*). The Arabic consonant *ق* can be represented with *a*, *q*, *g*, or *k*, depending on how this sound is pronounced in the regional dialect of the writer. For example, if the user is from Egypt, then he or she may write the letter for the sound *ق*. If the user is from Arabian Gulf countries, then he or she will use the letters *g* or *k*. Second, English vowels are used to represent Arabic vowels (e.g. *a* for "alfatha"; *e* or *i* for "Kasra"; and *o*, *u*, or *ou* for "aldammah"). Another feature is the use of abbreviations to represent some word endings in Arabic. For instance, @ (-aat) is used as a suffix to indicate plurality, and 8 (-eet) is used as a suffix to indicate first-person past tense in Arabic.

2.7.2.2.1 Reasons for Arabizi use

As Danet and Herring (2007) state, that the Internet is designed based on the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) which depends on the Roman alphabet and English language sounds. They argue that this is the reason behind the use of the Roman alphabet for languages normally associated with non-Roman writing systems such as Arabic, Punjabi, Greek, and Chinese. In accordance with Danet and Herring (2007), Mimouna (2013) claims that the high frequency of writing in Arabizi among Arab individuals is because the majority of them use keyboards that are designed based on ASCII.

This justification may have been acceptable at the beginning stages of the Internet when the writing systems of these languages were not yet supported. In recent years, technology has enabled users from almost every language in the world to write in their native language without the use of the Roman script. However, the use of the Roman alphabet has continued to be reported in recent studies (e.g. Albirini, 2016; Androutsopoulos, 2013b; Kosoff, 2014). It might be more logical to raise a question about the motivation behind Internet users' stubbornness to continue using Roman characters to write their native language. In Tseliga (2007) investigation, Greek Internet users stated that writing this way was easier than writing in their native writing system due to the lack of strict grammatical rules.

Many researchers have investigated the reasons for Arab individuals' use of Arabizi in online communication. Palfreyman and Khalil (2003) found that the main reason

for the use of Arabizi is the users' familiarity with typing in English. Furthermore, Yaghan (2008) interviewed a group of Egyptian undergraduate students and found that some students think that Arabic letters should be used only for writing Arabic script. Also, some of the participants reported that they felt more comfortable using Arabizi than Arabic in informal conversations. Another reason is that Arabizi supports the use of lowercase and uppercase letters, allowing users to express more emotions clearly. In addition, some participants reported that adopting an Arabizi system could be cool (Yaghan, 2008). In the same vein, Al-Jarf (2010) surveyed a group of Facebook users and found that many of them consider the use of Romanised Arabic when communicating with other people on the Internet to be fun and trendy. Albirini (2016) argues that the main reason for this practice was the prestigious state of English among Arab youth. Furthermore, many Arab Internet users believe that writing Arabic words using English letters indicates both technical knowledge and modernity (Albirini, 2016).

Overall, it is worth mentioning that writing in Arabizi is less common today than it once was due to negative attitudes toward that form of writing, as many Arab Internet users now believe that this style was only accepted when writing in Arabic letters was difficult (Albirini, 2016).

2.7.3 Social networking sites

Social network sites may be defined as “ web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a

list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 211). The first attempt to create a social networking site was in 1997 when SixDegrees.com was introduced (boyd, 2011). Since that time, many social networking tools have emerged, including Ryze, Friendster, LinkedIn, Myspace, Facebook, and Twitter (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Although these tools have certain differences in how they operate, the main feature in most cases is that they allow their users to create profiles and list their friends (boyd, 2011). Some of those listed no longer exist (e.g. Ryze and Friendster), and others have become the main ways in which people communicate online (e.g. Facebook and Twitter).

2.7.3.1 Features of social networking sites

One of the main features of social networking sites is the existence of personal profiles (boyd, 2011). These profiles allow individuals to present their selves to other users. The owners of the profiles have the freedom to decide how they want to present themselves and how they want to be seen. Second, profiles give users control by enabling them to decide who can see their profiles. The users can make their personal profiles public or private (restricted to a group of select friends or followers).

The second feature of social networking sites is that they allow users to decide which people they want to connect with (boyd, 2011). These users are called “friends” on Facebook and “followers” on Twitter. It is important to note that a list of Facebook friends is not limited to close friends. This can enable connections with a wide range of people.

In addition, social networking sites provide various tools for public communication

(boyd, 2011). These include the ability to create groups that help users find people with shared interests. Another important tool is commenting, which allows users to have conversations. Social networking sites also allow participants to broadcast their own content (messages, images, music, videos, etc.).

Finally, the most significant feature of social networking platforms is their 'affordances' (boyd, 2011; Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Tagg, 2015; Treem & Leonardi, 2013), a concept that is used to describe the actions that technological products allow their users to do (Bucher & Helmond, 2017). (Tagg, 2015, p. 4) describes affordances as the "possibilities, which people perceive to be provided by a technology, which may or may not be exploited by individuals, depending on their technical competence, their past experiences with similar technologies and their communication purposes". According to boyd, (2011), there are four affordances that such tools provide to their users: persistence (the ability to save content), replicability (the ability to duplicate content), scalability (the high visibility of the content), and searchability (the ability to find the content through search tools). In the same vein, Treem and Leonardi (2013) point out that these sites offer four methods of affordance: visibility, persistence, editability (the ability to edit the content), and association (the ability to connect with individuals or topics).

2,7.3.2 Social networking sites and audience design

Audience design theory (Bell, 1984, 1997) suggests that a speaker chooses his or her style depending on the intended audience. Bell (1984) distinguishes between different types of audiences. The first type is the addressees who are known, and directly

addressed by the speaker. The second type is the auditors, who are known but not addressed by the speaker. The third type is the overhearers, “whom the speaker knows to be there, but who are not ratified participants “ (Bell, 1984, p. 159). The fourth type is eavesdroppers, who are not known by the speaker. According to Bell (1984), the role of the audience is allocated by the speaker, and the salience of the audience has an impact on speakers’s style.

Bell’s framework can be useful for understanding users’ linguistic choices in social networking sites (Tagg, 2015) because these sites enable their users to interact with diverse and large audiences to the extent that it is difficult to decide the actual audience (Litt, 2012). Tagg and Seargeant (2014) used Bell’s model to distinguish between different kinds of audience in social networking sites. The types of the audience are poster of message, addressee, active Friends, wider Friends and the internet as a whole (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014, p. 172). The poster of the message can be regarded as the speaker based on Bell’s model. Active friends can be similar to the auditors, and the wider audience can be regarded as the overhearers. Finally, the internet as a whole is similar to the eavesdroppers in Bell’s model (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). Tagg (2015) argues that individual awareness of their wider friends (the overhearers) and the internet as the whole (eavesdroppers) might have an impact on what they post and how they post it even if they want to target the addressees and auditors. Also, users of social networking sites can use various strategies to include or exclude certain type of audience. One of the most important strategies is language choice (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014; Tagg, 2015). The user may use a particular language or variety to target their speakers and to exlude

others. Overall, all these types of audience can influence users' language choice in social networking sites as this study demonstrates.

2.7.4 Exploring Twitter

Twitter was founded in 2006 to enable users to exchange short messages with other users (Murthy, 2018; Weller, Bruns, Burgess, Mahrt, & Puschmann, 2014; Zappavigna, 2012). The number of registered Twitter users reached almost 1 billion by 2015 (Kurylo & Dumova, 2016). The total number of tweets sent every day is approximately 500 million (Aslam, 2018). In addition to its role as a tool for communication between friends, Twitter is also used to broadcast news and share opinions about governmental policies (Barthel, Shearer, Gottfried, & Mitchell, 2015; Weller et al., 2014).

The word limit for a Twitter post was originally 140 characters. Thus, some scholars consider Twitter to be a microblogging service because Twitter messages are essentially short blog posts (Murthy, 2018; Weller et al., 2014). It is important to note that, in November 2017, Twitter doubled this word limit to 280 characters (Murthy, 2018).

Along with this word limit, Twitter is differentiated from similar applications such as Facebook because Twitter messages, which are called 'tweets', are publicly available on users' personal accounts on various Twitter platforms (Murthy, 2018). If a person's account is not set to private, all of that person's tweets are public to other users. Another major difference between Facebook and Twitter is in the social relationship between users (Murthy, 2018). On Facebook, a friendship between individuals comes after both

people have approved this relationship. On Twitter, by contrast, a person can follow many people without asking for their approval. Hence, Murthy (2018) argues that one of the important reasons for Twitter's popularity is that it enables people to reach a wider audience. This can be done through addressivity, retweeting, or the use of hashtags (Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012).

2.7.4.1 Addressivity

I will use addressivity in this project to refer to the use of the 'at' sign (@) before another user's account name (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Starbird & Palen, 2011). All the followers of the addressed user can then see the tweet (Zappavigna, 2012). Therefore, users can use addressivity to reach a wider audience by tweeting to a person with a large number of followers. Addressivity on Twitter is employed for different purposes such as sending a direct message to another user, greeting someone, asking someone to comment on a particular topic, and asking an institution or a company about something such as asking about the price of a product. (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009). In addition to these functions, addressivity has a significant impact on users' linguistic practices on Twitter. Seargeant et al. (2012) state that the Bakhtin's notion of addressivity (1986) and Bell's work on audience design (1997) are very useful for understanding the importance of addressivity in social networking sites. The main idea of Bakhtin's notion is that "the composition and style of any utterance is shaped by the communicative expectations of the (imagined) addressee" (Seargeant et al., 2012, p. 515). The audience design, on the other hand, suggests that a speaker chooses his or her style depending on the intended audience (Bell, 1997). Applying this on Twitter means that when someone sends a direct

message to someone on Twitter, he or she usually chooses an appropriate language or variety for that a speaker (Seargeant et al., 2012). Based on that, addressivity is significant for the analysis of the current study as it may influence participants' linguistic practice in some tweets.

2.7.4.2 Retweeting

Retweeting is the publishing of another user's tweet (Starbird & Palen, 2011). According to (boyd et al., 2010), retweeting is similar to email forwarding. Users often retweet to agree with the content of a post. In other cases, they use retweeting to comment on a tweet by retweeting and adding comments (boyd et al., 2010). The use of retweeting can lead to a tweet being more widespread, particularly if it is retweeted by a famous user such as a politician, football player, or singer. It is significant to note that other users' posts that are retweeted by the participants are out of the scope of the present study which only explores participants' linguistic practices in their tweets.

2.7.4.3 Hashtag

Hashtag refers to a word or phrase that appears after the hash sign (#), which is used to identify all the tweets about a particular topic (boyd et al., 2010; Murthy, 2018; Zappavigna, 2012). There are two ways of using hashtags. The first one is when the hashtag is used to link subjects, events, and news; this can link strangers' conversations (Murthy, 2018). For example, the hashtag **(#ManchesterUnited)** is used to categorise all

tweets talking about the Manchester United football team. The other one is when the hashtag is used as a paralinguistic marker (Doyle, 2012). In this kind of use, the hashtag is used as a commentary on the content of the tweet often from another point of view. Doyle (2012) presented the following tweet as an example of this usage:

My husband knew that if he threw out the last of the toothpaste, I'd have to go shopping at some point tonight and buy him milk #wellplayed

The hashtag **#wellplayed** can be considered as a sarcastic comment on the content of the tweet. A hashtag can be also used as a way of self-categorization with a particular group (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). For example, when a person participates in a hashtag about a particular Islamic occasion, this may be seen as a way of showing his or her association with other Muslims using this hashtag. Therefore, hashtags will be considered when analysing the current study.

2.8. Research on Arab individuals and Social network sites

Plenty of studies have been conducted to investigate the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites from different perspectives. Some studies have focused on the language used by Arab users of social media platforms. Al-Jarf (2010) collected 11,160 posts written by 50 male and female Facebook users over four weeks of observation. Those users were living in different Arab countries in addition to the USA, and Canada. The result showed that most of the posts were written in colloquial Arabic. Moreover, while 15% of the posts were in English, only 12.5% were written in Standard

Arabic. The participants were also surveyed and asked some questions about their motivations for posting in colloquial Arabic. They indicated that the nature of informal communication in Facebook makes posting in colloquial Arabic more appropriate than posting in Standard Arabic which is always linked to formal communication. Additionally, some of them mentioned that they prefer using colloquial Arabic in their posts because it is easier than posting in Standard Arabic which requires following rules of spelling and grammar. Nevertheless, one issue with this study is that Al-Jarf (2010) dealt with 11,160 as one unit. In other words, she did not study posts written by each participant separately, because it might be expected if there is a difference between posts written by users living in an Arab country and those living in the USA and Canada.

Another study was conducted by Albirini (2016) who investigated the use of Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic, and English by Syrian users of Facebook. He collected 2108 posts written by many individuals and his analysis revealed that Standard Arabic was employed for emphasising, quoting, saying poetry or religious supplication, giving advice, or presenting their education identities. In contrast, Colloquial Arabic was used for sarcasm, introducing daily-life sayings, and insulting. In terms of English, it was deployed for attracting non-Arab users in order to tell them about the Syrian revolution. Albirini (2016) looked only at the occurrence of each one of the three varieties whether it appeared separately or mixed with another code. Since the focus of the study was on the posts, and not on the writers, no information is available about these users, such as their level of education, English language proficiency, or where they live. Thus, it might be logical to say that without knowing such information about the writers, analysing these

posts would be not accurate. For instance, the level of proficiency in English or the educational level has a clear impact on how an individual uses his or her linguistic repertoires.

Other researchers have explored patterns of CS in posts written by Arab users of Facebook and Twitter. Salia (2011) investigated CS from Moroccan Arabic to English or French on Facebook. She examined comments posted by a group of Moroccan friends and found that although they used colloquial Arabic most of the time, they occasionally switched to the language they studied in their formal education (English or French). She also labelled words like thanks, merci, hi, lol, and bye as 'international code' arguing that they do not belong to specific languages anymore. Salia (2011) used the term 'code weaving' to describe the CS between Moroccan Arabic and English or French in Facebook arguing that using the term 'CS' might be inappropriate to describe such practice. She explained that when people communicate on Facebook, there is no language to switch to or from to the extent that it is difficult to determine the base language of the conversation. It might be argued that this description of 'code weaving' is similar to what some scholars call "translanguaging" such as Wei (2017) and García (2009). Yet, one criticism of this study is that the author did not tell us about the number of the participants, the number of posts collected from each one of them, and how these posts were analysed.

Alfaifi (2013) explored the CS between Arabic and English among 10 Saudi bilingual female users of Facebook. The focus was to examine intra-sentential CS regarding 10 topics including gossip, humour, technology, compliments, achievement,

movies and songs, family, makeup, travelling, and religion. After analysing 1000 Facebook comments, it was found that intra-sentential CS occurred in informal topics especially in gossip and humour topics. The results showed also that Arabic words were used in English sentences when talking about religious topics. In contrast, the participants used English words within Arabic sentences when referring to some technical and academic terms.

CS in Facebook interactions of Arabic-English bilingual university students was investigated by Eldin (2014). He analysed students' bilingual posts and showed that the participants switched from English to Arabic if they did not know the appropriate word or expression in English. Furthermore, CS was evident in greetings, to express gratitude, commands and requests, and conversation markers (such as listen, you know, yes). It was also found that the mood of the speaker is an important factor for CS. It is worth mentioning that Eldin (2014) analysed CS depending on the approach suggested by Malik (1994). This approach is used for justifying CS based on the following ten reasons: lack of facility, lack of competence, semantic significance, to address different audience, to show identification with a group, to amplify and emphasise a point, the mood of the speaker, habitual expressions, pragmatic reasons, and to attract attention. Thus, the study would have been more useful if the researcher provided the justification for adopting Malik's (1994) approach of CS because it is not always possible to categorise how people use their linguistic repertoires. One might argue that different individuals do not use their linguistic repertoires in a similar way. In addition, Eldin (2014) did not provide any information regarding the number of the participants, and the number of posts he analysed. Hence,

one might argue that the lack of such information could affect the transferability and reliability of this study.

Kosoff (2014) focused on the practices of CS among ten famous Egyptian users of Twitter for two months. He collected 200 tweets for each one of these participants. It was found that CS between English and Romanised Arabic was employed to present both Arab identity and the identity of an individual who is familiar with the English language and western cultures. Nevertheless, the study was conducted in 2011, which was the year of the Egyptian revolution. Hence, I believe that the study would have been more valuable if Kosoff (2014) discussed the impact of this political situation on the users' online practices. Furthermore, it might not be possible to understand the linguistic practices of these users without interviewing them because each participant might have different motives for particular linguistic practices.

Recently, Al Alaslaa (2018) conducted a study to examine CS between standard Arabic and Saudi dialect on Twitter. He observed the accounts of 210 Saudi Twitter users for eight months to collect 35 tweets from each one of them. The findings revealed that those users switch to Standard Arabic to introduce formulaic expressions, to take a pedantic stand, to emphasise a point, to quote, and to shift from comic to serious tone. In contrast, they switch to the local dialect to introduce daily-life sayings, to exemplify and simplify, introduce quotations, personal attack or insult, criticise or to be sarcastic, and to introduce a specific intended meaning. It is important to mention that the participants in this study were all living in Saudi Arabia. My study is different because it will focus only on Arab university students in the UK.

Although these studies shed some light on the online linguistic practices of Arab individuals, it might be significant to point out that the analysis of linguistic practices of Arab individuals online done in the above-mentioned studies depended only on text-based analysis. Canagarajah (2011b) stresses that analysing individuals' linguistic practices depending only on the text without interviewing the users themselves could not enable us to have a clear understanding of these practices. Furthermore, since the use of emoji is popular among users of Facebook and Twitter, one possible weakness of these studies is that they did not pay any attention to the use of emoji in posts collected from the participants. According to Danesi (2016), individuals use emoji to change the tone of the posts. Hence, one might say that the analysis will not be suitable if we ignore looking at emoji used by the participant in their posts.

Some researchers have looked at linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites from the perspective of identity. Al-Saleem (2011) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between language use and Identity on Facebook. The researcher surveyed 44 Jordanian university students in Jordan and found that English was the most common language used on Facebook. Those students indicated that they use English to reflect their ability to adopt languages from different cultures. It is important to mention that this study did not examine the online practices of these students, and the focus was only on the opinion of these students. The author indicated that participants stressed that their use of English must not be viewed as a reflection of their identity. However, the construction of identity is not always determined entirely by the intention of the text producer. Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 606) argue that the

construction of identity might be “an outcome of others’ perceptions and representations”. A similar argument is made by Eckert (2016, p. 79) who mentions “style is not in the intent but in the intersubjective space between production and perception”.

Another study was conducted by Mashhour (2016) who explored language and identity among 60 Egyptian users of Twitter. The participants were students in an English medium university in Egypt and they were all fluent in English and Arabic. To collect the data, the researcher used a Discourse Completion Task which included two stages. First, students were given some tweets written by different users of Twitter in different topics such as politics, religion, freedom, abuse, studying, and ISIS. The second stage involved asking the participants to write another tweet as a response to each one of those tweets. The findings indicated that although most participants choose to write in the same code used by the original author of the tweet, some students used English more than Arabic or Arabizi to write their replies. The result also showed that those students expressed their agreement or disagreement with the original author of the tweet by taking an epistemic stance such as someone presents himself as an educated or ignorant person (Du Bois, 2007). The participants present themselves as well-educated individuals using words like perhaps, might, possible, definitely, certainly and obviously, using simple present tense to say their opinions as if they are mentioning a fact, and using modals such as should or must when giving advice.

Hallajow (2016) investigated how Syrian university students construct multiple identities through their language use online. The methodology includes observation of two students when they accessed the Internet and interviewing the participants to

understand their practices online. The findings revealed that there is a strong relationship between identity and language use online. One of the participants performs multiple identities through his use of either Arabic or English. On one hand, his affiliation with the USA is performed through his use of American English in his online communication. On the other hand, Arabic is used when he wants to show his national and Arab identity. Hallajow also examined participants' profile pictures and found that when a participant changed his profile picture to a picture of the Syrian President with the Syrian national flag and the word منحبك (We love you) in the background, this participant wanted to show his national identity. Nevertheless, no information was given about how the data were analysed. Although the study did not depend only on the analysis of the texts, Hallajow (2016) focused only on university students in Syria. My study will not be similar as it will be about Arab university students in the UK.

Recently, Sinatora (2019) conducted a longitudinal study about the online identity of the two Syrian dissidents who moved outside Syria after the Syrian revolution which started in 2011. He examined the participants' status updates and their friends' comments on their Facebook pages from 2010 to 2012. The analysis showed that their linguistic practices changed after the beginning of the uprising in 2011. Before the uprising, their linguistic practices included the use of multimodal texts (the use of local and global videos and photos, emoji in addition to the use of Syrian Arabic, Arabizi and English). Through these practices, the participants constructed a cosmopolitan identity where they present themselves as individuals who are familiar with the new linguistic forms resulted from communication in global social media applications. In contrast, after

the uprising, the linguistic practices involved using Syrian idiomatic expressions besides the extensive use of Syrian Arabic and Fus'ha. The analysis also revealed that there was an absence of global multimodal texts such as videos, photos, emoji, English and Arabizi. By these practices, the two participants constructed the identity of dissident Syrians who are educated and have the ability to engage in national political issues.

To conclude, all these studies indicate that the linguistic practices of Arab users of Facebook and Twitter include the use of SA, CA, English, Arabizi, emoji as well as CS between these languages and varieties. These studies show that CA is the most used variety for posting by Arab social networking users. While SA is used to present user's pan-Arab identity, CA is used by Arab users to present their national identity. In contrast, the use of English and switching between Arabic and English on Twitter and Facebook were deployed by Arab users to present their multilingual identity. These studies also show that Arab users switch from Arabic to English to introduce technical and academic terms. On the other hand, the switch from English to Arabic occur when the user do not know the exact word in English. Regarding switching between varieties of Arabic, Arab social networking users switch to SA to use formulaic expressions, to take a pedantic stand, to emphasise a point, to quote, and to shift from to more serious tone. In contrast, they switch to QA to introduce daily-life sayings, to simplify, introduce quotations, insult or criticise someone, and to be sarcastic.

It is important to mention that my study is different from all these studies. To begin with, the context of the study is different because my study is about Arab university students in the UK. Thus, this study brings in mobility as a factor that can influence

participants' linguistic practices. Another important point is that most of the above-mentioned studies looked at users' online linguistic practices by focusing on one aspect such as language use, CS, and identity. My study, in contrast, tries to explore all these areas when investigating participants' linguistic practices on Twitter. Furthermore, the current study investigates the use of emoji in posts written in participants' Twitter profiles. In addition, my study explores participants' attitudes towards online linguistic practices. Overall, one might argue that looking at all these angles can provide us with a more expansive picture of the linguistic practices of Arab university students in the UK.

Chapter 3: Methodology and research design

Introduction

After introducing the nature of the current study and discussing the literature review as presented in Chapters 1, and 2, this chapter addresses the methodology used in the present study. It discusses the development of the research design and addresses the methodological considerations and justifications that have helped to design this practical part of the study.

The chapter begins by identifying the epistemological and ontological beliefs that I followed when conducting the current research. After that, I discuss the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach. Next, I talk about the history of Online Ethnography, and my use of it here. After that, I present the rationale for choosing Twitter as the online context of this study. The following section gives a detailed description of participant recruitment, introduces the research participants, and describes my relationship with them. After that, data collection methods (online observations and interviews) are presented. Since the researcher can be considered as a tool for data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), the next section addresses some issues that might occur as a result of my role as a researcher in the research procedures. Following that, I present the pilot study and the necessary changes that I decided to make as a result of it. After that, I talk about the data analysis process by describing all the stages that followed in conducting Content Analysis, and Thematic Analysis. The last section of this chapter is a discussion about how I dealt with some ethical issues regarding studying online data.

Overall, this chapter describes in detail the processes carried out in order to conduct the current research. By doing this, the reader can evaluate the study, and other researchers can replicate it (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In most sections, I begin by providing a theoretical discussion followed by a description of the procedures that I took based on the justifications presented in the previous discussion.

3.1. Epistemological and ontological beliefs

According to Morgan and Smircich (1980), researchers need to recognise their assumptions about social reality and what is the meaning of being human (ontology) and the nature of knowledge about the social world (epistemology) before choosing the appropriate research methods. They differentiate between subjectivist assumptions and objectivist assumptions. The subjective approaches treat reality as a product of human imagination, believe that human beings create their realities and that knowledge is individual and cannot be regarded as something concrete. In contrast, objectivist approaches believe that reality is “a hard concrete, real thing "out there," which affects everyone in one way or another” (Morgan & Smircich, 1980, p. 495), that humans’ behaviour is the result of a group of environmental factors, and that knowledge is something real and fixed.

Cunliffe (2011) talks about a third perspective, intersubjectivism, which holds a view that reality is something relative and a product of interactions between individuals in a particular time and space. This approach also treats humans as “intersubjective,

embodied, relational, and reflexively embedded” (ibid, 654). The role of the researcher in this approach is to balance between subjectivism and intersubjectivism by using academic theories and concepts to theorise participants’ explanations.

The present study follows the subjectivist assumptions which suggest that there is more than one truth, and that knowledge is relative to particular contexts, time, and space. Therefore, my role as a researcher is to “explore constructions of social and organizational realities in a particular context and time and/or how we humanly shape, maintain and interpret social realities through language, symbols, and texts (Cunliffe, 2011, p. 656). However, Cunliffe notes that subjective assumptions can be classified into two main types in terms of their ontological stance: social constructivism and social constructionism. The first one is discourse-based researchers who consider reality as something socially constructed but also objectified (somehow stable and common) in linguistic practices and interactions. The second type is interpretive approaches to social constructionism where there are multiple realities and different interpretations. Taking Cunliffe’s classification into consideration, it might be valid to suggest that my position as a researcher floats between the two types. This is because while I utilise some discourse-based data from the online ethnographic observations, my presence is still prominent in the analysis of the text as I have to decide what is SA and what CA, what is CS and what is translanguaging, etc. As such, I am entangled in the process of making knowledge while relying on what Cunliffe (2011) refers to as ‘objectified linguistic practices’. At the same time, I swing towards social constructionism in the process of conducting and analysing

the participant interviews whereby multiple realities are socially constructed during the time and place of the interview event.

3.2. Situating the study in a research paradigm

3.2.1. The rationale of the qualitative approach

In order to investigate the online linguistic practices of Arab students in the UK, the current study used qualitative research methods. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 3), “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world”. This type of research depends on descriptive data without the use of statistical procedures (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In other words, the researcher in the qualitative study investigates subjects in their natural settings in order to describe and understand social phenomena based on participants’ interpretations of their behaviours and actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007).

There are plenty of merits of qualitative research. To begin with, applying qualitative methods can help us know the reasons for a particular practice or behaviour, which might lead to broaden our interpretations of social phenomena (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, the use of qualitative research enables the researcher to have emic perspectives, participant’s interpretations, in addition to etic perspectives, the researcher’s own interpretations of human behaviour (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

As for the current study, the rationale for using qualitative techniques is justified by the above-mentioned strength of this approach. The current study aims to have a deeper understanding of participants' online linguistic practices. According to Silverman (2013), if the researcher is interested in investigating everyday behaviour, then the qualitative methods should be used. Therefore, it can be argued that the qualitative methods used in this study (Online ethnography and semi-structured interviews) allowed me to understand the factors, attitudes and ideologies that underpin the participants' linguistic practices when they communicate on Twitter.

3.2.2. The use of online ethnography

Although the term 'ethnography' is generally connected to cultural anthropology, whose main purpose is to describe and analyse the practices and attitudes of cultures (Dörnyei, 2007), ethnography has been adopted by many scholars in online research. Different terms have been used by researchers in different fields to refer to ethnography on the Internet. These terms include "netnography" (Kozinets, 1998, 2006), "Virtual ethnography" (Hine, 2000), "network ethnography" (Howard, 2002), "Webnography" (Puri, 2007), "cyber ethnography" (Domínguez et al., 2007), and Discourse-Centered Online Ethnography (DCOE), (Androutsopoulos, 2008).

The use of ethnography in computer-mediated communication research was a reaction to a new view of the Internet, which considers it as a cultural artifact, instead of the old view which looked at the internet as a space for interaction (Hine, 2000). Kozinets (1998) introduced his approach 'Netnography' in marketing research to explore the

behaviour of Internet users. It can be defined as “a written account resulting from fieldwork’ examining the cultures integrated within virtual, computer mediated, or Internet-based communications, where both the fieldwork and the written account are methodologically strengthened by the research traditions and methods of cultural anthropology” (Kozinets, 1998, p. 366). Similarly, a new approach, Virtual ethnography, was developed by Hine (2000) to provide a deep understanding of the interaction between technology and culture on the internet. Howard (2002) uses the term ‘Network ethnography ‘ to refer to the process of using both ethnographic field methods and social network analysis to study cultures online.

In terms of the beginning of language-focused CMC studies, most research at that time depended mainly on data usually randomly collected and taken from their contexts (Androutsopoulos, 2008). As a result, a new methodology called Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) was suggested by Herring (2001) for language-focused CMC research. According to Herring (2001), this approach uses tools adapted from different language-focused disciplines such as linguistics, communication, and rhetoric, to the analysis of computer-mediated communication. This method may use surveys, interviews, and ethnographic observations. It also may apply qualitative or quantitative analysis, but “what basically identifies CMDA is the analysis of logs of verbal languages (characters, words, utterances, messages, exchanges, threads, archives, etc.)” (Herring, 2004, p.339).

However, a criticism of CMDA is that the primary focus is on text analysis. Androutsopoulos (2008) argues that although data collection tools in some studies

included surveys and interviews, the findings depended mainly on the analysis of texts produced by the participants during their online interaction. A possible motivation behind this dependence could be the notion that online interaction is usually presented and read as a text on a computer screen (Herring, 2004). This can be supported by Milner (2011, p. 14) who argues that studying online interaction depends on our decision of whether we deal with this interaction as a 'text', focusing only on what is written, or as 'place' for human interaction. Therefore, it may be logical to say that the CMDA method is the result of framing online interaction as a 'text'.

After that, Androutsopoulos (2008) proposed a new methodology for research investigating language online. This methodology, which he named Discourse-Centered Online Ethnography (DCOE), "combines the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its social actors" (Androutsopoulos, 2008, p. 2). Instead of looking only at what can be seen on the screen, this approach tries to find answers to research questions also through conducting interviews with Internet users. This can be supported by Jones (2004) who stressed that the concept of context in online interaction should not be limited to what is happening on the screen. It can be said that this method, now called 'online ethnography' (Androutsopoulos, 2013a), might be the result of dealing with online interaction as a 'place' for mutual interaction between individuals (Androutsopoulos, 2013b; Milner, 2011). Indeed, online interaction is more than a text. Rather, it is a space where individuals deploy digitally afforded semiotic resources (e.g. emoji) in addition to the use of texts.

Considering all the previous points and keeping in mind Heller's argument about

using multiple data collection tools: “the more routes you have into apprehending and understanding something, the better off you are” (Heller, 2008, p. 255), the current project adopted an online ethnography approach. In other words, I observed participants’ Twitter accounts for a period of time (nine months) and then interviewed them to ask about to reflect on their linguistic practices and what linguistic repertoires they think they rely on or use more. It could be argued that the use of this methodology is beneficial for the purpose of this study, which is to look at the online linguistic practices of Arab students on Twitter. On the one hand, using systematic observation of participants’ online activities facilitated acquiring a clearer understanding of their daily online practices (Androutsopoulos, 2013b). On the other hand, conducting interviews with them helped to provide profound interpretations and reflections of different linguistic practices. Some scholars have warned against relying only on text analysis. For example, Canagarajah (2011) stresses that analysing translanguaging depending only on texts without interviewing the users themselves could lead to a poor understanding of translanguaging. Aligned with this view, I decided to conduct two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the research participants: one before the start of the online observation and another after the end of the observations. The first round aimed to establish their linguistic profiles, asked about the participant’s online practices, language attitudes, and linguistic identity. The second round of interviews, however, aimed to discuss some tweets to provide some explanations for their linguistic practices.

3.2.3 Locating the study in a research tradition: ethnography vs case study

As mentioned in the previous section, the use of online ethnography involves participant observation which is considered as the main element of ethnographic research (Heller, 2008). However, the study also involves in-depth description of multiple cases over time through observations and interviews, and, therefore fits the description of case study research according to different scholars (e.g. Creswell, 2007). Thus, I was faced with the dilemma of choosing between considering the study as an ethnographic, or a case study. The real issue is that there are many similarities between the two to the extent that they have been used interchangeably (Willis, 2007).

In terms of ethnography, Ingold (2014, p. 383) argues “Ethnography has become a term so overused, both in anthropology and in contingent disciplines, that it has lost much of its meaning”. This is because many studies cannot be considered ethnographic studies as the researchers are actually conducting a case study, depending on ethnographic techniques (Parker-Jenkins, 2018). Even some of the scholars who suggest using ethnography in online research have also shown hesitation towards considering such research as ethnographic. For example, Androutsopoulos (2008) who developed online ethnography states clearly that it cannot be considered as a well-developed ethnography. Instead, “it adopts an ethnographic perspective and uses elements of ethnographic method in various settings” (ibid, p. 17). Similarly, Hine (2000, p. 65) who introduced virtual ethnography describes it as “not quite the real thing in methodologically purist terms” and as “an adaptive ethnography”.

Regarding case studies, they are “defined by interest in an individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used” (Stake, 2005, p. 443). This can be applied to my research because I am interested in exploring the linguistic practices of five individuals in detail. Nevertheless, considering the current research a case study overlooks the fact that I observed participants’ Twitter accounts for nine months. Parker-Jenkins (2018) argues that ‘case study’ as a term does not represent the level of the researcher’s involvement in ethnography over a long period in the field to collect a large amount of data. Therefore, considering that both case study and ethnography overlap, White, Drew, and Hay (2009) suggest combining the two instead of choosing one over another. This is in accordance with Parker-Jenkins (2018, p. 24) who suggests that using a new term ‘ethno-case study’ might be better to describe studies that include a detailed description of a case or multiple cases through the use of ethnographic techniques.

Taking all these points into consideration, it might be valid to consider my study as a case study as it involves providing a thick description of multiple cases. At the same time, it also uses ethnographic data collection tools like observation. Hence, it is possible to identify my study as an ethno-case study.

3.3. Rationale for choosing Twitter as the context of the study

Both Facebook and Twitter are in common use among Arab Internet users. According to Salem (2017), Facebook is the most popular social networking platform among Arab individuals, with around 156 million users. Twitter has more than 11 million Arab users, who post an average of 27.4 tweets every day (Salem, 2017).

It is essential to note that, although these numbers can be used to indicate a preference for Facebook over Twitter among Arab individuals, these figures do not show how active the sites' users are. Facebook's total-user number (156 million) refers only to the total number of people who have Facebook accounts. Salem (2017) revealed that only 20% of this number use Facebook on a regular basis. In the same context, Strong and Hareb (2012) surveyed 167 individuals in Emirates and found that nearly 40% of them mentioned they have a Facebook account but rarely use it anymore. In fact, I have faced many difficulties when trying to recruit Arab Facebook users for the current research. Although many students agreed to participate in the study, I did not find enough data in their Facebook profiles. Some of them were not active and rarely posted on their Facebook accounts. In contrast, it is much easier to find participants who are active on Twitter. It is not easy to determine the reasons for people's inactivity on Facebook. The findings of Strong and Hareb (2012) revealed that 94% of the participants preferred to use Twitter because it is easier to use than Facebook which had too many applications (photos, status updates, etc.). One possible reason is the availability of other applications such as 'WhatsApp' and 'Snapchat', which serve the same function of Facebook, acting as tools for communication between friends. This means that Twitter is popular among individuals in the Arab world especially if we keep in mind that Twitter played a major role during the Arab revolutions of 2011, especially in Egypt and Tunisia, as it allowed activists to send messages to the public (Lotan et al., 2011).

Considering all the previous points, Twitter has become the focus of the present study. Moreover, choosing Twitter as the context of this sociolinguistic inquiry can be

interesting because of its unique features. To begin with, while Facebook connect its users with people they already know (e.g. friends or family members), Twitter allows its users to connect with diverse group of people in addition to their friends (Ovadia, 2009). Hence, this can help to understand how Arab online users use their linguistic repertoires to interact with different kind of audience. In addition, the fact that a tweet is limited to a particular number of characters (140 and then 280) can push individuals to use many techniques that could help them to convey what they want to say in their tweets (Hong & Davison, 2010). To conclude, this discussion indicates that Twitter is an appropriate context of the present study.

3.4. The research participants

This section gives a detailed description of the strategy of sampling, how the sample size was decided, how the participants were recruited, and a description of each participant. This section ends with talking about my relationship with the participants during the study.

3.4.1. The strategy of sampling

According to Creswell (2014, p. 189), “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question”. Therefore, the

strategy of judgmental or purposeful sampling (Lanza, 2008) was adopted in the study. The main idea of this type of sampling is that the researcher determines in advance the qualities of the participants needed in the study (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

The participants chosen for this project are Arab students of both genders who are, at the time of the study, studying at a higher education institution in the UK. To purposefully select the participants, it was important to identify four criteria:

- An Arab student on an academic degree (Bachelor's, Master's, or PhD.).
- An Arab individual who was born and raised and completed his or her undergraduate education in one of the Arab countries.
- An Arab student who would not finish studying in the UK before 10 months.
- An Arab student who has an active Twitter account.

The reason for targeting students on an academic degree is that the participant should have a good level of translingual proficiency, which makes him or her capable of using different linguistic repertoires including different Arabic varieties. An individual who was enrolled in a language course might not have enough proficiency to use English or might have what Blommaert (2010) refers to as 'truncated repertoires'. The second criterion excludes students who moved to the UK when he or she was a child because they may not be proficient in Arabic. The importance of the third criterion comes from the longitudinal nature of the current study as it requires observing participants' Twitter accounts for nine months in addition to conducting two interviews with them. Finally, the fourth criterion excludes those who are not active on Twitter to guarantee the presence

of different linguistic practices. This is because many of Twitter' users might not use their accounts except for retweeting or liking tweets posted by other users. Therefore, it was essential that all the participants wrote tweets frequently (a discussion on the required number of posts from each participant is presented in section 3.5.1).

3.4.2. Deciding the size of the sample

Achieving the aim of qualitative research does not require having a representative sample from a large number of cases like what is very normal in quantitative studies (Neuman, 2014). Instead, the purpose of sampling is to extend our understanding of social practices by examining "a few cases" (ibid, p. 247). However, it can be argued that the word 'few' can be ambiguous as it does not provide guidance on what the recommended number of the participants is. Thus, I decided to take the advice of Barkhuizen (2018, p. 121) who recommends "Consulting published research literature in the same field" to decide the number of the participants. Therefore, I looked at the number of participants in research investigating linguistic practices and identity in social media platforms. I found that there is no agreement among researchers about the number of participants in their studies. For example, in a study conducted by Androutsopoulos (2013b), the number was 7. In Kosoff's (2014) study, the sample size was 10. Halim and Maros (2014) examined only 5 students' profiles. In a study by Dovchin (2015), the participants were only 4. In contrast, Hallajow (2016) investigated the language and online identity of only two participants. Therefore, I decided to recruit an average sample size in my field, aiming for 5 to 7 participants. This sample size should allow me to explore the linguistic practices of

each participant in detail. As Creswell (1998, p. 63) argues “the more cases in individual studies, the greater the lack of depth in any single case”.

In addition, the longitudinal nature of the present study forced me to consider another challenge which is the problem of “sample attrition” (Grinyer & Thomas, 2012, p. 220). This refers to the case when it cannot be possible to trace some of the participants for plenty of reasons like moving to another area or being sick. Also, a participant or more may just simply withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason. Therefore, in order to factor in any dropouts, I decided that it might be more beneficial to recruit more than 7 participants.

3.4.3. The process of recruiting participants

Recruiting the participants was one of the biggest challenges I have faced in the current study. I started the task of recruiting participants in the last week of January 2018. This process took nearly 4 months and it involved the use of three techniques.

In the first method, I tried to scroll between some famous Twitter accounts for Arab students’ associations in the UK hoping to find students that fit the description required for the eligible participants. When I found someone suitable, I sent a private message to that user’s Twitter account inviting him or her to participate in my study. The message includes information about my identity, the aim of the research, and what is required from the participant (See Appendix 2 for a copy of that message). In that message, I also tried to assure them that this is a sociolinguistic study and that the focus would be on the language of the tweet. The purpose of this assurance is to tell them that

I would not judge them because of their religious and political beliefs. While some students simply ignored my message, other participants rejected the invitation politely. For example, one student mentioned that he did not want to participate in the study because he was a final year PhD student and did not have enough time to conduct the interviews. The majority of those students were sceptical about joining the study. Although it was not explicitly expressed, I think this could be related to the conflicts between different political and religious groups in the Arab world. This could lead some Arab students to have some doubts about my identity as a researcher. Hence, they might think that I was trying to harass them because of posting some tweets that indicated their agreement with a specific religious or political group. Overall, only one participant was recruited by sending a direct message to her Twitter account. This indicates that it was not an effective strategy for approaching potential participants. Thus, I decided that it was necessary to try another technique.

This second technique involved walking around campuses of universities in Manchester, trying to talk to Arab students from different Arab countries about my research and encourage them to join my study. I also gave them a copy of the information sheets to prove my credibility, and for contacting me if they expressed an interest in my study (See Appendix 3 for a copy of the information sheet). Many students agreed to participate in the project. However, when I looked at their profiles, I did not find enough data. Some of them were not active on social media and rarely wrote anything on their accounts. For instance, one student posted only 13 tweets in one year. Some of them posted many tweets but the majority of them were retweets or quotations. Nevertheless,

this method was the most effective as it enabled me to recruit four more participants.

Moreover, I used a snowball sampling technique for recruiting more participants. In this technique, friends and colleagues of participants were asked to join the study (Milroy & Gordon, 2003). In other words, I asked the participants recruited by the previous two techniques to nominate other students who might be interested in joining the study. Then, I contacted the recommended students and made sure that they fit the selection criteria mentioned above. It turned out that the snowball technique was also effective because it helped me to recruit three participants.

Overall, the number of participants recruited through using these techniques was eight. Nevertheless, only five participants completed all the stages of the study. One participant contacted me after one month from the first interview telling me that he wanted to withdraw from the study because he had decided to leave the UK. Moreover, two participants wrote only a small number of tweets during the whole period of the observation, despite that they were active Twitter users before the beginning of my observations of their accounts. Hence, I decided to remove them and delete their information from my project. Having described the recruitment process, the next section provides detailed information about the remaining five participants.

3.4.4. Introducing the research participants

Table 3.1 presents the participants, with some demographic information about them and their studies. After that, a detailed description of each participant is presented. Looking at the table, we can notice that there is only one female participant while four

males participated in the study. This might be seen as a reflection of the difficulty of having access to many Muslim women if the researcher is a man (Lanza, 2008).

	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Nationality	Course type	Field
1	Muna	32	Female	Saudi	PhD	Biology
2	Yasser	36	Male	Saudi	PhD	engineering
3	Ahmed	37	Male	Saudi	PhD	Medicine
4	Ali	23	Male	Saudi	Bachelor	engineering
5	Fahad	28	Male	Bahraini	Master	Business administration

Table 3.1 Research participants' demographic and background data

Muna

The first participant is Muna who is a 32-year-old Saudi Arabian woman. Muna was born in Medina; when she was a child, she moved to Jeddah. She now lives, with her family, in a major English city, and has been a resident of the United Kingdom (UK) for nearly 4 years. Muna now is about to complete her third year in her PhD. in Biology. Muna stated that she has been using Hejazi Arabic since she was a child, as it was one of the regional varieties of Arabic used in Hejaz, where she grew up. The Saudi Arabian region Hejaz is famous because the two holiest cities in Islam (Mecca and Medina) are within its borders, along with Jeddah, widely regarded as the economic capital of Saudi Arabia. She started to learn English when she was a child because her mother is an English language teacher. Moreover, she said that her English improved because she went to private schools which give intensive courses in English. Regarding her level of proficiency in

English, she said that she is very good at speaking and listening and writing although she admitted that she sometimes faces some kind of difficulty in terms of academic writing.

Yasser

He is a 36-year-old Saudi Arabian PhD student. Yasser was born in Yanbu, a port city on the Red Sea coast of Western Saudi Arabia and it is one of the cities in the Hejaz region. He is married and now lives in with his family in an English city. He has been a resident of the United Kingdom for nearly 2 years. Yasser now is about to complete his second year in his PhD. project which is in engineering. Yasser mentioned that he has been using the local variety of Yanbu. According to Yasser, this variety is similar to Hejazi Arabic but has some differences in terms of the pronunciation of some words. However, he said that because he moved to live in different cities in Saudi Arabia like Jeddah, Dammam (a city in the eastern region), he does not speak like people of Yanbu.

He started to learn English as a foreign language in the first year in intermediate school when he was 13 because primary schools did not provide teaching English at that time. Yasser said that his English was very poor when he finished secondary school. He said that his English improved when he joined King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals where English was taught by native speaker English teachers. He told me that he was exposed to British English. In terms of his level of proficiency in English, Yasser stated that he is very good at listening, reading and writing. He mentioned that he cannot

claim that he is very good at speaking because he sometimes speaks English with some mistakes.

Ahmed

The third participant in this study is Ahmed (pseudonym), a 37-year-old Saudi Arabian PhD. Student. He was born in the southern region of Saudi Arabia and lived in Jeddah and Riyadh. He is married and now lives with his family in an English city. He has been a resident of the United Kingdom (UK) for nearly four years. Ahmed now is about to complete a PhD. in medicine.

Ahmed mentioned that because he is originally from the south and lived in Jeddah and Riyadh, he can speak the local variety of these cities. Thus, Ahmed said that he speaks a mixture of these varieties.

He started to learn English as a foreign language in the first year in intermediate school when he was 13 because primary schools did not provide teaching English at that time. He said that his English improved when he started to study medicine at university because attending intensive courses in English was compulsory for all medical students. According to Ahmed, he is very good at speaking. In terms of writing, he said that although he has some difficulties in academic writing, his writing is very good.

Ali

Ali is a 23-year-old Saudi Arabian Bachelor Student. Ali was born in Mecca, the holiest city of Islam, and the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammad. He is not married and

now lives with a group of his friends, in a major English city. He has been a resident of the United Kingdom for nearly 2 years and a half. Ali now is at the beginning of his final year of the bachelor's degree in engineering at a UK university. Ali stated that he has been using Hejazi Arabic since he was a child, as it is one of the regional varieties of Arabic used in Hejaz, where he grew up. He started to learn English as a foreign language in the first year in intermediate school because he attended a government primary school in Mecca. In Saudi government schools, primary schools do not provide teaching English, and students start to learn English in intermediate schools. In addition, Ali attended a special English course in 2013 in a private institution in Mecca. Before coming to the UK, Ali completed a six-month intensive course on English grammar and conversation skills. He told me that he was exposed to British English. In terms of his level of proficiency in English, Ali stated that his ability to use English is good. However, he mentioned that he has a problem with speaking, especially in terms of the pronunciation of certain words.

Fahad

Fahad is a 28-year-old Bahraini Master's student. He was born in Manama (capital of Bahrain). He is not married and now lives with a group of his friends, in a major English city. Fahad has been a resident of the United Kingdom for two years. He has just started his Master's course in Business administration. Fahad mentioned that he has been using Bahraini Arabic, which is similar to the variety used in the eastern province in Saudi Arabia. He started to learn English in the primary school because it is compulsory in Bahrain to learn English since grade one. Nevertheless, he said his English did not improve

until 2016 when he joined an English institution in the UK before starting his master's course. Fahad said that he is good at all language skills especially in writing.

3.4.5. The relationship between the participants and the researcher

To address the relationship between the researcher and the participants in this study, I tried to follow Badwan (2015, pp. 91-92) who discusses her relationship with her participants by considering four factors: reciprocity, the longitudinal nature of the study, the interview site, and participants' comments on participating in this research.

First, reciprocity refers to the situation where there is mutual benefit for both the researcher and the participants (Trainor & Bouchard, 2013). In other words, since participating in a study requires commitment and devoting effort from the participants (ibid), they might feel that participating in the study could also enable them to get some benefit (Badwan, 2015). One aspect of reciprocity was when one of the PhD students asked me to participate in his study by completing a questionnaire. In addition to that, Ali contacted me to ask for advice about whether he should consider joining a postgraduate program or not. Similarly, since Fahd was a master student at MMU during the data collection period, he asked me several times about the PhD and my advice on how to approach potential supervisors. The situation was different for the remaining two as they both simply expressed that they just wanted to help other students such as when Muna said (**I've been there**) when I asked her to take part in my study implying an

understanding of the difficulty of finding participants and, therefore, she did not want me to live the same experience she had when she was collecting her data.

Another important point is related to the longitudinal nature of the study. The participants' commitment to my study and the regular contact with them over a long period helped me to develop a good relationship with the participants even after finishing the data collection period. Three of the participants still contact me when they visit Manchester, and I usually meet them in a restaurant or a café. The friendly relationship continues even with those who finished their course and left the UK. We regularly send messages to each other, especially in some religious events and celebrations.

Thirdly, choosing an appropriate place and time for conducting the interview helped to build a good relationship with the participants. First, since four of the participants were living outside Manchester, I told them that I would be happy to travel to their cities of residence at their preferred time in order to interview them. Also, it was important for me to express that I would be flexible if they wanted to reschedule the time or the date of the interview. Luckily, two of them informed that they were already planning to visit Manchester. Therefore, I succeeded to interview them in Manchester in the agreed dates. For the other two participants, I travelled to interview them in their cities. Furthermore, choosing the venue of the interview was important for building trust and credibility between me and the participants. According to Badwan (2015), men and women do not typically meet in closed places in the Islamic and Arabic culture. Thus, it was not possible or comfortable to ask the female participant (Muna) to meet in a room in the campus to conduct the interview. Hence, I interviewed her in a quiet café near the

campus which affected the quality of the recording. However, Badwan (2015) argues that gaining trust and respect of the participant should be the main priority in such cases. To conclude, considering participants' suitable time and place in addition to their religious and cultural traditions enabled me to develop a friendly relationship with all participants.

The final point is the participants' comments on participating in this research. While Muna, Ahmed and Fahad mentioned briefly that they enjoyed participating in the study, Yasser and Ali talked about a personal meaning in their participation. They showed some excitement about the topic of the study especially in terms of CS between Arabic and English. They mentioned that because of their situation as Arabs studying in an English-speaking country, they are usually criticised by some Arab individuals when they mix between Arabic and English. Therefore, participating in the study gave them an opportunity to talk about that and express how they feel about that practice.

3.5. Data collection methods

The overall design of the present study follows the guidelines of research on social network sites suggested by Androutsopoulos (2014). The first step is to contact possible participants, to obtain their permission to access their Twitter profiles. The next step is a period of observing online activities in order to collect and analyse some samples. Finally, conducting interviews with participants to seek interpretations of their online practices. However, I also conducted another interview with the participants before the beginning of the observation to ask them general questions about their online linguistic

practices.

There are two methods for collecting the data in the present study: online observations and interviews. The relationship between the two is explanatory (Heller, 2008). That is to say that the observation tries to document participants' online linguistic practices. On the other hand, the purpose of interviews is to discover participants' own understanding and explanation of these practices.

3.5.1. Online observation

The majority of studies on the Internet have depended primarily on online observation. According to Androutsopoulos (2014, p. 77), "though often not explicitly acknowledged in research publications, observation is the bottom of any "virtual fieldwork" and the ground pillar of most linguistic CMC research". Online observation is the process of watching digital communication, texts, and images on the screen of the computer (Androutsopoulos, 2013b, 2014; Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, & Cui, 2009). Online observation can be useful for having broad insights into participants' online language practices (Androutsopoulos, 2014). It enables the researcher to acquire some of the implicit knowledge that could cause individuals' semiotic practices (Androutsopoulos, 2014).

Online observation in the current study follows the technique of 'revisit' type of online participation "to make regular and iterative visits to the target site of data collection, documenting routine activities as well as changes" (Androutsopoulos, 2014, p. 78). Hence, I made regular visits to their personal accounts on Twitter trying to document

their tweets.

3.5.1.1 Observing for collecting sufficient data

The purpose of the observation was to collect sufficient data to explore a particular phenomenon. However, before that, it was important to ask the question of what counts as sufficient data? According to Herring (2004), there is no straightforward answer to such a question. She explains that this usually depends on several factors such as how frequent the occurrence of the phenomenon under investigation in the data sample is, or the number of codes used to categorise the phenomenon. As for my study, the purpose is to explore the participants' linguistic practices in their tweets. In the case of the absence of a particular practice, this can be also regarded as a finding. For example, if there are no cases of CS between Arabic and English in a participant's tweets, this might indicate that he or she does not prefer that kind of switching. This absence also can be one of the subjects of the second interview with the participants. Therefore, it was necessary to decide a fixed period observation regardless of whether a particular practice would occur or not during that period. Based on that, I decided to observe participants' daily interactions on Twitter for nine months. It is worth noting that it was difficult to predict precisely how many posts would be collected from each participant. While one of the participants in Androutsopoulos (2013b) wrote around 100 posts, another participant produced only 13 posts. In preparation for the present study, I observed the profile of two participants for two weeks, and I found that one of them wrote 21 posts while the other participant wrote only 9 posts in these two weeks. Therefore, it was hoped that

nine months of observation would allow me to collect enough number of posts from each participant. Table 3.2 provides some information about length, the beginning and the end of the period of online observation.

	The participant	Beginning of the observation	End of the observation	Length of the observation
1	Muna	April 2018	October 2018	7 months
2	Yasser	June 2018	February 2019	9 months
3	Ahmed	June 2018	February 2019	9 months
4	Ali	June 2018	February 2019	9 months
5	Fahad	June 2018	February 2019	9 months

Table 3.2 Timeline of the online observation period.

3.5.1.2 The process of observing participants' Twitter accounts

As can be seen in the table, I started observing Muna's account at the beginning of April 2018. Two months later (June 2018), I started observing the accounts of the other four participants. This is because while I succeeded to recruit Muna in January, the other participants did not agree to take part in my study before May. Moreover, the table shows that Muna is also not similar to the other participants because while the observing of their accounts lasted for nine months, I decided to end observing Muna's account after only seven months. The decision was built on the principle that the data should continue to be collected until reaching the point of data saturation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). This refers to "the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data" (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 59). In other words, it is the point when the researcher

finds that new data produce repeated information. This was exactly what happened with Muna because, after six months of collecting her tweets, I found that the same patterns were repeated, and no new patterns could emerge from her new tweets. Based on that, I decided to end observing her account.

As the aim of my prolonged observation was to explore participants' online linguistic practices, only tweets written by them, and not retweets, were collected as data. Further, posts consisting of only a link or a photo were also excluded from consideration. Table 3.3 shows the total number of tweets collected from each participant during that period of observation. All these tweets were saved in PDF files and, then, the texts in these tweets were exported for the analysis process. All collected data were stored on a password-protected computer. Besides, names and identifying details were anonymised in order to protect participants' privacy.

	The participant	Total Number of Tweets
1	Muna	423
2	Yasser	228
3	Ahmed	276
4	Ali	209
5	Fahad	174

Table 3.3 Total number of tweets by each participant

3.5.2. Interviews

Following the recommendations of Androutsopoulos (2014), I conducted online observations and interviews with each participant. Interviews can be defined as a

“technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally” (Potter, 1996, p. 96). It is a very effective research tool because it enables the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a shorter time (Codó, 2008). For instance, an important advantage of interviews is that it allows gathering the information that may be very difficult to collect even after a long period of observation such as biographical details or to investigate topics such as language attitudes and ideologies (Codó, 2008; Mackey & Gass, 2005). Also, due to its interactive nature, researchers can gather additional data if the first answer is unclear, incomplete, or need to be more specific (Mackey & Gass, 2005). As for the current study, the use of the interview helped me to understand some contextual information of participants’ tweets that it may be difficult to be captured with online observation alone as we will see in the findings chapter.

3.5.2.1. Two rounds of interviews

Two interviews were conducted with each participant. The first interview was conducted before the beginning of the online observation and the second one was conducted after the end of the period of the observation. The purpose of the first interview was to gather some general information about participants’ online practices, language attitudes, and linguistic identity. It also aimed at helping me build trust and rapport with the participants. More importantly, it aimed at assuring them that this is a sociolinguistic study and that I would not be interested in their religious and political beliefs. In contrast, the purpose of the second interview was to understand, reflect on, and interpret participants’ linguistic interactions on Twitter. Moreover, conducting the

second interview could enable me to clarify and understand parts of the participant's answers in the first interview that can be ambiguous (Earthy & Cronin, 2008).

The design of the interviews was semi-structured. In this type of interview, the researcher is guided by a group of written questions. Nevertheless, the format is open-ended, and the researcher still has the freedom to ask more questions for acquiring further information or allowing the interviewee to talk about some topics in detail (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005). It was hoped that interviewing Arab students using this way would help to have a better interpretation of their online practices, and also can allow them to talk freely about their attitudes towards language use, and linguistic identity. Therefore, questions of the first interview were based on a group of themes such as language learning history, languages in the daily life, language and identity, attitudes towards language and linguistic online practice (See Appendix 5 for the first interview questions). Simply put, all the participants were asked the same questions in the first interview. In contrast, because these participants differ in terms of their online linguistic practices, each one of the participants was asked different questions in the second interview. This all depended on how he or she used different linguistic repertoires.

3.5.2.2. Conducting the interviews

As we mentioned before, the first interview was conducted before the online observation. This means that while Muna was interviewed in March 2018, the other four participants were interviewed in May 2018. In contrast, I interviewed Muna for the second time in November 2018 for Muna, whereas I interviewed the rest of the group between March and April 2019. According to some researchers (e.g. Dörnyei, 2007;

Polkinghorne, 2005), recoding the interview is recommended if we want to analyse the content of the interview. Therefore, the interviews in the current study were recorded. Overall, when conducting the interviews, I tried to follow the guidelines suggested by Mackey and Gass (2005, p. 174) to make the interview more successful.

- Be careful to talk about things people might be sensitive to talk about such as age, gender.
- Encourage detailed discussion instead of accepting the first answers by keeping silent or saying “Anything else”.
- Place the key questions in the middle of the interview because the participants may not be relaxed in the beginning.
- Make the interview as friendly as possible by conducting the interviews in a comfortable place and starting with small talk to relax the interviewee.

Following the final recommendation, I tried to make the setting of the interview more comfortable. This was done by allowing them to choose a suitable time and place for interviewing as we discussed before (See section 3.4.5.). All the interviews were conducted in a nice quiet area in participants’ university campus except Muna was interviewed in a quiet café near the campus.

The last point to consider when conducting the interview was deciding the language of the interview. Since both the participants and the researcher in the current study share the same first language (Arabic), each participant was given the choice to either use Arabic or English in the interview. The five participants preferred Arabic as the language of the

interview. Conducting interviews in participants' first language helped to minimise the risk that their language proficiency could affect the quality of data (Holmes, Fay, Andrews, & Attia, 2013). Although this forced me to allocate extra time and effort in translating the interviews to English as I discuss in section 3.6.4, using Arabic enabled these students to talk about their linguistic practices freely.

3.6. The role of the researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher can be considered as a tool for data collection (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In other words, the data are typically generated and through a "human instrument" which is the researcher (Simon, 2011, p. 1). In fact, the presence of the researcher in the research setting may influence participants' actions and responses which might direct the research in a certain direction. This indicates the importance of the role of the researcher in the research process. This role may become far greater in subjective studies like the present one considering my belief as a researcher in the existence of multiple realities and different interpretations. This may present some issues that might have an influence on the research procedures (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2013). Thus, the researcher should talk explicitly about his or her role in creating the research (Lanza, 2008). This section begins by talking about my situation as an insider researcher. Then, I address the issue of the observer's paradox. After that, I discuss the social desirability bias. Finally, I talk about how I translated the data.

3.6.1. The insider researcher

The identity of the researcher could have a great influence on the process of research (Lanza, 2008). Some researchers (e.g. Lanza, 2008; Zentella, 1997) have talked about the positive impact of being an insider researcher in facilitating conducting their studies. Similarly, being an insider researcher facilitated my research as it helped me to gain access to the participants and communicate easily with them during all the stages of the research. First, being an Arab and Saudi like four of the participants helped to gain their trust. Also, I share the same culture of the fifth participant who is from Bahrain since we are both from the Arabian Gulf countries⁴ who are usually believed to have similar national cultures. Second, I share the same spoken variety with three of the participants as we all speak Hejazi Arabic. Also, I do not have any difficulty in understanding the varieties of Arabic used by the other two (Bahraini Arabic or the variety used by Ahmed who uses a mixture of different Saudi varieties). Thus, my participants did not have the feeling that they were dealing with a “foreign” person or an outsider who was “spying” (Badwan, 2015, p. 82) on their Twitter accounts.

However, Lanza (2008) points out that being an insider researcher can complicate the research process as his or her questions and notes might not be taken seriously by the participants. Luckily, I did not have that experience with the participants. It could be argued that being a PhD student and older than the five participants helped to create

⁴ The Arabian Gulf countries are Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman.

some sort of seriousness and respect between me and them. As a result, the participants took my questions with a high degree of seriousness.

While being an insider researcher can be a significant factor in facilitating conducting the research, some scholars have warned insider researchers from the danger of 'going native' (Davies, 2008; Johnstone, 2000). It means the situation when the researcher is at risk of losing the ability to analyse critically native behaviour or local cultural assumptions. The basic idea behind this warning is related to the claim that the native researcher often adopts an emic (insider) perspective (Kanuha, 2000). This perspective is often seen as "a subjective, informed, and influential standpoint, contrasted with the *etic* perspective that is more objective, distant, logical and removed from one's project" (ibid, p. 441). As a result, it is believed that those who are 'native' or 'inside' may write about their local culture positively. However, Narayan (1993) argues against this assumption as it considers all natives share the same opinion on different cultural behaviours regardless of their diverse backgrounds and experiences. This diversity means knowing everything about the local society is impossible even for the most experienced 'native' researcher (Aguilar, 1981 cited in Narayan, 1993).

Besides, it might be valid to say that the issue of 'going native' might be a concern if the study is investigating some critical issues in the society which he or she tries to present positively. This is not the case in the current study as it explores insensitive issues like online linguistic practices of Arab study abroad students in the UK. Furthermore, my analysis is guided by sociolinguistic concepts that enabled me to critically analyse the data. Also, I tried to make balance between my own analysis and the analysis presented

by other researchers regarding linguistic practices of Arab individuals especially if we know that some of these researchers are outsiders as they are non-Arabs (e.g.Brustad, 2017; Hoigilt, 2018; Kosoff, 2014; Sinatora, 2019).

3.6.2. Observer's paradox

A major concern of observation is the issue of the observer's paradox (Labov, 1972). It refers to the possibility that "the presence of an observer can influence the linguistic behaviour of those being observed" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 176). This can be a serious issue because "the aim of the linguistic research in the community must be to find out how people talk when they are not being systematically observed; yet we can only obtain this data by systematic observation" (Labov, 1972, p. 209). In other words, the purpose is to ensure that the data gathered is naturally occurring data. As for the current study, the observer's paradox could be a challenge that I had to deal with, as the methodology involved interviewing the participants to ask them about their linguistic practices before observing their Twitter accounts. This could draw their attention to linguistic practices under investigation such as CS or the use of CA, which could lead them to modify their behaviour like trying not to switch or not using CA in their tweets. Nevertheless, Heller (2008) warns against spending a lot of time worrying about the impact of the presence of the observer on participant's behaviour because it may be unavoidable and undesirable especially if the researcher follows the subjective assumptions about reality where there is more than one truth. Also, I agree with Heller's argument that the observer's paradox might be unavoidable because once the researcher

asks someone to participate in his or her study, it is expected that this person will ask about the areas and topics the researcher wants to investigate. As for the current study, it was unethical for me to begin observing the participants' accounts without gaining their consents to take part in my study. This entails telling them explicitly about the aim of the study which is to explore their online linguistic practices. Thus, the impact of my presence as the observer could be unavoidable. However, it can be argued that the impact of the observer's paradox in participants' tweets is not significant. This is related to the nature of Twitter as a public domain which means that tweets written by the participants are accessible not to the researcher alone, but also to many users of Twitter. Furthermore, in order to minimise the influence of the observer's paradox, I tried to be a silent observer by not contacting the participants to ask them about a particular tweet or their linguistic practices during the whole period of observation. This was very important because considering that the duration of observation was relatively long (nine months), there was a big chance of minimizing participants' awareness that they were observed.

3.6.3. Interviews and social desirability

Self-reported methods of gathering the data such as interviews have been usually criticised for the impact of the social desirability bias on the data. According to Fisher (1993, p. 303), social desirability bias is "the basic human tendency to present oneself in the best possible light". For example, it is possible that the interviewees will not reveal their real opinions and attitudes towards certain topics for several reasons such as trying to present beautiful images of themselves (Codó, 2008) by reporting what they think is

socially acceptable. Moreover, some participants in some cases might try to answer some questions depending on what they think the interviewer wants them to say (Mackey & Gass, 2005). These weaknesses may lead the researcher to develop incorrect conclusions about participants' practices (Codó, 2008). However, Brustad (2017, p. 61) argues that self-reported techniques can be a useful tool to “provide reliable information on the participants’ understanding of acceptable attitudes in the society around them, whether or not they hold these views themselves”. Also, Kreuter, Presser, and Tourangeau (2008) found that the majority of their participants told the truth to their survey questions even when the question is sensitive. Despite that Kreuter et al. (2008) are talking about surveys, this can be also applied to interviews. Moreover, the interview questions in the current study are not about sensitive topics, as they revolve around general questions regarding language, identity and online linguistic practices.

Overall, it might be impossible to claim that my participants’ answers in the interviews are totally unbiased. Therefore, the following steps were taken to reduce the effect of social bias. I followed Codó (2008) who suggests that for the researcher to encourage the interviewees to express their real opinions and attitudes, the researchers should try to make the setting of the interviews more comfortable to build a strong connection with the interviewees. Through this strong connection, I tried to encourage them to be honest in responding to my questions. Also, I assured them that I would be open to any answer they may provide and that I would not judge them based on their answers.

3.6.4. Translating the data

Since many of the participants' tweets were written in Arabic, and all the interviews were conducted in Arabic, I had to deal with another challenge. Since the thesis should be submitted in English, this means that all the Arabic data must be translated into English.

When I started to translate the data, I did not face any difficulty in translating tweets that included religious texts and famous Arabic sayings as there are a lot of certified English translations for these texts. However, the tweets and the interviews included many words and expressions that do not have certified translations. In addition, there were many cases of "non-equivalence" which refers to the situation when English has no direct equivalent for the word or expression in Arabic (Baker, 2018). This issue might be harder if we consider that the data included the use of CA. The reason is that some words and expressions can be difficult to translate even to SA. Therefore, it was necessary to use a suitable technique of translation that guarantees conveying what the participant wanted to say in the interviews and in the tweets. I decide to use a combination of literal translation and communicative translation. According to Newmark (1988), literal translation involves converting grammatical constructions to their nearest target language equivalents and translating lexical words individually and out of context. In contrast, communicative translation "attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership" (Newmark, 1988, p. 47). Although literal translation

tries to produce a text in the target language that is very close to the text in the original language, it could also lead to producing a text that might be unclear or not comprehensible, and, therefore, requires interference from communicative translation (Badwan, 2015). For example, the following statement is Ali's response when he was asked t about his attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English:

(يمكن في كلمة او كلمتين ... بس اذا كله الكلام ملخبط بين اللغتين..... احسها ما تمشي لانه أغلب الناس ما راح يفهموك).

The literal translation would be (**Maybe it's ok if it's in one word or two...but if all what you write are mixed...it does not walk because most people will not understand you**). This is really a weak translation because it does not produce a comprehensible meaning. Nevertheless, after using the communicative translation, the statement means (**Maybe it's ok if it's in one word or two...but if all what you write are mixed... it does not feel right because most people will not understand you**). This is because the word (تمشي) in this context does not mean (**walk**) as the literal translation suggests. Instead, it means (**feel right**) if it is translated communicatively. Furthermore, for the purpose of checking the accuracy of the translation, some samples of my translation and the original text were given to a friend who is a Saudi PhD. student in applied linguistics to revise the translation and to look for mistakes. Overall, it can be almost impossible to have "exact equivalence" (Halai, 2007, p. 351) of what the participants have actually written in their tweets or said in the interviews using their Arabic repertoires. Thus, using a mixture of literal translation and communicative

translation in addition to my friend's notes enabled me to convey the essential meaning of the participants' words.

3.7. Reporting on the pilot study

According to Mackey and Gass (2005), conducting a pilot study is an important tool for testing data collection techniques, trying the analytic methods, and making any necessary changes before they are used in the main study. For example, conducting a pilot interview can help to modify ambiguous questions (Codó, 2008; Johnstone, 2000), and to know if participants will speak freely or they will respond using only yes, no, or I don't know (Johnstone, 2000). Finally, this can be good training for the interviewer (Johnstone, 2000). Therefore, a pilot study was conducted with one of the participants (Muna). I interviewed her two times before and after observing her Twitter account for one month. I knew that there could be a risk that Muna would modify some of her linguistic practices because I would ask about them in the second interview. However, this decision was the result of considering the difficulty of recruiting more Arab students that fit the criteria for an eligible participant as I explained in section 3.4.3. Therefore, conducting a small pilot study with one of the participants was the only option. Luckily, the patterns of Muna's linguistic practices between the pilot study and the actual study were similar.

The only change I made after the pilot study was regarding the method of analysing participants' tweets. After using a 'transtextual analytic framework' suggested by Pennycook (2007), it turned out that this framework was not suitable at least for me as I discuss in section 3.8.1.1. Hence, I decided that using a content analysis is more appropriate.

3.8. Data analysis

The data in this study were gathered from both online posts and interviewing the participants. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct two types of analysis with the data. While online linguistic practices were analysed using Content Analysis, interview data was analysed using Thematic Analysis approach.

3.8.1. Content analysis

3.8.1.1 Choosing content analysis as a method for analysis

One of the main issues I faced in the current research is choosing an appropriate approach for analysing participants' tweets. This is because there is some kind of ambiguity about the analytic method used in many studies investigating the linguistic practices of users of social media platforms. To begin with, there is no clarification of the analytical method used in some studies such as Androutsopoulos (2013b), Eldin (2014),

Halim and Maros (2014), Dabrowska (2013), and Hallajow (2016). In contrast, other researchers have mentioned the approaches they rely on to analyse their data. These methods include 'Conversation analysis' (Themistocleous, 2015), and 'Discourse analysis' (Al-Jarf, 2010; Birnie-Smith, 2016). Nevertheless, these studies have not provided enough information about the followed steps they have taken to conduct the analysis. They only have mentioned the name of the method used to analyse the participants' posts.

Dovchin (2015) used a 'transtextual analytic framework' suggested by Pennycook (2007). The following tools were used to interpret participants' online practices: pretextual history (socio-historical implications of the text); contextual relations (the physical location, the indexical meaning in the actual text); subtextual meaning (the socio-cultural ideologies and the relations of power that affect the text); intertextual echoes (the covert associations to other texts); and post-textual interpretation (the metalinguistic interpretations of the speakers' own texts) (Pennycook, 2007, pp. 53-54). Yet, one might say that these tools look vague. Indeed, while it might be easy to understand how the pretextual history or the post-textual interpretation is done because it can be achieved through interviews, no enough information is provided about how to conduct the three remaining tools of this framework.

Herring (2004) identified 'Content analysis' as an appropriate approach to analyse online data. This approach has been used in many pieces of research investigating online interaction such as electronic messages (Herring, 1996; Yates, 1996), internet chats (Cherny, 1999; Kendall, 2002) discussion web forums (Androutsopoulos, 2007; Paolillo, 1996), Twitter (Lin, Hoffman, & Borengasser, 2013; Small, 2011; Strong & Hareb, 2012).

Moreover, in his study about the linguistic practices of Arab individuals on Facebook, Albirini (2016) followed similar steps to those followed in content analysis, although he did not mention the name of his analytical approach. Content analysis may be quantitative which means counting how many times a certain linguistic practice is produced in the text (Herring,2004). It can be also qualitative which involves the interpretation of the linguistic phenomena through the use of “exemplification, argumentation, and narration” (Herring 2004, p. 369). Herring (2004) argues that Content analysis is suitable for researching some complex and interacting phenomena (e.g. code switching). Overall, considering all the previous points, I decided to analyse participants’ online linguistic practices using Content analysis in the current study.

3.8.1.2 Defining content analysis

Content analysis may be defined as “ a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the context of their use” (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 24) It is a technique by which “observations of discourse phenomena in a sample text may be made, illustrated and discussed” (Herring 2004, p. 343). According to Anderson and Kanuka (2003), since content analysis is always associated with text documents, these documents in online research include many online platforms (e.g. email, chats). Similarly, the interaction in social media platforms such as Twitter can be also considered as texts. In the following section, I will discuss all the stages which I followed to carry out the analysis of participants’ tweets.

3.8.1.3 Conducting content analysis

3.8.1.3.1 Deciding the unit of analysis

The first aspect to consider when conducting content analysis is deciding on the unit of analysis. Some online researchers have chosen the sentence as the unit of analysis. Others have used the paragraph as the unit of analysis. In the current study, it was decided that the unit of analysis would be each post written by the participants on their profiles. Anderson and Kanuka (2003) discussed in detail the advantages of using the message (tweet in this study) as the unit of analysis. One advantage for that is making data management easier because then I was counting posts, rather than sentences. Indeed, if we take Muna's case, for example, will find that she produced 423 tweets. If we used the sentence as a unit of analysis, then we would have a larger amount of data because she wrote more than one sentence in many of her tweets. Another advantage of using the tweet as a unit of analysis is helping me contextualize the unit which then could enable me to understand and interpret the linguistic practice in that tweet.

3.8.1.3.2 The coding system

A Coding system refers to the rules used to classify and record the content of a text (Neuman, 2014). The present study used both types of coding in content analysis: manifest and latent. **Manifest coding** (also called structural) focuses on the form and structure of the text like words, languages (Neuman, 2014). According to Herring (2004),

examples of structure in online communication include language, emoticons, quoting, and abbreviation. Therefore, it might be logical to claim that structures on Twitter include emoticons, emoji, quoting, hashtags, replies, comments and language/languages used in each post. This analysis can give us much information about the nature of online activity (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003). **Latent coding** (also called semantic analysis) focuses on the implicit meaning of the text (Neuman, 2014). It tries to evaluate the text to find patterns and themes (Neuman, 2014). In online communication, an example of semantic coding might be the manner of the post (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003) such as conflict and politeness (Herring, 2004). As for the present research, the first step when conducting the analysis is to develop a coding system. This system is divided into a series of stages, which are explained in detail in the following sections.

3.8.1.3.3 The first stage

The first stage was to categorise the tweets based on the language or languages used in the tweets. These categories encompass Fus'ha, Colloquial Arabic, English, Arabic and English posts, borrowed words from English Arabizi, Fus'ha and Colloquial Arabic, tweets that included emoji only, and tweets that were written in other languages or varieties. Table 3.4 demonstrates the coding system for this stage with examples taken from posts produced by the participants in the current research. The post is followed by its translation when it is needed.

The variety/varieties used	Example
Fus'ha	...قد نتعلم الكثير من أخطائنا ان لم ننشغل في إنكارها (We might learn from our mistakes if we do not deny them)
colloquial Arabic	الحمد لله انها ماقابلتك و لا كان غيرت رايتها Thank God that she did not meet you. If she meets you, she will change her opinion
English	Remember you don't need certain number of friends, just a number of #friends you can be certain of...
(Arabic +English)	احلى ميزة في الجوالاات البريطانية ان المتصل يقدر يسبب Voice mail يعني ما عنده حجة اني لازم ارد عليه مباشرة What I like about mobile phones in the UK that the caller can send a voice mail . There is no excuse for him or her that I should answer him immediately
(SA+ CA) Underlined: SA	<u>بالعادي نقول دائما اللي عينه شبعانه ما يبالغ باظهار الامور المادية</u> We always say that if you are satisfied, <u>you will not care about materialistic things</u>
Words borrowed from English Underlined: borrowed words	#وقتك ضايع في: في كمية الناس اللي اعملهم بلوك (#You are wasting your time in: too many people to <u>block</u>).
Arabizi	We will <u>insha allah</u> (We will if God wills)
Emoji-only	
Other languages	Bonjour 
Other varieties of Arabic	في قلبي حاجة مستخبية (Something is hiding in my heart). (Egyptian)

Table 3.4. Categories of tweets based on the linguistic form.

It is important to mention that this process was not always straightforward because the categorisation of the tweet as belonging to a particular language or variety might be complicated in some cases. Therefore, before starting this stage, I realised that

some important points must be addressed in order to have a clear and consistent categorisation to my data.

The first point is that, in some cases, deciding whether a word belongs to Fus'ha or Ammyah was not easy because the boundaries between the two varieties can be blurry especially in terms of the written language. Following Albirini (2016), the categorization of the words to belong to Fus'ha or Ammyah was based on the researcher's own intuition in addition to the judgment of two Saudi PhD. students. While the first one is originally from Al-Hejaz, the other one is from the eastern region of Saudi Arabia and understands Bahrain Arabic (the variety of Arabic used by the Fahad). Also, since I deal with written data, I followed Albirini (2016) who used morphological cues in some cases to distinguish between words from Standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic (e.g. yashrabuun "drink" for the plural subject in Standard Arabic vs. yashrabuu in colloquial Arabic). Another related point is that some sounds belong mainly to Standard Arabic such as (قق), and ذ (Ò).For example, the word قال (he said) can be classified easily when it was spoken because if it is pronounced (qala), it belongs to Standard Arabic. In contrast, if it was pronounced (gal), it belongs to colloquial Arabic. However, when they are written in a post, they can belong to both varieties of Arabic. In such cases, determining a word to belong to either variety of Arabic was done depending on contextual information (Albirini, 2016).

The second point is that the participants wrote many posts that include several Quranic verses, Hadiths sayings, and Islamic supplications in their tweets, which are often classified as Classical Arabic. However, I categorised them at this stage as Standard Arabic in order to differentiate between them and posts written in colloquial Arabic. Categorising

the post as classical Arabic was used later in the latent coding when I examined the meaning and the mood of each post.

Overall, it can be said that this stage was very useful for conducting a suitable analysis of participants' linguistic practices in their Twitter accounts. The reason for this is that when I finished classifying tweets written by the participants based on this system, all posts in every single category were saved in a separate folder. First, this helped to make the analysis of each specific linguistic practices easier because then I was able to concentrate on all posts under each category separately. Besides, this enabled me to have the number of posts composed by the participant in each language or variety. This does not mean in any case to say that the main priority was to focus on the total number of posts in each category. Instead, this allowed me to know some initial information like the preferred language or variety for posting. This also provided me with some information about participants' linguistic practices such as how frequent or absent the use of some linguistic practices (e.g. code-switching).

3.8.1.3.4 The second stage

The second stage was to determine the type of each tweet posted by the participant. This included deciding whether the post was a reply to another user, participation in a hashtag, or when the tweet features addressivity using the 'at' sign (@) before another user's account name (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Starbird & Palen, 2011). Although both of a reply and an addressivity tweet entail the use of @ sign, the reply occurs in the following format: (replying to @ username). This format was used as

the criterion for categorising tweets as replies or addressivity. Table 3.5 shows the coding scheme for this stage of analysis. Every code is given with an example from the data collected from the participants in the present research.

Category	Example
Tweet	For the first time I knew that you could become homesick for people too...
Addressivity	@ياحي الله من جانا Name (Name @ Hello to the one who came)
Hashtag	Do you remember when you joined Twitter? I do. 9 years #My Twitter anniversary
Reply	Replying to @ username Is it today?

Table 3.5. Categories of tweets based on the type of the tweet.

Considering stages 1 and 2, it can be said that the use of content analysis can lead to a limitation in terms of categorising participants' tweets. The decision to take the tweet as a unit of analysis required me to apply one label to a tweet. For example, while the participants posted text with emoji in some tweets, they also posted some tweets that included emoji only. I decide to put only posts that included emoji without written language as a separate category and to include tweets with written language and emoji as one category whose label indicates the linguistic practice. The reason for such a decision was informed by the argument that people tend to use emoji to add an effective tone to their written messages (Danesi, 2016). In this case, the interpretation of the post might be more appropriate if it is done through a mixture of the analysis of the written

language and the analysis of the emoji used in this post. In contrast, the analysis of emoji-only was needed if the post included only emoji without any written language.

Other examples of the limitations of using the tweet as the unit of analysis include instances where a tweet could be both a reply and a participation in a hashtag. In other cases, the tweet can be a reply, a participation in a hashtag and it includes addressivity. These cases cannot be easily categories under a single label. Aware of the potential caution of using the tweet as the unit of analysis, it was important to stress that my main concern was not to focus on quantifying tweet categories, but to provide a detailed qualitative analysis of the tweet to unpack its complexity. Doing so has helped me develop a more valid analysis of participants' linguistic practices. For instance, discussing the impact of the audience on participants' linguistic practices in the third stage cannot be done without identifying the type of the tweet (e.g. reply, participation on a hashtag, or addressivity). Similarly, cases in which tweets fitted into more than one category were analysed in the final stage when I examine the meaning and the context of each tweet.

3.8.1.3.4 The third stage

In this stage of the analysis, the content of participants' tweets was analysed qualitatively. This stage involved examining each post separately by focusing on multiple criteria. These included looking at the nature of the post (e.g. Formal, informal), the tone of the post (e.g. funny, serious) the type of the intended recipient (e.g. friend, journalist, religious scholar), and then finding the meaning of the post. This helped us to gain a fuller interpretation of participants' linguistic practice when they post on Twitter.

The process of analysing participants' linguistic practices was carried out based on several frameworks. First, the current study depended on Gumperz's notion of metaphorical CS (Gumperz, 1982) for investigating patterns for switching between Arabic and English. Second, to identify patterns for switching between different Arabic varieties, I relied on the reasons suggested by Albirini (2011). Moreover, it is important to say that the study followed Wei (2017) to differentiate between CS and translanguaging. According to Wei (2017), CS implies that there is a shift between one language to another, and this shift comes in different patterns. In contrast, translanguaging indicates that an individual uses his or her linguistic repertoires in a dynamic way to the extent that it might be difficult to find patterns for switching between languages or varieties.

Furthermore, since the tweets posted by the participants included the use of emoji, it was necessary to find an appropriate framework to analyse emoji uses. Therefore, I decided to discuss how and why are emoji were used by the participants by depending mainly on three books: **Semantics of Emoji** (Danesi, 2016), **The Emoji Code** (Evans, 2017), and **Because Internet** (McCulloch, 2019) in addition to the work of Herring and Dainas (2017) on the pragmatics of emoji . These books talk about the development of emoji, their functions and meanings, in addition to their uses in different societies. Thus, they were very useful for understanding participants' emoji uses.

In terms of discussing identity construction in participants' posts, the current research used the framework proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) for studying identity. This framework considers that "identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles, and local,

ethnographically emergent cultural positions” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 585). Also, to understand and identify different kinds of stances used by the participants and in their tweets, I relied on the differentiation suggested by Du Bois (2007) (see section 2.5.1).

Finally, it is significant to note that before ending the third stage of the analysis which included analysing participants’ tweets qualitatively, a final revision was made after the second interviews with the participants which included participants’ own interpretation of their online linguistic practices.

3.8.2. Thematic analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis includes searching across interviews or a collection of texts to discover frequent patterns of meaning. It goes “beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is themes” (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011, p. 10).

Themes may be defined as “abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that link not only expressions found in texts but also expressions found in images, sounds, and objects” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 87). The real issue is identifying themes within the data. In other words, it is necessary to answer some questions such as: what counts as a major theme or subtheme, or what is the size of the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), instead of identifying themes depending on quantifiable measures, I identified themes if it was connected to something important in relation to the overall research question. A theme was considered major even if it is not one of the

most frequent themes within the data set.

3.8.2.1 Conducting thematic analysis

In the study, I followed the six steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) for conducting thematic analysis as can be seen in Table 3.6.

No	Phase	Description of the process
1	Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial idea
2	Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3	Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4	Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5	Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6	Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Table 3.6. Phases of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006)

3.8.2.1.1. Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

Braun and Clarke (2006) pointed out that the researcher should read the data profoundly to be familiar with the depth of the text. This stage includes transcribing, translating, and reading the interviews many times.

Since the interviews were conducted in Arabic, it was necessary to translate the interview into English. While it was possible and less time consuming to do the thematic analysis in Arabic and then translate only the sections that I would need to present in the

report, I decided to translate the full interviews for two reasons. First, it can be also a part of the process of familiarizing myself with the data. Second, it made the writing stage easier because I was able to change the extracts that I wanted to present in my findings without spending extra time in translating them into English.

Although transcribing is time-consuming, it enables us to have a profound understanding of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The current project followed some transcribing advices proposed by Johnstone (2000). These include numbering all the lines, using names of speakers instead of using letters (e.g. speaker A), which is easier for the reader of the transcript to follow the talk if names are used than speaker A.

3.8.2.1.2. Phase 2: Generating initial codes

After the process of familiarization with the data, it was time to create initial codes from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 88), “Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst”. The process of generating codes was data-driven and theory-driven. While the former involves searching for codes depending on the data, the latter involved approaching the data “with specific questions in mind that you wish to code around” (ibid, p. 89). Because I was dealing with a small number of interviews, I decided to code the data manually by writing notes on the transcribed of the interviews and using different colours to show possible patterns.

3.8.2.1.3. Phase 3: Searching for themes

After finishing coding all the data, I started searching for themes, rather than codes. This stage contained categorising the different codes into potential themes and classifying all the relevant coded data extracts in the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than focusing on semantic content, the clear or surface meanings of the data, I attempted to look for the latent content which is the underlying ideas and ideologies of what the participant has said (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8.2.1.4. Phase 4: Reviewing themes

In this phase, a review of all themes was conducted. In other words, some of the themes were deleted if there is no sufficient data to support them, or others might be divided into different themes. The aim of this phase is to know all the different themes in the data, the relation between them, and the general information they present about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8.2.1.5. Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The next step included identifying the meaning of each theme. For every single theme, a detailed analysis was provided, in addition to discussing its relationship with other themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The aim of this stage was to have the ability to decide what is the theme, and what is not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Table 3.7 provide a list of the major themes that were identified from participants interviews:

No	Themes	Description
1	Language attitudes	Participants' attitude to a certain language or variety.
2	Language ideologies	Beliefs about the language whether if they are dominant (mainstream social beliefs about the language) or they are emerging (the ideologies that emerge as a result of practices)
3	Audience	When the participants talked about the impact of other users on their linguistic practices.
4	Identity	When the participantst linked a certain language or variety to a particular aspect of identity
5	Type of interaction	When the participants indicated that a certain language or variety should only be used in certain situation (e.g. SA in formal sitautions.

Table 3.7. Themes emerged from the data.

3.8.2.1.6. Phase 6: Producing the report

The final stage included writing the report that presents the analysis of the data to the reader. Braun and Clarke (2006) stressed that the writing of the analysis (including extracts from the data) should present a logical, brief, and interesting description of the data.

3.9. Ethical considerations

One can argue that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter can provide many opportunities for research in different scientific fields. Nevertheless, since all information extracted from these sites could involve people, it is necessary to consider the ethics regarding research on human subjects even if it is not clear how and where individuals are involved in the research data (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

The main issue is that there is no clear guidance on how ethical considerations can

be maintained when researching online (Moreno, Goniu, Moreno, & Diekema, 2013). For example, Zimmer and Proferes (2014) studied 382 studies investigating Twitter and found that only 16 studies mentioned something about ethical considerations in their methodologies. Five studies of these sixteen argue that data on Twitter is available for public access and, therefore, no ethical considerations were required for using or collecting data from Twitter. Similarly, Beißwenger and Storrer (2008) argued that it is illogical to obtain approval from users when collecting data from publicly accessible online environments due to practical reasons.

Hård af Segerstad, Kullenberg, Kasperowski, and Howes (2016) distinguish between two methods of collecting data from social media sites. The first one when profiles of a group of users are observed for a period of time and only a small amount of data are collected. The second method when some computer applications are used to gather a large number of posts or tweets from many users. Hård af Segerstad et al. (2016) argues that ethical difficulties are limited in the first one comparing with the second one. Therefore, it might be claimed that the current study fits within the description of the first method, as it focuses on the profiles of a small number of users and computer applications were not used.

According to Beißwenger and Storrer (2008), informing people about the desire for researching their practices online is essential in order to make the research ethically justifiable. Thus, I did not start to gather data from participants' profiles before obtaining signed consent forms (See Appendix 4) from them allowing me to access their profiles for research purposes. Furthermore, Vitak, Shilton, and Ashktorab (2016) stressed that the

researcher should notify the participants about what he or she is going to do with the data and why, in addition to telling them how the data will be gathered. Hence, the participants were given a detailed information sheet about the purpose of the study, how data will be collected, saved, and analysed. Also, participants were informed explicitly that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Accordingly, I informed each one of the participants that if he or she did not want to continue to take a part in the study, all the information and data collected from him or her to date, would be destroyed and his or her name would be removed from all the study files.

A major challenge to online researchers is that Internet users can have different perceptions of privacy (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). Androutsopoulos (2014) argues that what seems public in the eye of the researcher may be considered private by the participants. Thus, researchers should be careful because some internet users may consider their public posts as private material (Garcia et al., 2009). Therefore, the second interview was an opportunity to ask the participants to have a look at their data to ensure that they were happy for me to include their tweets. I told them that they could accept or reject the inclusion of certain tweets in the study. Additionally, they were allowed to edit or delete any private information included in these tweets. By doing this, I was ensuring that there was an ongoing process of consent. Furthermore, as suggested by Moreno et al. (2013) and Androutsopoulos (2014), I tried to avoid giving any clue that may lead to revealing participants' real identities. Besides, any mention of other persons' names, or institutions was modified to guarantee that there is no possible risk for individuals (Mann & Stewart, 2000).

Finally, only tweets that were posted by the participants were considered in the study. This means that retweets and responses from other people were not part of the research data and were excluded from the study. However, these tweets can provide a lot of contextual information that can be essential to have a proper analysis of participants' tweets. Therefore, since I did not have other users' consent to collect their tweets, I decided to go back to Twitter each time to see the tweet in context, in its longer thread.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a detailed description of the methodology and research design of the current study. It aimed to clarify and justify every decision and procedure that was taken to develop the study. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the challenges and issues that occurred during the practical part of the study, and how I tried to solve them. I hope that this chapter succeeded in providing a clear and transparent picture of how the study was conducted.

Using analytical tools discussed in this chapter, the next chapter talks about the findings of this study where I critically present the linguistic practices of the participants in their Twitter accounts.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents the linguistic practices of Arab study abroad students in their Twitter accounts. It describes participants' use of linguistic, spatial and digital repertoires which include SA, CA varieties, English varieties, and digitally afforded emoji. The findings also discuss how all these linguistic repertoires are deployed by these participants to construct different macro and micro-level identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005).

The first section of the chapter begins by providing a quantitative content analysis (Herring, 2004) which shows how many times each linguistic practice is produced by the participants. This can give initial information such as the least or the most preferred language or variety for posting. Then, following the typical format of case study research (Creswell, 2007), I provide a detailed qualitative content analysis of each case before ending the chapter by presenting a cross-case analysis where I talk about the similarities and the differences between the participants in terms of their linguistic practices. In this chapter, tables, examples of participants' tweets, and quotes from interviews are used to present the findings.

4.1. Participants' linguistic practices

Analysing all tweets, replies, and hashtag participation by the participants revealed that they use a wide range of linguistic repertoires. Table 4.1 presents the numbers of tweets composed in each language and variety, in addition to the number of tweets that include more than a single language or variety.

The variety/ varieties used	Muna	Ali	Yasser	Ahmed	Fahad
CA only	170	126	149	28	82
SA only	134	35	38	157	51
English only	61	29	6	41	12
SA + CA	29	5	21	36	14
Arabic +English	7	2	2	4	3
Borrowed words from English	19	3	7	5	9
Arabizi	1	1	-	-	-
Other languages only	-	French 2	-	-	-
Emoji-only	2	6	5	5	3
Total	423	209	228	276	174

Table 4.1: Language choice in participants' tweets.

The table shows that the participants used two forms of Arabic--SA (Fus'ha) and CA, in addition to the use of English and emoji. However, it was not always easy to determine if a word is intended to be in SA or CA as I explained in the methodology chapter. Also, the table distinguishes between words borrowed from English (writing

English words written in Arabic scripts) and English words written in English. In general, this chapter explains that the boundaries between these linguistic practices are blurred, and these categories are not always neat and clear.

The analysis revealed that CA was the most used variety for posting by all the participants, and that the second preferred choice was SA. The only exception is Ahmed, who wrote his tweets using SA, and English more than CA. It is worth noting that I am not describing one monolithic CA. Instead, I used CA to refer to the regional varieties of Arabic such as Hejazi, Bahraini, Lebanese and Egyptian, etc. Moreover, while English was used by all the participants, some of them (Yasser and Fahad) wrote only a small number of tweets in English. The analysis also revealed that the participants used some borrowed words from English. Across the entire data set, only two cases of Arabizi, writing Arabic words in Roman letters, were found: one by Ali and one by Muna. Furthermore, the table shows that a single tweet can include the use of Arabic and English, or SA and CA. The chapter demonstrates these are cases of switching between Arabic and English, between SA and CA, and translanguaging especially between SA and CA.

Another important point is related to the presence of both linguistic (written language) and semiotic (emoji) elements in tweets posted by the participants. although the participants used emoji alongside texts in many of their tweets, there are a few cases of using emoji without any written language. While some researchers (e.g. Gurney & Demuro, 2019; Pennycook, 2017) call for a move from language and languaging to semiotic assemblage to provide a broader umbrella for communicative means, Evans (2017) argues that although emoji is a strong communication system, it is still not a

language. Also, Danesi (2016) mentions that people in online communication use emoji to add an effective tone to their written messages. Therefore, only tweets that included emoji without written language were categorised as a separate category. In contrast, tweets that included emoji alongside texts were categorised as a part of the variety used in that post.

Finally, there were only two tweets written in a language other than Arabic and English which was French. These were written by Ali who told me that such a practice is simply because he was in France at the time of these tweets. All these linguistic repertoires were strategically deployed by the participants to convey meaning and construct different identity aspects.

The following sections presents a detailed analysis of the linguistic practices of the five research participants (I introduced their sociolinguistic profiles in Section 3.4.4). Guided by their level of online activity, and therefore the amount of data collected per participant, I decided to first present in detail the cases of Muna, Yasser, and Ahmed, my most active participants. After that, I present data from the remaining participants Ali and Fahad in section 4.5. The chapter ends with a cross-case analysis of the linguistic practices of all the five participants. This approach has enabled me to zoom in on the linguistic practices of individual participants and to zoom out on the languaging practices of all the participants.

4.2. Muna's case

A total of 422 tweets, replies, and hashtag participation by Muna were collected as data during seven months of observation. Table 4.2 shows the numbers of tweets composed in each language and variety, in addition to the number of tweets that include more than a single language or variety.

The variety/ varieties used	Number of tweets
CA only	170
SA only	134
English only	61
SA + CA	29
Arabic +English	7
Borrowed words from English	19
Arabizi	1
Emoji-only	1
Total	422

Table 4.2.: Language choice in Muna's tweets

4.2.1. The use of CA

The study identified a clear preference for CA (mostly Hejazi Arabic), over English and SA, across Muna's tweets. As illustrated in Table 4.2, CA clearly emerges as the language of preference, as 170 posts were written entirely in CA. The relevant tweets can

be categorised into 3 types, as follows: original tweets that Muna composed, replies from Muna to other followers, and instances of Muna participating in a hashtag.

Of these 170 tweets, only 17 were created by Muna in CA. None of these tweets was a reply or represented Muna's participation in a hashtag. First, Muna wrote the "at" sign (@) four times before another user's account name. This is known as addressivity (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Starbird & Palen, 2011). All four such messages were identical, in terms of their content, as they shared a single message (يا حي الله من جانا) (Hello to the one who came), and they were distinguishable only by the name of the user addressed. According to Seargeant, Tagg, and Ngampramuan (2012) addressivity on Twitter means that when someone writes a tweet before another user's account name, he or she usually chooses an appropriate language or variety for that user. This is what can be seen in Extract 1 when Muna used a famous expression in CA to welcome this user. This expression (يا حي الله من جانا) (Hello to the one who came) is normally used by individuals in Saudi Arabia when they want to welcome a guest. Based on the linguistic use of Hejazi Arabic and the informal tone of the welcoming message, it can be assumed that Muna knows these addressed individuals in person in the four tweets. This was confirmed by Muna in the second interview when she explained that this user is her friend and she wrote this tweet when she knew that that friend was visiting the UK. Thus, Muna used CA which she deemed as the appropriate variety for communication with friends. This can be considered as an example of how online linguistic analysis can reveal offline personal connections.

Extract 1

The tweet	Translation
@ Name يا حي الله من جانا	Name @ Hello to the one who came

Hejazi Arabic is also used by the participant, in some cases, when she is trying to describe a funny situation she has experienced. In Extract 2, for example, Muna described a situation where she was studying in a public place and mentioned that she had not realised that she was singing. Muna then wrote (ياا حلاوتك يا جماالك خليت للحلوين ابيبييه) which is a line from an Egyptian song. She also used the emoji as an action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) which is the use of emoji to describe a physical action. In this case, she used [🎵] to show that she had been singing. Further, the use of an emoji (😂), at the end of the story, showed that this was an embarrassing situation. This funny story could help to construct a micro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is Muna's identity as a humorous person.

Extract 2

The tweet	Translation
مشكلة الواحد لمن يتحمس مع الشغل في مكان عام و هدوء وفجأة.... يستوعب انه قاعد يغني بصوت عالي و بتلحيين... ياا حلاوتك يا جماالك خليت للحلوين ابيبييه 🎵 اترك لكم التخيل 😂	It's a problem when someone gets excited in a public place and realises that he or she is singing ... You are very very beautiful 🎵 I leave that to your imagination 😂

Finally, Muna wrote many tweets that can be regarded as simple quotations. In Extract 3, for example, she wrote a tweet in CA that is actually a quotation from a poem written by a Saudi poet.

Extract 3

The tweet	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">ليتك تجي.... تشوف شوق عيني بعينك...</p>	<p>I wish you are here.. To see my love by your eyes...</p>

Muna also used Hejazi Arabic reflected to participate in hashtags. If we look at Extract 4, it is clear that Muna participated in the hashtag referring to **#اليوم العالمي للاعسر** (#Left-handers Day). When she wrote (My god created a few special people, and the rest write with the right hand), it is clear that she is expressing pride of being left-handed herself. She also added [smiling face with sunglasses] emoji which is used to convey coolness (Danesi, 2016) to suggest that left-handedness is cool.

Extract 4

The tweet	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">#اليوم العالمي للاعسر 🕶️ ربي خلق قليل مميزين و الباقي يكتبو باليمين</p>	<p># Left -handers Day 🕶️ My god created a few special people, and the rest write with the right hand</p>

Extract 5

The tweet	Translation
<p>هذا وقت احتفال...  مو وقت كتابة..</p> <p> محمد قاعد يتحجج </p> <p>#انجتلا كولومبيا</p>	<p>It is time to celebrate  not a time for writing.</p> <p>No one is giving excuses </p> <p># England vs. Colombia</p>

In Extract 5, Muna used Hejazi Arabic in a hashtag about a football game, for the World Cup, between England and Colombia. After the victory by England, she wrote that it was time for a celebration. she used the dancer emoji to reinforce the idea of celebration (Evans, 2017). Muna commented, at the end of the tweet, that she was not trying to give excuses to justify her intent to stop writing that night. The use of the smiling face with halo emoji can be considered as a tone modification (Herring & Dainas, 2017) because it makes the tweet looks sarcastic. Moreover, the fact that Muna talked about football in this post and some other posts as I demonstrate later can be seen as a sign that she belongs to a new generation of Arab women who use social networking sites to express their ideas about different topics (Newsom & Lengel, 2012). Hence, by posting about football, she constructs her identity as a modern Arab woman. This is because the traditional conception about Arab women in Arab countries is that they are oppressed and that they cannot talk about many topics such as sports (Guta & Karolak, 2015). This can be clear from Muna's answer in the interview about the reason for writing about football:

Muna: Now it's different. Women can talk about sport, not like my mother's generation... they did not care about football because it was not acceptable to them... but now many girls talk about football like men and even better.

Most of tweets written in Hejazi Arabic occurred when Muna replied to her followers in friendly conversations. For example, in Extract 6, Muna replied to another user, who wrote in Hejazi Arabic that she was scared because she was at the beginning of her PhD. program. Muna tried to reassure her friend, by writing the following tweet:

Extract 6

Muna's reply	Translation
<p>احلى شيء لمن نضحك على الي بنمر فيه مهما كنا نتخيل انه أصعب الايام او أكبر الهموم حيجي يوم نفتكر دي الايام ونتمناها</p>	<p>  The best thing is when we laugh about what we are going through even if we think that these are the hardest days. We will remember these days in the future and will hope these days come again.</p>

Extract 7 is a reply to one of her friends who posted a picture of a beautiful café. Muna wrote this tweet to indicate that the picture is beautiful. She also used the coffee emoji because the tweet is about a café. She also used a smiling face with heart-shaped eyes emoji () to express her happiness for her friend's post. The use of this emoji can be considered as a reaction, when emoji is used to show an emotional response to the content of another user's post (Herring & Dainas, 2017).

If we look at Extracts 7 and 8 again, we can see that Muna wrote: “دا” instead of writing “ذا” in Extract 7 and “ياخدو” instead of writing “ياخذو” in Extract 8. She replaced the letter (ذ) with the letter (د) to imply that she is pronouncing the sound (ò) as a sound (d). This would tell other Twitter users that she is from the region of Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. Hejazi Arabic has many distinctive features that separate Hejazi speakers from other Saudi Arabic speakers. For instance, Hejazi individuals always replace the sound (ò) with the sound (d), or they pronounce the sound (t) instead of the sound (θ). Overall, it might be claimed that Muna constructs a macro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is her Hejazi identity through writing these words in the Hejazi style. This aspect of identity appeared early during the first interview with Muna. It occurred when she was asked about the closest language or variety to her:

Muna: Of course, Hejazi Arabic. We have been using it since I was a child. I have used it all my life. You can express yourself through Ammyah. I love it.

One can see in the previous statement that Muna used emotional language (**I love it**) when talking about Hejazi Arabic. The statement also shows that she used the first-person plural pronoun “we” instead of “I” in (**We have been using it since I was a child**) which suggests a sense of belonging to speakers of Hejazi Arabic. This is supported by Muna’s reply in the second interview when she was asked about her Hejazi identity:

Muna: Hejaz means Makah and Medina. . . . I am Hejazi and proud of that.

Extract 9

Muna's reply	Translation
 ولا حاولت اطل في احد اساسا	I didn't try to look at anyone  

Extract 9 is also a reply written by Muna in CA. The context related to Muna's embarrassing story about singing in a public place (Extract 2), one of her followers asked about how the people around her had reacted. Muna, in Extract 9, replied that she did not try to look to anybody. She used two funny emoji to show that situation was funny situation.

Extract 10

Muna's reply	Translation
هههههه تفسير منطقي برضو	Hahahaha this also could be a logical reason

The post in Extract 10 is a reply, written by the participant, to what another user wrote. One user wrote, in CA, a question about why Shawwal (the month that comes after Ramadan) is boring and long. Another user said that it was because people are waiting for their salary. Muna replied that could be a logical explanation, but began by writing (ههههههه) (hahaha) which indicates that she was laughing because of that user's explanation.

In only one case (post 11), Muna posted something in Egyptian Arabic (Something is hiding in my heart). When I asked Muna about her reason for writing in an Egyptian dialect of Arabic, she informed me that the content of the tweet was a line from a song by a famous Egyptian singer.

Extract 11

The tweet	Translation
وفي قلبي حاجة مستخبية...	Something is hiding in my heart

Overall, these examples demonstrate that Muna used the regional variety in informal situations, where she was trying to express her feelings, to indicate the existence of some kind of personal relationship with her interlocutor, or to reflect her intention of being sarcastic. This is supported by a statement Muna made in the first interview when asked about her positive attitude towards writing the posts using the regional dialect:

Muna: I like it

R: why?

Muna: It's simple. Your message will reach other people easily because you don't speak Fus'ha in your daily life.... If you write in CA, you are being yourself.

Muna's attitude towards the use of CA in her posts can be understood if we acknowledge that many Arabs believe that using the regional dialect plays a major role in positive social communication (Saidat, 2010). This is because of its simplicity, as it is the language that individuals use in their daily lives in interpersonal communication. In addition, many Arabs think that CA represents a local identity (Albirini, 2016) which, in

this case, is Hejazi Arab. This might go in the same line with Muna’s words “you are being yourself”.

4.2.2. The use of SA

Exploring Muna’s account revealed that, behind her regional dialect, her second choice of language for writing her posts on Twitter is SA. A total of 134 tweets were composed in SA. Generally, Muna’s use of SA might be categorised into 2 types. First, she uses it when she wants to post a religious supplication or a religious saying, as she does in Extracts 12 and 13 respectively. It might be claimed that posting some religious supplication could be seen to enact another macro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which Muna’s religious identity as a Muslim. This identity is constructed through her participation in hashtags about some Islamic occasions such as Eid and Ramadan. For example, she participated in the hashtag عيد الفطر (Eid) by wishing happiness for all Muslims. Because a hashtag can be used as a way of self-categorisation with a particular group (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012), Muna was trying to perform her association with other Muslims using this hashtag.

Extract 12

The tweet	Translation
اللهم اروي قبور موتانا و موتى المسلمين	Oh lord: have mercy on Muslim dead people

Extract 13

The tweet	Translation
بين غمضة عين وانتباهتها يغير الله من حال الى حال	In the blink of an eye...Allah can change everything.

Analysing the data shows that the second context in which Muna uses Fus'ha is characterised by her desire to present a thoughtful comment. We can see that SA is used in Extracts 14, 15 and 16 to express Muna's feelings about how to deal with some life experience.

Extract 14

The tweet	Translation
الابتسامة وقت شرود الذهن لقاء من نوع اخر	A smile at the time of mind-wandering is another kind of meeting.

Extract 15

The tweet	Translation
رسالة لأشخاص لا يغيبو عن بالنا حتى في أشد أوقات انشغالنا ... ننتظر الوقت للحديث معهم لمشاركتهم تفاصيل حياتنا تأكدوا انكم سعادتنا..	A message to all that we don't forget even in our busiest time... we are waiting to talk with them, and share the details of our life with you... Be sure that you are our happiness.

Extract 16

The tweet	Translation
قد نتعلم الكثير من أخطائنا ان لم ننشغل في إنكارها...	We might learn from our mistakes if we do not deny them.

One piece of evidence that supports Muna’s preference for using Fus’ha to present her more thoughtful ideas and pieces of advice is the fact that many of these tweets occurred in the context of Muna’s participation in certain popular hashtags, as can be seen in the following examples:

Extract 17

The tweet	Translation
# درس اليوم في قصص البعض قوة نحتاجها	<i># today’s lesson</i> we can find the strength in other people’s stories

Extract 18

The tweet	Translation
# صباح الخير احدهم يهتم و ان كان يخفي اهتمامه تهمه ابتسامتك و تصنع فارق في يومه ابتسم لنفسك اولاً ثم من اجل تلك الارواح التي تسعد بابتسامتك	<i># Good morning</i> Some people might care for you even if they don’t tell you.... they care for your smile which makes their day Smile for yourself in the first place, and for those who will be happy for your smile.

Extract 19

# اهلا-بالعام-الدراسي الموهبة وحدها لا تكفي... التعليم يصنع منك نسخة افضل	<i># beginning of the school year</i> Talent alone is not enough.. Learning will make a better version of you
---	--

By using SA in these tweets, Muna contrast a micro type of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is the identity of a wise and knowledgeable individual. This could be understood by taking language ideology into account. It is widely believed by most Arab

individuals that SA is the language of education and sophistication (Albirini, 2016; Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959; Hoigilt, 2018). Thus, Muna wanted to be seen as a wise person, capable of providing thoughtful comments in her tweets. This process of promoting herself on Twitter (Page, 2013) can be confirmed by what she said in the interview:

Muna: Anything might be used against you whether it is religious, political, or cultural.

This statement indicates that she is very careful about her image in the eyes of other users of Twitter. Marwick and boyd (2011) mentioned that some users of Twitter would similarly not talk about some controversial topics in order to present an acceptable image to other users, especially if they know that the interaction between users of Twitter can be accessed through plenty of search engines (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012).

Furthermore, the fact that Muna uses SA in her participation in some popular hashtags in Arabic can be considered a symbol of a macro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is the pan-Arab identity. Hashtags can be used as a way of self-categorisation with a particular group (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). In that case, Muna's participation in these hashtags demonstrates that she is a member of the pan-Arab community. Moreover, Birnie-Smith (2016) found that if the real identity of an audience is not clear on the Internet, then the user will choose to use the language of the group to present his or her unity with this group. By using a hashtag, one's posts appear to a wider group, not only to one's followers. Hence, it is expected that one's tweets will be seen by people whom one does not know personally.

This might not be the case if Muna wants to write an ordinary tweet and not use a hashtag. Then, she will be less careful in her language choice. In contrast, when using a hashtag, Muna preferred to use SA to show her identification with the wider group by using their shared language.

Another piece of evidence for Muna's pan-Arab identity is how she perceived herself as an Arab during the interview. According to Bucholtz and Hall (2005, 2010), identity can be expressed directly by referring to a particular identity category. In the following extracts from the interview, we can see that Muna's pan-Arab identity is expressed through her answers.

R: *Do you perceive yourself as an Arab?*

Muna: *Yes, I am proud of that.*

Muna: *When some people say they don't like Arabs . . . I feel that I have to defend Arabs.*

The last point in terms of Muna's Arab identity is that she revealed in an interview that she was aware of the importance of Fus'ha in forming the Arab identity.

Muna: *Without the language, you are not an Arab. Language is important.*

The previous statement denotes that the ability to use Arabic, according to Muna, is a significant condition by which to be identified as an Arab. Here language is mainly used for the identification of someone as a member of a particular group (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

It can be concluded that Fus'ha is used by the participant in situations where she wants to be taken seriously. This is apparent in Muna's attitude towards posting in Fus'ha:

Muna: *It makes you more formal. If someone uses Fus'ha in all the tweets, we as students think that this person tries to make himself or herself an important person.*

R: *Why do you connect using Fus'ha and giving importance?*

Muna: *I don't know. This is a sophisticated language and it is formal. I use Fus'ha for formal topics. If it is not a formal situation, I will not use Fus'ha. We use Fus'ha in praying, and Quran.... in things that you have to respect. The rest of the day we use CA.*

Muna's answer, in the interview, might not be fully comprehensible without having an adequate understanding of the prestigious status accorded to SA, relative to the CA used widely throughout the Arabic world. While the former always correlates with respect and a high level of education and knowledge, the latter is often associated with informal situations (see section 1.4.2). Hence, Muna used Fus'ha to assign increased significance to her posts. The absence of funny emoji across all 134 tweets in SA seems to support her claim that Fus'ha is not used in informal or funny posts. Although she uses some emoji, such as (🙌) or (🌹), with some expressions like شكرا جزيلا (Thank you) and بالتوفيق (Good luck), there is no evidence that she uses any of the emoji that she typically relies on to show sarcasm, such as those used by the participant when tweeting in Hejazi Arabic.

4.2.3. The use of English

Muna composed only 61 posts in English over the whole period of observation. These posts can be categorised into 3 main types. The first one is when Muna wrote some posts that include quotations like in the following four posts.

Extract 20

Sometimes it's better to react without reaction...

Extract 21

For the first time I knew that you could become homesick for people too...

Extract 22

A mistake repeated more than once is a decision

Extract 23

You can be a good person with a kind heart and still say no

In each one of these tweets, Muna simply wrote a particular saying in English such as “A mistake repeated more than once is a decision”. It might be claimed that by doing this, Muna constructs the identity of a bilingual English-Arabic speaker who knows a lot of English sayings. This aspect of identity is also constructed through Muna’s participation in some English–language hashtags (the second category) as evident in the next Extracts (24, 25, and 26). In Extract 25, for example, Muna participated in a hashtag called #justsaying by writing the famous saying “Getting no message is also a message”.

Extract 24

It's time to do the coffee dance
Friday Feeling
#morning

Extract 25

Getting no message is also a message #justsaying

Extract 26

Remember you don't need certain number of friends, just a number of #friends you can be certain of...

These two patterns seem to be consistent with what Muna mentioned in the first interview, regarding her use of English:

Muna: Sometimes a famous saying or some news about the UK... It is for the non-Arab audience.

Moreover, the previous three posts (24, 25, and 26) involve Muna's participation in hashtags which is one of the features of global social media that can be categorised as a supervernacular (Blommaert, 2019). This can be defined as "particular and new type of sociolinguistic object: semiotic forms that circulate in networks driven, largely, by new technologies such as the Internet and mobile communication device" (Blommaert, 2012, p. 3). Thus, the participation in English hashtags could be seen as a sign of a micro aspect of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is Muna's cosmopolitan identity (Sinatora, 2019) where she presents herself as an individual who is familiar with the new linguistic forms resulted from communication in global social media applications.

Beyond examples that reflect these three patterns, there are only a few examples of Muna engaging in conversations, in English, with her followers. Muna stressed the importance of her audience in response to being asked about her use of English:

Muna: *Only for those who speak English. If this person speaks Arabic, I don't use English. But if he sent me a message in English, I will send him or her in English. Most of my messages are in Arabic.*

This impact of the audience on her use of English is easily observable across many situations. The context of Extract 27 is related to Extract 25 when Muna participated in the hashtag (#justsaying) by writing “Getting no message is also a message”. When one of her friends replied in English, suggesting maybe a person is trying to ignore her, Muna replied in English, as can be seen in Extract 27.

Extract 27

Sometimes you need to deliver the message with silence

In the interview, Muna pointed out that if the person changes the language of the conversation to English, she would still use English most of the time. Extract 28 is an example where the language of the other person influenced her linguistic practices. She wrote something in Arabic, about her concern about having to finish something important for her PhD program. Then, one of her friends replied in English that, to get a PhD, Muna should have coffee. Muna replied to her friend in English, with the use of the emoji of a face with the tears of joy to make the tone of her reply looks sarcastic (Herring & Dainas, 2017).

Extract 28

Congratulation! You have been awarded a second PhD. 🤔

In terms of her attitude towards tweeting in English, Muna noted again that the audience plays a major role in determining the appropriate times for her to use English:

Muna: Sometimes it's necessary. If I want to target people in Saudi Arabia, I try to avoid using English because I want them to understand because some people do not know English.

According to Sinatora (2019) and Leppänen and Peuronen (2012), language choice in an online setting can be a strategy for expressing an individual's multilingual identity. Thus, it might be argued that posting 61 tweets in English could be seen as an indication of Muna's multilingual identity as an Arab student in an English-speaking country (Haeri, 1997). However, Muna stressed that her use of English must not be viewed as a reflection of her identity. She mentioned that the identity of Arabs should be linked only to Fus'ha:

Muna: In fact, identity is supposed to be in Fus'ha.

Nevertheless, the construction of identity is not always determined entirely by the intention of the text producer. Bucholtz and Hall (2005, p. 606) argue that the construction of identity might be "an outcome of others' perceptions and representations". A similar argument is made by Eckert (2016, p. 79) who mentions "style is not in the intent but in the intersubjective space between production and perception". It is worth mentioning that Muna's opinion above is similar to what was reported in Al-Saleem (2011) who investigated identity and language in the Jordanian context. One likely interpretation is that the majority of Arab people think that identity must be always related to Arabic only.

4.2.4. Emoji in the data

The analysis showed that Muna relied on the use of emoji especially in tweets where the emoji were used as an addition to the texts. She used emoji if the tone was not as serious as when communicating with her friends or when talking about funny topics. As previously mentioned, most of the emoji used by Muna occurred with tweets written in CA.

Besides the use of emoji with texts in some posts, the analysis of the data also revealed that on only one occasion, Muna posted a tweet that included one emoji without any written language. This what Evans (2017) calls the substitution function of emoji when the individuals use emoji instead of writing something.

Extract 29



In Extract 29, Muna participated in a hashtag about PhD life by using the [grinning face with smiling eyes] emoji as a comment about a funny clip. This funny clip shows a man jumping into a lake full of crocodiles, in addition to the comment “when you know it’s a bad idea and still go for it” implying that the PhD student is the one who is jumping in the lake. She used emoji in this tweet to modify the tone of the tweet (Herring & Dainas, 2017) because she wanted to indicate that this is a sarcastic tweet. It can be claimed that posting about PhD could be seen to enact Muna’s identity as a PhD student.

Finally, when I asked Muna in the second interview about her use of emoji, she replied:

Muna: *It helps me to express my feeling in my tweets.*

This statement indicates that Muna uses emoji to express her emotions in her tweets. This goes in the same line with some scholars (Evans, 2017; McCulloch, 2019; Stark & Crawford, 2015) who pointed out that emoji can be used to present feelings in digital writing.

4.2.5. Arabic posts with English words

Only seven of Muna's posts include the use of both Arabic and English. Two of these posts (Extracts 30 and 31) are not cases of CS between Arabic and English. Muna simply wrote an English translation or a comment after writing sayings in Arabic. This could be seen to enact a micro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010) which is her identity as a well-educated person who has the ability to translate from Arabic to English.

Extract 30

عندما تحسد أو تتمنى ميزة تعجبك في شخص ما
فتأكد أنه أختار أن يريك جزء فقط من حياته وهناك ما يخفيه
فلا تحكم بالظاهر ولا تتمنى حياة غيرك...
It's a full package and there is something you don't know...
take it all or leave it all

Extract 31

لا مجال للغيرة و الحسد في نفس واثق
When you know you are great there is no reason to hate

The remaining five posts include the use of both Arabic and English. It is notable that, in all of these posts, the base language is Arabic, and that an English word, words or

expressions have been inserted into the Arabic posts. It might be claimed that the CS between Arabic and English could be a sign of Muna’s multilingual identity (Kosoff, 2014). Moreover, the use of these words could also be seen to enact her identity as a student in an English-speaking country. For example, in Extract 32, the whole tweet was written in Arabic except (**voice mail**) which was written in English. The participant switched to English because she apparently did not know the Arabic equivalent of (**voice mail**). This may be because this word (voice mail) was introduced to Muna in English only. This what can be understood from Muna’s answer in the interview:

Muna: I wrote the sentence in CA, except for voicemail, which can’t be translated into Arabic.

Extract 32

The tweet	Translation
<p>احلى ميزة في الجوالاات البريطانية ان المتصل يقدر يسيب voice mail يعني ماعنده حجة اني لازم ارد عليه مباشرة</p>	<p>What I like about mobile phones in the UK that the caller can send a voice mail. There is no excuse that I should answer him or her immediately</p>

A similar pattern can be observed in Extract 33 when Muna uses another English term (the young adults). In this example, it is clear that Muna was simply unfamiliar with the exact Arabic term for (the young adults). One piece of supporting evidence for that is the fact that she wrote شباب الجيل الجديد followed by (**the young adults**), and then Muna continued to explain by saying in Arabic that she did not want to call them teenagers. This suggests that she did not know the exact Arabic term for (**the young adults**). This can be

supported by Muna’s explanation in the second interview about her use of this English term:

Muna: I did not find the Arabic translation... if I write the “الشباب البالغين”, the meaning will be poor. I used “شباب الجيل الجديد” (youths of the new generation) it is not the same but it is better.

Extract 33

The tweet	Translation
<p>The young adults لما اتكلم مع شباب الجيل الجديد ما اع اسميهم مراهقين <u>قد ايش احترم فيهم فهمهم لتفاصيل كثيرة في المجتمع و</u> <u>انهم ما يصدقوا الخرافات</u></p>	<p>When I talk with the youths of the new generation, the young adults...</p> <p>I don’t want to call them teenagers</p> <p>I respect that they understand many details in society and that they don’t believe in myths</p>

Muna switched to English, in only one instance, to introduce a quotation. As can be seen in Extract 34, Muna participated in the Arabic hashtag, about the match between England and Sweden in the World Cup. She wrote in Arabic that the streets are singing then introduced the song “it’s coming home”. This line (it’s coming home) is from a song famous among fans of England’s national team. Those fans used this line to indicate, or perhaps hopefully predict, that England would win the World Cup. After England did win that match, Muna introduced this famous song to her Arab followers. She also used the emoji as an action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) because she used [🎵] to show that she had been singing.

Extract 34

The tweet	Translation
 <p>الشوارع تغني it's coming home... #انجلترا. السويد</p>	<p>The streets are singing it's coming home  # England-Sweden</p>

Extract 35

The tweet	Translation
 <p>الف الف مبروووك منها لأعلى المراتب يارب proud of you</p>	 <p>Congratulation and I wish you more success proud of you</p>

Some researchers have shown that, on some occasions, people decide to switch between two languages, to indicate personal emotions (Holmes, 2001; San, 2009). This is what happened in Extract 35, above, where Muna switched to English to convey her emotions towards her friend. One of her friends wrote a tweet, in Arabic, that she had received her master's degree. Then, Muna replied to her friend, writing the English expression (**so proud of you**) after first congratulating her friend in Arabic. Her use of the smiling face with heart-shaped eyes emoji () seven times as a reaction (Herring & Dainas, 2017) because she wanted to show that she is happy for her friend. When, in the second interview, Muna was asked about her use of English “so proud of you” in this Arabic post, she explained as follows:

Muna: I don't know ...this is my friend and I was happy for her. Maybe because I always use (I am proud of you) with my son. The most important thing is that she will understand me.

Extract 36 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic; English=**bold**

The tweet	Translation
<p>بعض التخصصات يلزم عليهم الكتابة يوميا perfect سيكون في تخصصنا كعامل كمان لو كتبنا يوميا لكن بعد يوم طويل في المعمل يادوب نكتب التجربة أو نحلل نتائجها فللاسف سيكون الكتابة يوما أمر صعب نوعا ما</p>	<p><u>In some fields, they have to write daily.</u> It would be perfect. <u>In our field,</u> if we write daily. <u>But after a long day in the lab,</u> we have time only for writing the result of the experiment. <u>Unfortunately, writing daily will be somewhat</u> <u>hard</u></p>

Finally, Extract 36 shows the use of an English word (**perfect**) in a post written entirely in Arabic. The context of this post is related to Muna's tweet about the difficulty of writing in English because it is not her native language. One of her friends suggested that she should write a page or two in English each day, to improve her written English. Both posts, by Muna and her friend, were written in Arabic. Then Muna wrote a tweet in response to her friend's suggestion. The only explanation for this switch to English is that Muna wanted to emphasise her recognition of the value of what her friend proposed. The word (**perfect**) was used to indicate that (**writing daily**) would be just that--perfect. However, it is significant to note that Muna herself claimed, in the second interview, that she had no explanation for this linguistic practice:

Muna: ... I use this word (perfect).... in my daily life and my followers know the meaning of this word in Arabic.

It is worth mentioning that the previous example involves a high fluid use of various words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic in addition to the use of English words. Therefore, it might be claimed that this post can be considered as an example of translanguaging.

Regarding the attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English, the participant regards this practice as acceptable:

Muna: I do that sometimes which makes people get angry. As I told you, if it's informal, everyone has freedom. But in formal situations, like if I am in an official position and you write something like that, I am not taking you as a professional.

Muna in this statement pointed out that some Arab people have a negative attitude towards this practice. This negative attitude is the result that some Arab individuals believe that CS between a foreign language and Arabic is a corrupt form of Arabic (Hussein, 1999; Saidat, 2010) as it is a language without roots or grammatical rules. However, she thinks that this practice is acceptable on Twitter because of the informal nature of Twitter.

4.2.6. Words borrowed from English

It was found that 19 tweets included the use of borrowed words from English. Table 4.3 presents a list of all such words written, by the participant, in Arabic letters.

After a brief look at this table, we will find that the majority of these words are technology-related terms (e.g. hashtag, USB, What's up, mention), study-related terms (e.g. offer, proposal, application), or words normally used in an English speaking society (e.g. GP, Concierge).

The word in Arabic letters	The English word
منشن (3 times)	Mention
بلوك	Block
تيم	Team
بروبوزال	Proposal
الوفر	Offer
يو اس بي	USB
الواتس اب	What's up
جي بي	GP
اكسنت	Accent
برودكاست	Broadcast
باوند	Pound
ابليكيشن	application
كونسيرج	Concierge
هاشتاق (2 times)	Hashtag
بلوفر	Pullover
ميتنج	Meeting

Table4.3. Words borrowed from English

Extract 37 demonstrates how an English word was written, by Muna, in Arabic. We can see that Muna participated in this Arabic hashtag by writing the word (**block**) in Arabic instead of writing it in English. This word (**block**) on Twitter means clicking the (**block**) button on a particular user's account. This refers to an act aimed at preventing that user from looking at a given user's tweets or replying to them. In this post, it is clear

that Muna used the word (**block**), in Arabic, because the word is well-known among Arabic users of Twitter.

Extract 37 underlined= borrowing

The tweet	Translation
<p>#وقتك ضايع في: كمية الناس اللي اعملهم <u>بلوك</u></p>	<p>#You are wasting your time in: too many people to <u>block</u></p>

When I asked Muna about the reasons for writing these words in Arabic letters.

She said:

Muna: *The person writes English in Arabic letters maybe because he or she does not know the word in Arabic. I do that sometimes. For example, GP is easier than writing Arabic words.*

This statement indicates that she regards writing English words in Arabic letters as acceptable. This can be supported by Muna’s claim that most of her followers are familiar with these words. She also gave an excuse for the practice, saying that this tends to result from not knowing the appropriate Arabic equivalent for a word. Muna clarified by giving the following example:

Muna: *the word (Concierge)... I always use it. I tried to use the word استقبال (reception) but I thought it was not correct... because people would think that I live in a hotel. So, I use the word concierge and people will understand what I mean.*

4.2.7. Arabizi

There is only one instance where the participant wrote a post that contained Arabic words written in Roman letters. The post (38) is Muna's reply to one of her followers who tried to assure Muna that she must be patient to earn her PhD. We can observe that the participant wrote the religious phrase (ان شاء الله), but did so in Roman letters (**insha llah**). It is important to note that this contradicts Muna's negative attitude, as asserted in the first interview towards, writing Arabic words in English letters. Muna explained, in the second interview, that the popularity of this word led to the use of this word:

Muna: (insha allah) is different because everyone knows this word even my non-Arab followers. If I write it in English, it will be weird.

Extract 38

The tweet	Translation
We will <u>insha allah</u>	We will if God wills

Regarding her attitudes towards the use of Arabizi, Muna showed a kind of negative attitude towards this practice:

Muna: I get angry and I will not read the tweet because I think there is a need for that.

This attitude can be justified by the fact that technical developments in mobile phones now allow people to use Arabic in all digital contexts. Muna's statement seems to

be in accordance with an argument made by Albirini (2016) who mentioned that writing in Arabizi is less common nowadays due to the negative attitudes toward that form of writing among Arab Internet users as they believe that it was only accepted when writing in Arabic letters was difficult.

4.2.8. SA and Hejazi Arabic

The analysis identified 29 tweets that included the use of both Fus'ha and the regional dialect. In some of these posts, there is a switch from SA to CA. In other cases, the switch is from CA to SA. There are also some cases which can be described as translanguaging.

4.2.8.1. Switching to SA

The analysis of the data shows that Muna switches from Hejazi to Fus'ha, mainly to take a pedantic stand (Albirini, 2011). Muna used Fus'ha to assume the role of an expert who wants to present an important idea. In Extract 39, Muna was replying to a friend's claim, written in CA, that a person should not care about what other individuals think about his or her behaviour. She wrote in Hejazi Arabic "من رأي برضو" (Also in my opinion), and then switched to Fus'ha, writing "انه يمكن ان يكون للغير وجهة نظر اخرى" (other people may have a different opinion), which is a statement that is typically said by intellectual persons. Similarly, in Extract 43, Muna was commenting on a post by another user, who talked about individuals who are obsessed with expensive things. As that user tweeted in Hejazi Arabic, Muna likewise began her tweet in Hejazi Arabic, and then completed the sentence

in SA. The use of "مايبالغ بإظهار الامور المادية" (you will not care about materialistic things) is intended to introduce the statement with the tone of a well-educated person.

Extract 39 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
اقصد صحيح هذا المفروض يكون الحاصل من رأي برضوانه يمكن ان يكون للغير وجهة نظر اخرى	I mean this what should happen... in my opinion, <u>other people may have different opinion</u>

Extract 40 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
بالعادي نقول دائما اللي عينه شبعانة مايبالغ بإظهار الامور المادية	We always say that if you are satisfied, <u>you will not care about materialistic things</u>

4.2.8.2. Switching to CA

The analysis of Muna's tweets indicates that the switch from SA to the regional dialect happens when Muna wants to be sarcastic with her followers (Albirini, 2016; Riegert & Ramsay, 2013).

Extract 41 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
 حفاظا على صحتها من حرقان الدم قتلها بلاش	<u>Trying to prevent her from getting high blood</u> pressure, I said to her no need for that. 

The context of Tweet 41 is related to Muna mentioning in a previous post that her grandmother hates the name (habaq) for mint. A friend tells Muna that, if her grandmother had a Twitter account, she would be angry because many people use that name for mint. Then, Muna wrote in Fus'ha "حفاظا على صحتها" (Trying to prevent her from getting high blood pressure) and then switched over to Hejazi Arabic, to add more of a sarcastic tone to this tweet. The use of "قلتلها بلاش" in Hejazi Arabic, followed by the face with tears of joy emoji (😂), is a clear sign that she wanted to be funny in this post. The use of a funny emoji and the regional dialect is also deployed by Muna in Extract 42, to be ironic in her reply to her friend. She uses the expression "اسحب عليكي", which is used by some individuals, who want to ignore someone, but in a funny way. To conclude, writing these tweets could help to construct Muna's identity as a humorous person.

Extract 42 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
<p>تم حظر الرومانسية من حياتك للأبد وراح اسحب عليكي واحط الدكتورة الخارقة 😂</p>	<p>You are prevented from being romantic for your entire life and I will neglect you and I will call you the marvellous doctor 😂</p>

Before concluding this section, it is essential to note that, in some cases, it is difficult to identify patterns associated with switching from one variety or dialect to another. A perfect example would be Extract 43, where Muna wrote to advise her followers, especially PhD students. She recommended talking with other researchers because that might help students to resolve many problems.

Extract 43 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
يجي وقت على طلبة الدكتوراة مافي اي تجربة راضية تمشي بالطريقة المتوقعة احيانا توصل المدة لسنه يشعر الطالب فيها بخوف وضياح وكل مايحاول يجمع نتايج يحس انه قدامه سور الأغلب عدا بهذه الفترة ناقش الباحثين في نفس المجال احيانا تلاقي الجواب في النقاش أكثر من البحوث المنشورة	Sometimes PhD students face the difficulty of doing their experiments <u>in an expected way</u> This period may last for a year <u>The students feel fear and loss.</u> Every time he or she tries to find the results, he or she feels that they are in front of the wall Most students have the same experience <u>Ask the researchers in your field.</u> It is likely to find the answer in the discussion <u>more than in the published articles.</u>

In this post, Muna used both SA and the regional dialect. In the beginning, she used Hejazi Arabic and then wrote “بالطريقة المتوقعة”, which was written in Fus’ha. In another line, she started with Fus’ha “يشعر الطالب فيها بخوف وضياح”, and then switched over to Hejazi Arabic. In all cases, it is evident that words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic tend to be in highly fluid and dynamic ways. This flexibility sometimes makes it difficult to decide if the line was written in Fus’ha or Hejazi Arabic, as in “احيانا لسنه”. The following statement is Muna’s response when I asked her about this post:

Muna: *I don’t know...just I wanted to give my experience ... I did not think about Fus’ha or Ammyah*

This statement suggests that she uses the various linguistic repertoires available to her without distinguishing among them. Therefore, this post can be considered as an example of translanguaging.

Finally, regarding the attitude towards switching between SA and the regional dialect, the participant claims that this practice is normal among Arab intellectuals:

Muna: *It's called اللهجة البيضاء the white variety.. Fus'ha with words from Ammyah. If you see many famous people in the TV... they do that. If you want all people to understand you, you have to use it.*

This statement indicates that Muna holds a positive attitude towards this practice which she calls the 'white variety'. As far as I know, there is no mention of this term 'white variety' in the literature regarding different varieties of Arabic. However, I found many articles and reports in by non-linguistic writers in some Arab magazines and newspaper about اللهجة البيضاء (white variety) like Abdulhamed (2015) and Albarrak (2018). These articles used this term to describe the use of SA with words from different varieties of Arabic. It is called 'white' because it easy to understand since these words are known to most Arabic speakers (Abdulhamed, 2015). Therefore, the use of this term can be classified under folk linguistics which is interested in non-linguists' understanding of language (Niedzielski & Preston, 2010). Overall, Muna likes switching between SA and CA because some media activists use a combination of SA and CA when they appear on TV channels.

4.2.9. Mobility

Mobility is a term used to refer to movements across different borders (Urry, 2007). This is what is happening with Muna because she is originally from Saudi Arabia, and she is currently living in the United Kingdom as a student. Blommaert and Dong (2010) point out that living in a different country in a different society can affect how people use languages.

Looking at her Twitter account, it can be said that living in an English-speaking community has some kind of impact on Muna's linguistic practices.

First, her use of CS between Arabic and English in her posts can be viewed as a normal practice for her as a result of her situation as a student in the UK:

Muna: *It is like a habit. I always try to avoid that, but I can't. For example, today I went to a party at my son's school. When I was trying to take a photo of my son and his friend, I use Arabic with English even with non-Arabic boys.*

A similar answer provided by Muna when I asked her about the use of the English word (**perfect**) in a post written in Arabic:

Muna: *... I use this word (perfect).... in my daily life and my followers know the meaning of this word in Arabic.*

It seems that Muna is aware of the impact of being a student in an English-speaking environment because it appears in her attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English on Twitter:

Muna: *I will realise that he is studying abroad like my situation. He is trying to express himself. I do that sometimes.*

In addition, it is possible to say that her use of English in her tweets can be explained as she uses English all the time. Muna describes her situation as a student in the UK:

Muna: *because I am here, I use English the most of my daily life....., in university....., and shopping..... every time.*

Furthermore, since Muna is a student in the UK, it would be expected if she has non-Arab friends or colleagues on social media platforms. As a result, in order to communicate with them, Muna should use English in her posts. This can be supported by her answer when I asked her about the reason for posting in English:

Muna: *It is for the non-Arab audience.*

Finally, when I asked her about her linguistic practices on Twitter before living in the UK, she answered:

Muna: *Before I start living here, I rarely posted in English. But now I wrote more English posts because I have some non-Arab followers.*

Taking the previously mentioned points into account, it can be argued that mobility in a study abroad setting has some kind of impact on how the participant uses her linguistic repertoires in her personal account on Twitter.

4.3. Yasser's case

A total of 229 tweets and replies written by Yasser were collected as data. Table 4.4 shows numbers of tweets composed in each language and variety, in addition to the number of tweets that include more than a single language or variety. The analysis revealed that most of Yasser's linguistic practices are affected by other users' linguistic choices as we will see in the following subsections.

The variety/ varieties used	Number of tweets
CA only	149
SA only	38
English only	6
SA + CA	21
Arabic +English	2
Borrowed words from English	7
Emoji-only	5
Total	228

Table 4.4. Language choice in Yasser’s tweets

4.3.1 The use of CA

The analysis identified a clear preference for CA (mostly Hejazi Arabic), over English and SA, across Yasser’s tweets. As illustrated in Table 1, CA is the most used language with 149 posts written entirely in CA. After examining all these tweets, it was noticed that there are two patterns for posting in CA by Yasser. The first one when he participated in hashtags. The second when Yasser replied to other users of Twitter.

Extract 44

<p>والاخير... يبقى اخير   #الاتحاد- التعاون</p>	<p>The last... will be the last  # Al-Etihad -Al-Taawoun</p>
--	--

Across all tweets written in CA, it was found that Yasser participated in hashtags many times using CA. In some occasions, Yasser wrote in these hashtags to say something funny, or to introduce his opinion in a funny way. For example, Extracts 44 and 45 show how Yasser used CA in hashtags about football. In Extract 44, Yasser participated in a hashtag about a football game between Al-Etihad and Al-Taawoun (football clubs in Saudi Arabia). When Al-Etihad lost the game, Yasser wrote in CA **الاخير يبقي اخير** (the last will be the last) which indicates that he is making fun of Al-Etihad's situation as in the bottom of the table of teams in the Saudi football league. While the word **اخير**(the last) belong to both MSA and CA, I decided to classify it as CA because the tone of the tweet is sarcastic as Yasser used (🎵) and (🕺) to describe a physical action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) which that he had been singing when he wrote: "the last will be the last as a song". He also added [smiling face with sunglasses] emoji which is used to convey coolness (Danesi, 2016). This tweet could be seen as to enact Yasser's identity as a sports fan, an individual who has "an emotional attachment to sport" (Shank & Beasley, 1998, p. 436). More specifically, teasing Al-Etihad's fans could contribute to the construction of Yasser's identity as a fan of Al-Ahli (the rival of Al-Etihad in the same city "Jeddah") because football fans usually make fun of each other teams. Therefore, when Yasser writes a tweet to make fun of Al-Etihad football team, people who are interested in football will suppose that he is a fan of Al-Ahli. This correlates with Yasser's reply when I asked about the reason for posting about Al-Etihad:

Yasser: I have followers who support Al-Etihad and they always make fun of Al-Ahli. Thus, I try to do the same and make fun of Al-Etihad.

Extract 45

The tweet	Translation
<p>#البرازيل_بلجيكا #نيمار بعد الطقطقه عليه بعد المباراة الي فاتت تأدب و صار ادبي 😂😂</p>	<p># Brazil _Belgium #Neymar became well-mannered after the mockery he received in the last game 😂😂</p>

Yasser in Extract 45 participated in two hashtags about a football game between Brazil and Belgium during the world Cup, and about the famous Brazilian player **Neymar**. The context of the post is related to Neymar's attempts to make fun of players from the opponent team in a previous game. After that, many players and coaches criticised Neymar's behaviour. Yasser used CA to write that this player became well-mannered in the game against Belgium after the mockery and criticism he received. Yasser wrote the post in CA as evident in the use of a word (**الطقطقه**) which a word used in Saudi Arabia to refer to the act of criticising but in a funny way. Yasser also used [face with tears of joy] emoji to indicate that the mood of tweet is saecastic (Herring & Dainas, 2017). Overall, a possible reason for using CA in posts 44 and 45 is that they are sarcastic tweets about football. Thus, using CA would make the tweet funnier than the use of SA which is always associated with serious topics. Writing about the world Cup and famous players could be seen as an indication of Yasser's identity as a sports fan who is interested in some international football competitions.

Extract 46

The tweet	Translation
<p>#تغريدة لمتابعينك الحلوين من كثر الناس اللي ب 100 وجه وحشونا الناس اللي بوجهين </p>	<p># a tweet for your beautiful followers Since there are a lot of people with 100 faces, we miss those who have only two faces </p>

Yasser used CA in some hashtags to express his opinion humorously. In Extract 46, Yasser participated in a hashtag asking the users of Twitter to give their followers a special post. Yasser then wrote this post which is a funny way to complain about hypocrisy in society. It is possible to say that Yasser used CA in this tweet because the hashtag was written in CA as evident in the use of the word **الحلوين** (beautiful) instead of the standard form (**الحلوون**). The use of [disappointed face] emoji three times in the post is similar to the complementing function (Evans, 2017) when the person adds an emoji at the end of the post to indicate his or her feeling. Thus, Yasser used this emoji to show his disappointment because of the about hypocrisy in society.

Extract 47

The tweet	Translation
<p>#سافرت اولا تعبنا و ملينا من السفر نبي نرجع خلاص</p>	<p># Did you travel or not I am sick of travelling I want to go home</p>

Extract 47 shows Yasser's participation in a hashtag about travelling. This hashtag, which was written in CA, asked if the user travelled abroad in the summer holiday or not.

Yasser then wrote in CA that he was sick of travelling and he wanted to go home. I think that the emotional nature of this post (possible feeling of homesickness) can be another factor for using CA as it is the variety used in his home city. Both examples demonstrate that the use of CA in the hashtag might have an impact on Yasser’s decision for writing the tweet in CA.

While Yasser used Hejazi Arabic when he participated in these hashtags, it was found that he used the Lebanese variety of Arabic in his participation in a hashtag about Fairouz (a famous Lebanese singer). Yasser simply posted a part of her song **فايق ياهوى** which was written in Lebanese Arabic. He also used [two hearts] emoji at the end of each line to show indicate that he is the mood of love. By writing this tweet, Yasser presents himself as someone who loves classical Arabic music.

Extract 48

The tweet	Translation
<p style="text-align: right;">فايق ياهوى...  ليم كنا سوى... و الدمع سهرني وصفولي الدوا  اتاري الدوا حبك و فتش عن الدوا  #فايروز</p>	<p>Oh love  do you remember when we were kids...Tears kept me lately awake, they prescribed a remedy to me  it was your love, and look for it  #Fayrouz</p>

Extract 49

Yasser’s reply	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">الحمد لله خلصنا من شغلة الديون</p>	<p>Thank God we no longer hear about the debt</p>

Most tweets written in CA occurred when Yasser was joking or talking about informal topics with his followers. For example, Yasser, In Extract 49, replied to one of his followers who was also one of Al-Etihad fans. This user wrote a post to indicate that Al-Etihad lost in one of the games because of the coach. Yasser replied in CA by posting that we no longer hear about the debt. The context of the post is related to Al-Etihad fans who used to say that money was the main obstacle for Al-Etihad to become a strong team. Although Yasser used the religious phrase الحمد لله (praise be to God) which is originally from SA in this reply, I decided to classify the whole tweet as CA because the context of the tweet is not serious, in addition to the fact that this expression is also used widely in CA. The whole post can be seen as a sarcastic tweet because Yasser is one of the fans of AL-Ahli (the rival of Al-Etihad in the same city “Jeddah”). Therefore, this also might help to construct Yasser’s identity as a fan of Al-Ahli football club.

Extract 50

Yasser’s reply	Translation
سيبك من الحلطة	Stop complaining

The analysis revealed that Yasser also replied in CA sometimes to tease his friends. In Extract 50, he replied to another user who asked what you will say if you know that a person in your mind is observing your Twitter account right now. He wrote (سيبك من الحلطة) which is a famous expression used by some youths in Saudi Arabia if they want to ask others to stop complaining in a funny way. The other user’s tweet could have

possibly set the linguistic choice for writing the reply. In other words, he replied in CA because it is the variety used to write the tweet he was replying to. It can be claimed that by using the expression (سيبك من الحلطة), Yasser presents himself as someone familiar with trendy expression among the Saudi youths. The same pattern can be seen in Extract 51 where Yasser used Hejazi Arabic to post this reply to one of his friends. This user posted a video of a non-Arab woman saying nice words about people in Madinah, a city in Saudi Arabia. Yasser wrote that if this woman meets you, she will change her opinion. Yasser wanted to tease this user in this post because the meaning indicates that he knew that this user is from Madinah. Thus, Yasser was teasing his friend in a sarcastic tone by implying that this friend is not nice. This is can be proven by this friend's reply to Yasser's post since he replied by writing ههههههههه (hahahahaha). This funny tweet could be seen as a sign of his identity as a humorous person.

Extract 51

Yasser's reply	Translation
الحمد لله انها ما قابلتك ولا كان غيرت رايتها	Thank God that she did not meet you. If she meets you, she will change her opinion

Extract 52

Yasser's reply	Translation
هههههههههه والنعم والله	hahahahaha a good reputation I swear

Extract 54

Yasser's reply	Translation
زي الخيارة...	Like a cucumber ...

Extract 55

Yasser's reply	Translation
الحلزونة يما الحلزونة	Snail. Oh, my mother .. there is a snail

The analysis also revealed that Yasser used Twitter to go beyond Hejazi Arabic when he used Egyptian Arabic when replying to another user of Twitter on two different occasions. In Extract 54, an individual wrote a post asking his followers to complete the sentence (Life is ...). Yasser then replied by writing **زي الخيارة** (life is like a cucumber) which is a funny expression used by some Egyptians when they want to describe life. This expression is taken from a famous Egyptian saying (**الدنيا زي الخيارة يوم فى ايدك ويوم فى ايد اللى (جنبك**). It means that you will be not lucky or happy all the time. Many Egyptians youths use the expression **زي الخيارة** (life is like a cucumber) if they want to be sarcastic. Thus, Yasser wanted to be funny when he wrote this expression.

Yasser also, in Extract 55, wrote **الحلزونة يما الحلزونة** (Snail. Oh my mother .. there is a snail) as a reply to a friend who posted a line of a poem he wrote. This expression comes from a famous Egyptian film about a person who tried to be a poet by writing strange and funny expressions. The whole meaning of the post indicates that Yasser is trying to make

fun of his friend by saying that your poem has no meaning but in a funny way. Yasser's replies in Extracts 11 and 12 could help to construct his identity as a humorous person.

It can be claimed that patterns for replying in CA by Yasser in his posts go in the same line with Yasser's response when I asked him about the use of CA in his tweets:

Yasser: *I use Ammyah with some people and Fus'ha with some people. It depends on the person that you are replying to. If I want to reply to a religious scholar, for example, the language should be correct. But if I want to reply to a friend or a young person, it's ok if I use any variety.*

This statement made by Yasser indicates that CA is used by him if he wants to reply to a friend or a young person. This is exactly what is happening in these tweets. In each one of these posts, Yasser is replying to a friend or other young users of Twitter. This is the result of the perception by many Arab individuals who believe that CA should be mainly used in informal or friendly conversation or joking.

In terms of his attitude towards the use of CA in his posts, Yasser pointed out that he thinks that it is not a problem:

Yasser: *I don't consider it as a problem... it's ok if one uses the variety used daily... It's normal.*

This positive attitude towards the use of CA in his posts can be understood if we acknowledge that many Arabs believe that using the regional dialect plays a major role in positive social communication (Saidat, 2010).

Overall, it can be concluded that all these examples show that Yasser used CA in informal conversations with his followers, or when he wanted to be sarcastic. This is

supported by the fact that Yasser posted some tweets that included the use of emoji. According to Danesi (2016), emoji are usually used in informal messages to add a sarcastic tone, and they are rarely used if the tone is serious.

4.3.2. The use of SA

The analysis of Yasser’s Twitter account revealed that, after CA, his second choice of language for writing posts on Twitter is SA. A total of 38 tweets were composed in Fush’a over the whole period of observation. These tweets might be categorised into 2 types: hashtags and replies.

Extract 56

The tweet	Translation
<p>#يومعرفة جهزوا أمانيتكم , اكتبوا دعواتكم, استعدوا ليوم عظيم و  رب كريم يسمع الدعاء و يفتح ابواب السماء</p>	<p># Arafah Day Prepare your wishes, write your supplications, be ready for a great day and a generous God who responds to the invocation and opens the gates of the heaven </p>

Yasser wrote some tweets in SA when he participated in some hashtags. In Extract 56, Yasser used Fus’ha in a hashtag about ‘Arafah Day’ (an Islamic holiday) to encourage the users of Twitter to be ready for this important day for all Muslims. Yasser used SA in this post because the hashtag is about a religious occasion. Therefore, SA would be more acceptable because of its strong relationship with Islam. We can see that Yasser also

ended the post with a red rose emoji which is sometimes used to give a sense of celebration (Al Rashdi, 2015). The participation in hashtags about some Islamic occasions could help to construct Yasser's religious identity as a Muslim because Hashtags can be used as a way of self-categorisation with a particular group (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). This aspect of identity appeared early during the first interview when Yasser mentioned Quran and praying several times in his response to my questions, like when I asked him about the use of SA:

Yasser: *it's the language of the Quran... We use it only in formal writing and in praying.*

Extract 57

The tweet	Translation
<p>رسالة لأُمك الغالية مادمت تشاهد بسمه امك .. فالحياة لانزال جميلة </p>	<p># a message to your dear mother As long as you see the smile of your mother...life is still beautiful </p>

Extract 58

The tweet	Translation
<p># الحياة قاسية بدون مؤسف ..  ان يتمنى الانسان حقه</p>	<p># Life is tough without It is sad.. if you cannot have your right </p>

In Extract 57, Yasser participated in a hashtag about mothers by writing that life is beautiful if you can see the smile of your mother and then added two [sparkling heart] emoji to show his love for her (Evans, 2017) . One potential reason for writing in SA in this tweet is that the hashtag was written in SA. The same pattern can be seen in Extract 58 used SA when he participated in a hashtag called (life is tough without) to express his sad feeling. He wrote مؤسف ان يتمنى الانسان حقه (It is sad if you cannot have your right). Yasser may have used SA because the hashtag itself was written in SA. He ended his tweet by using [weary face] emoji to show his sad feeling (Evans, 2017). The meaning of these tweets which were written in SA can help to construct the identity of a wise person.

Extract 59

The tweet	Translation
منظر قبيح جدا	Very ugly image

The analysis of tweets posted by Yasser revealed that he writes in SA when he replies to tweets written by some users of Twitter. In Extract 59 Yasser replied to a tweet posted by a famous journalist. This user posted a picture of an unclean park and wrote in SA asking his followers to suggest a suitable comment for this picture. Yasser then wrote in SA **منظر قبيح جدا** (Very ugly image) as a comment for the picture. Since Yasser is commenting on a social issue, he may have used SA because he wanted people to take his reply seriously. This is related to the ideology that is SA is always associated with serious issues. Moreover, through the use of SA expression (**قبيح جدا**), the tweet could be

viewed as an epistemic stance (Du Bois, 2007) where Yasser positions himself as a well-educated individual because this expression is used mainly by educated Arabs. The final point concerning Yasser’s desire to promote himself on Twitter (Page, 2013) as an educated Arabic can be seen from the interview:

Yasser: I always try to be perfect...the person should be careful and write without mistakes.

This statement shows that he wanted to perform the identity of a well-educated person because he used some expressions such as “to be perfect” and “without mistakes”. This is because of the wide belief among Arab individuals that well-educated persons should write without mistakes.

Extract 60

Yasser’s reply	Translation
وهل من المهنية انها تكذب وتنقل اخبار غير موثوقة ؟	Does professionalism include lying and broadcasting unconfirmed news?

Yasser in Extract 60 replied to a tweet posted in Fus’ha by a famous journalist who was criticising Al-Jazeera for its coverage of the disappearance of Jamal Khashoggi (a major Saudi journalist). Then, Yasser replied in SA to say that Al-Jazeera broadcasted some unconfirmed news. One possible explanation for the use of SA is that it is the variety used in the tweet he was replying to. Moreover, because this journalist is followed by people from different Arab countries, replying in SA could lead those users to take his reply seriously, and that he would be widely understood.

Extract 61

The tweet	Translation
<p>للأسف... كلام غير صحيح الفن الخببتي غير موجود في مصر اصلا الخببتي كلمات و الحان حجازية و بالتحديد من ينبع و ماجورها</p>	<p>Unfortunately, this not true Khubaiti art does not exist in Egypt This art is Hejazi, it is from Yanbu and its surrounding areas</p>

Extract 62

The tweet	Translation
<p>امازون موجودة في بريطانيا من سنين.. و لازالت كل الانشطة التجارية تعمل و تحقق ارباح</p>	<p>Amazon has been working for years in UK...all kind of businesses are working and making profits</p>

Extract 61 is Yasser's reply to an Egyptian journalist who wrote a post commenting on a video about Khubaiti (a type of singing popular in some parts of Hejaz). This journalist claimed that all types of Art in Yanbu are originally from Egypt. Yasser replied to that Journalist by writing that his claim is not true. Yasser used SA because the original tweet was written in SA. Furthermore, Yasser replied in SA because maybe he wanted other users to think that his opinion is credible as it is the variety used usually by well-educated experts when they appear in TV channels. Therefore, this could be seen to enact Yasser's a micro type of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010) which is his identity as a well-educated person. Similarly, Yasser also used SA in Extract 62 to reply to a Saudi journalist who mentioned that allowing Amazon to work (online shopping company) might harm the private sector in Saudi Arabia. Then, Yasser posted this tweet which was written in SA say

that Amazon did not impact businesses in the UK. It can be said that by replying in SA, Yasser presents himself as an expert who knows about business and the economy.

The pattern in the previous four examples correlates with Yasser's response when I asked him about the variety he uses in his tweets:

Yasser: I use Ammyah with some people and Fus'ha with some people It depends on the person that you are replying to. If I want to reply to a religious scholar, for example, the language should be correct. But if I want to reply to a friend or a young person, it's ok if I use any variety.

This statement made by Yasser indicates his conscious decision to deploy his repertoires strategically and intentionally. Fus'ha is used by him if he wants to reply to a religious or a well-educated person. This is the result of some language ideologies regarding SA among Arab individuals such as the association between SA should be always used in formal situations and with formal people to show some kind of respect. One piece of evidence for that is the rare use of funny emoji across all 38 tweets written in SA.

Finally, in terms of his attitude towards the use of SA in his posts, Yasser showed some kind of enthusiasm for this practice:

Yasser: excellent...I encourage if we use Fus'ha.

R: Why?

Yasser: If you use Fus'ha, you will be understood by all Arab people. For example, if you talk with a person from Morocco or Algeria, it's impossible to understand each other if the local varieties are used. Then, Fus'ha will be the perfect language for us to understand each other. In addition to that, the local varieties sometimes are not easy in writing.

Yasser in this statement explained his enthusiasm regarding posting in SA for two reasons. First, he thinks that SA should be used as a lingua franca. This is because, according to Yasser, it is difficult to communicate with people from Morocco and Algeria if the local varieties are used. The reason for the idea of the difficulty to communicate with people from Morocco and Algeria is that the local varieties of Arabic used in countries such as Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia are different from varieties used in the rest of Arab countries (Albirini, 2016; Chtatou, 1997; Embarki, Yeou, Guilleminot, & Al Maqtari, 2007). Therefore, Yasser thinks that the use of SA will facilitate communication between people from all Arab countries because the local varieties might not be easy to understand. Second, Yasser said that people should post their tweets in SA because local varieties of Arabic are not easy in writing. This can be related to some language ideologies regarding CA such as they believe that people did not use to write in CA in the past (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ruzic, 1983), or they believe that the regional varieties do not have basic rules for writing as those followed when writing in SA because there are no explicit rules of grammar for CA (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014).

Furthermore, the use of “**we**” and “**us**” in the previous statement shows that that Yasser talked about himself as one of the Arab people. Also, this statement can help to construct Yasser’s pan-Arab identity. This identity is also constructed through Yasser’s answer in the interview when he perceived himself as an Arab:

R: Do you perceive yourself as an Arab?

Yasser: Yes, I am a native Arab ... pure Arabic.

Finally, Yasser's pan-Arab identity can be noticed in his answer to my following questions in the interview:

R: *What makes you an Arab?*

Yasser: *in fact, language is the first thing.*

The previous statement denotes that the ability to use Arabic, according to Yasser, is the main condition by which to be identified as an Arab. This is related to the ideology that SA is the unique marker of the Arab identity (Albirini, 2011, 2016; S'hiri, 2002). Here language is mainly used for the identification of someone as a member of a particular group (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

4.3.3. The use of English

Exploring Yasser's account revealed that he posted only 6 tweets in English over the whole period of observation. This correlates with Yasser's reply when I asked him about his use of English in his tweets. He also pointed out that the fact that his followers are Arabs is the main reason for not posting in English. Analysing posts written in English suggests that it would be appropriate to categorise them into two types. The first one is when Yasser participated in English hashtags (63 and 64).

Extract 63

Do you remember when you joined Twitter? I do. 9 years
[#My Twitter anniversary](#)

If we look at Extract 63, we will find that Yasser participated in a hashtag about the anniversary of Twitter (#My Twitter anniversary). This hashtag is a question (Do you remember when you joined Twitter?). He wrote “I do. 9 years” to say that he joined Twitter 9 years ago.

Extract 64

<p>وش حكمتك في الحياة Everyone cares when it's too late #just saying</p>
--

In Extract 64, Yasser wrote a tweet in English to participate in a hashtag written in CA. He wrote a famous English saying “Everyone cares when it’s too late”. Then, he finished the tweet by writing the hashtag (#just saying) which is used by many Twitter users to express their opinions freely. When I asked Ahmed for the reason for posting in English in a hashtag written in CA, he replied:

Yasser: I did that because I am in the UK. So, I was affected by everything around me.

Yasser’s use of this saying could be interpreted as a way of enacting his identity as a bilingual English-Arabic speaker. Besides, the previous two posts (63, and 64) involve Yasser’s participation in hashtags which can be considered as supervernaculars which can be defined as “ a descriptor for new forms of semiotic codes emerging in the context of technology-driven globalization processes” (Blommaert, 2019, p. 2). This could be seen as a sign of a micro-level of identity Yasser’s cosmopolitan identity (Sinatora, 2019) where he performs the identity of an individual who is familiar with the new linguistic forms resulted from communication in global social media applications.

Second, the remaining four tweets include Yasser’s reply to tweets written in English by other users. The first one can be seen in Extracts 65 which is a reply written by Yasser to another user. After Yasser wrote “Everyone cares when it’s too late” in Extract 64, this user asked Yasser about the meaning of this post. Then Yasser replied by writing “It’s too late to say that....”. The same pattern continues in Extract 66 when Yasser replied to one user who posted a video of the rain in Paris. Then, Yasser replied by asking about the date of the video by writing “Is it today?”.

Extract 65

Yasser’s reply
It’s too late to say that....

Extract 66

Yasser’s reply
Is it today?

Extract 67

Yasser’s reply
It will never happen again 🤞🤞🤞

Extract 68

Yasser’s reply
This is the best 🏆🏆🏆

Yasser in Extract 67 was replying to a tweet posted by the official account of the German national team before the 2018 World Cup in Russia. This post included a picture of the result of a game between Germany and Saudi Arabia in the 2002 world Cup which was held in Korea and Japan. The result of that game was 8-0 for Germany. Yasser replied by writing that this will never happen again. We can also notice that he added the [flexed

biceps] emoji at the end of the post. The use of this emoji has a reinforcement or emphasising function (Evans, 2017) because Yasser wanted to indicate strength about his assertion that this would never happen again. Also, the repetition of the use of emoji in this reply could mean that he wanted to present a challenging tone to his post. Writing this tweet to support his national team could help to construct Yasser's national identity. Finally, in Extract 68, a Twitter user posted a funny video about animals with the title (**one of the best funny videos**). Yasser replied by writing "**This is the best**" and used [smiling face with Halo] emoji three times to indicate that he is happy to see that video. Thus, the use of emoji with English could be also seen as a sign of Yasser's cosmopolitan identity (Sinatora, 2019) because he presents himself as an individual who is familiar with the new linguistic forms resulted from communication in global social media applications.

In terms of his attitude towards tweeting in English, Yasser showed a negative attitude towards writing in English on Twitter especially if the followers are Arabs:

Yasser: if one has non-Arab followers, it's ok. But if the followers are Arabs, why does he or she use English?... I don't encourage that.

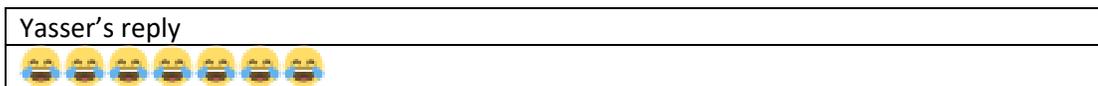
It might be argued that Yasser's statement shows how national borders can indeed be transferred into online spaces. Yasser pointed out that the user should only use English in his post if his followers are non-Arabs. This can be backed by the fact that he posted only six tweets in English. In most of them, the intended recipients of the post are non-Arabs. Yasser explained more in the second interview about posting in English:

Yasser: if you want to write to British people, you must use English, so they understand your message.

4.3.4. Emoji in the data

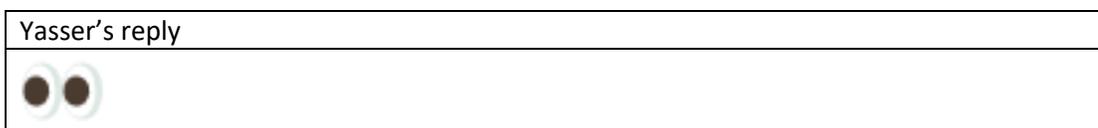
The analysis showed that Yasser relied on the use of emoji especially in tweets where the emoji were used as an addition to the texts. Yasser used emoji in if tweets were written in CA especially if the tone was not serious like when communicating with his friends or when talking about funny topics. It was also found that Yasser on five occasions, used emoji for a substitution function (Evans, 2017) when Yasser posted a tweet that included one emoji without any written language.

Extract 69



Four of these tweets were posted when Yasser replied to posts written in CA by his followers. In these four posts, he used only one emoji which was [face with tears of joy]. He used this emoji to potray a physical action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) which is laughing. For example, Yasser in Extract 69 posted this emoji to another user who posted a funny video about his situation before the exams. He used this emoji seven times in the tweet to indicate he is truly laughing.

Extract 70



In only one post, Extract 70, Yasser posted only [two eyes] emoji when he replied to a friend. This user replied to a tweet posted in Spanish by the coach of Al-Etihad football club by writing (English please) to ask him to post in English. Yasser replied posting [two eyes] emoji without any text. when I asked him about this post, he replied:

Yasser: I used it to say that I am watching him.

Yasser's reply indicates that he is watching that user and reading his tweets. This reflects a kind of linguistic policing in online space because Yasser's reply can be understood as an objection to the use of English by that friend.

Finally, when I asked Yasser in the second interview about his use of emoji, he replied:

Yasser: I use emoji to show how I feel like .. if I am laughing or happy because it is difficult to do that in writing.

This statement indicates that Yasser uses emoji to express his emotions in his tweets. This goes in the same line with Stark and Crawford (2015) who pointed out that emoji can be used to present feelings in digital writing.

4.3.5. Arabic posts with English words

Across the whole data set, only two of Yasser's posts include the use of both Arabic and English. This correlates with Yasser's response when I asked him about switching between Arabic and English in his posts:

Yasser: I always try to avoid that... I do that only with the colleagues who have the same field of study.

Extract 72

Yasser's reply	Translation
Teesside الحب 	the love Teesside 

In post 72, Yasser posted a romantic tweet in CA with the English letter T. One of Yasser's friend asked him about the meaning of T in the post. Yasser replied by writing in Arabic and then writing the name of this town in English (Teesside). He also used the emoji of smiling face with smiling eyes to the post to reingorce what is written (Evans, 2017) which is that he loves this town.

Finally, regarding the attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English, Yasser said:

Yasser: *I don't like it.*

R: *Why?*

Yasser: *Because some people have a negative attitude towards that. Also, because some people use it as a way to show off.*

Yasser in this statement pointed out that he did not like switching between English and Arabic in his posts because of two reasons. First, some Arab people have a negative attitude towards this practice. This negative attitude is the result that some Arab individuals believe that CS between a foreign language and Arabic is a corrupt form of Arabic (Hussein, 1999; Saidat, 2010) as it is a language without roots or grammatical rules. The second reason is that some people use it to show off. This can be understood if we

consider the prestigious situation of English as the language of modern technologies (Albirini, 2016). Thus, according to Yasser, when some people use English words with Arabic words, they want to indicate that they are familiar with modernization.

4.3.6. Words borrowed from English

The analysis of the data showed that Yasser used some borrowed words from English in six of his posts. The following table (Table 4.5) presents a list of all such words written, by Yasser in Arabic letters. After a brief look at this table, we will find that the words are popular among Arab Internet users because they are technology-related terms (hashtag, remote control) or words normally used in an English-speaking society (weekend, central,). This can be confirmed by Yasser’s response when I asked him about the use of these words:

Yasser: everybody knows these words, and we use them every day.

The word in Arabic letters	The English word
الهاشتاق	hashtag
الريموت	Remote control
السنترال	central
الويك اند	Weekend (2 times)
سبام	spam

Table4.5. Words borrowed from English

Extract 73 is an example of how a borrowed English word is used by Yasser when he replied to another user who posted a video about the contradiction of some Saudi journalists. Yasser wrote this reply to criticise those journalists by implying that they are

controlled by someone. We can see that he wrote the word (Remote), which refers to remote control, in Arabic letters (الريموت). He also used (ال) before the word (ريموت) which means that this word was regarded as an Arabic word.

Extract 73 underlined= borrowed word; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Yasser's reply	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">والله عقليات عجيبة يا ابوحميد ماتدري كيف صاروا اعلاميين والمصيبة يتحركوا بالريموت</p>	<p>It is wondering how some journalists became journalists. The issue is they are controlled by <u>the remote control</u></p>

Finally, regarding his attitude towards the use of Arabizi, writing Arabic words in English, Yasser pointed out that he has a very negative attitude towards this practice:

Yasser: *It's very bad.*

R: *Why?*

Yasser: *it's stupid...and it's hard to read... it was popular in the past... I don't like it at all... if you want to write Arabic, use Arabic letters.*

Yasser's reply reflects an argument made by Albirini (2016) that writing in Arabizi is less common nowadays due to the negative attitudes toward that form of writing among Arab Internet users as they believe that it was only accepted when writing in Arabic letters was difficult.

4.3.7. SA and Hejazi Arabic

The analysis identified 21 tweets that included the use of both Fus’ha and the regional dialect. In some of these posts, there is a switch from SA to CA. In other cases, the switch is from CA to SA. There is also a case of translanguaging where both varieties were used in a dynamic way by Yaeer.

4.3.7.1 Switching to SA

The analysis of the data showed that Yasser switches from CA to SA for taking a pedantic stand (Albirini, 2011). Consider the following Extract (74).

Extract 74 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Yasser’s reply	Translation
عاد انت الحاجات هذه ماتعني لك اي شيء ابدا	These things <u>do not mean anything to you</u>

In this post, Yasser replied to another user who was making fun of another user who wrote a line of a romantic poem. Then, Yasser replied by writing in CA عاد انت الحاجات هذه... (These things) then switch to SA to say by writing ماتعني لك اي شيء ابدا (do not mean anything to you). It might be claimed that Yasser in this post assumes the role of a well-educated person or a teacher because of his use of the expression ماتعني لك اي شيء ابدا which is normally used by well-educated individuals in the Arab individuals (Albirini, 2011).

Extract 75 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Yasser's reply	Translation
<p>تري الفطرة مالها دخل بكروية الارض يا صديقي <u>ركز يارعاك الله</u></p>	<p>Nature has nothing to do with the earth being round ...my friend <u>concentrate ..God save you</u></p>

The same pattern can be seen in Extract 75 when Yasser wrote a reply to one user who was arguing that the earth is flat because of nature. Yasser replied by writing in CA تري الفطرة مالها دخل (Nature has nothing to do with the earth being round) then switched to SA by writing the expression ركز يارعاك الله (concentrate ..God save you). Yasser in this post plays the role of the teacher (Albirini, 2011) because this expression is used normally by teachers if they want to encourage their students to concentrate.

4.3.7.2. Switching to CA

The analysis showed that Yasser switched from Fus'ha to CA for two reasons: 1) to simplify and explain a particular idea, and 2) criticise or insult.

Extract 76 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Yasser's reply	Translation
<p>عندما يتحدث الجاهل بما <u>يجهل</u>...اجل 99% من الحوادث وفيات.... من حقاك انك تعارض سواقة الحريم بس مو من حقاك انك تجيب نسب من راسك</p>	<p><u>When the ignorant talks about something he does not know</u> ...so you said 99% of people in accidents are dead.... You have the right to be against allowing women to drive, but you do not have the right to create your numbers</p>

Extract 77 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Yasser's reply	Translation
<u>يا كذايين اصلا لا يوجد في السعودية شيء اسمه اعدام</u> شنقا... ولا عمره السعودية شنقت احد	<u>You are liars...there is no death by hanging in Saudi Arabia.</u> this has never happened before in Saudi Arabia

Yasser switched from SA to CA to explain a statement written in SA. In extract 76, Yasser was discussing with another individual the problem of car accidents in Saudi Arabia. That user wrote that 99% of people in car accidents are dead. Yasser replied by writing عندما يتحدث الجاهل بما يجهل (When the ignorant talks about something he does not know) in SA and then switch to CA to explain this statement. The same thing can be seen in Extract 77 when Ali was replying to a person who claimed that the Saudi government executed a religious scholar by hanging. Yasser replied by writing يا كذايين اصلا لا يوجد في السعودية شيء اسمه اعدام (you are liars... there is no death by hanging in Saudi Arabia) in SA then switched to CA to explain his statement by writing that this has never happened before in Saudi Arabi.

Yasser also switched to CA to insult or attack someone. In Extract 78, Yasser replied to another user who wrote a tweet to attack the Saudi government. Yasser replied by ههههههه writing (hahahaha) and then wrote in SA شكل الحالة المادية سيئة (It seems that you are in a bad financial condition) and finally switched to CA by writing ومحتاج فلوس يالملعون (and you need money, you are cursed). He finished the tweet by the use of three faces with tears of joy emoji to show that he is laughing. The whole tweet implies that this user

wanted to criticise the Saudi government because he wanted money from the enemies of Saudi Arabia.

Extract 78 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Yasser's reply	Translation
<p>هههههه شكل الحالة المادية سيئة ومحتاج فلوس يالمعون </p>	<p><u>Hahahaha It seems that you are in a bad financial condition...</u> and you need money </p>

Extract 79 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Yasser's reply	Translation
<p>اتمى ايقاف استيرادها و بالطقاق عليه هو و سيارته</p>	<p><u>I wish that they would stop import that car..</u> I do not care about him or his car</p>

In Extract 79, Yasser was discussing with another user a statement by the owner of a famous car company who criticised the Saudi government. Yasser replied by writing in SA "اتمى ايقاف استيرادها" (I wish that they would stop importing that car) and then switched to CA by writing "و بالطقاق عليه هو و سيارته" (I do not care about him or his car). This expression (و بالطقاق عليه) is normally used by people in Saudi Arabia when they want to insult or attack someone. Thus, the use of the expression (و بالطقاق عليه) could be seen to enact his Saudi identity. Overall, it can be said that the two posts (78 and 79) could be seen to enact the identity of a person who defends his country.

Extract 80 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Yasser's reply	Translation
من افضل و اطعم انواع السمك خصوصا مشوي دائما اشترته في بريطانيا.. لكن في السعودية للأسف ما اعرف احد يبيعه	<u>One of the best kinds of fish especially if it is grilled.. I always buy it in Britain.. <u>unfortunately in Saudi Arabia</u> I do not know anyone who sells it</u>

In addition to these patterns, the analysis found that Yasser used both varieties of Arabic in Extract 80 in a dynamic way to the extent that it is difficult to identify patterns associated with switching from one variety or dialect to another. In this post, Yasser replied to one user who was asking about the best kind of fish. In this post, Yasser used both SA and the regional dialect. He used Fus'ha when he wrote "من افضل و اطعم انواع" and then wrote "دايما اشترته في بريطانيا" which was written in CA. After that, he wrote in SA "لكن في السعودية للأسف" and then finished the post with CA.

It can be noticed that words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic are used by Yasser in highly fluid and dynamic ways. This might correlate with Yasser's interpretation of this post because he said that the whole post was written in Fus'ha despite his use of words from CA:

Yasser: This post was written in Fus'ha.. I don't think it is Ammyah ...maybe I did not follow the Arabic grammar. Sometimes I use both with users that I don't have a personal relationship with.

It might be logical to claim that Yasser's response might confirm the idea that Yasser in some cases uses the various linguistic repertoires available to him without meaningfully distinguishing between them. This is because this statement confirms the

difficulty of determining whether a word or a sentence is written in SA or CA. Thus, Yasser's tweet in Extract 47 can be regarded as a typical example of translanguaging.

Finally, regarding the attitude towards switching between SA and the regional dialect, Yasser showed some kind of positive attitude toward this practice:

Yasser: *I encourage that.*

R: *Why?*

Yasser: *It is easier to reach a wider audience.*

4.3.8 Notes on Yasser's online identities

The previous sections showed that Yasser performs different aspects of identity in his Twitter account. Nevertheless, the analysis found some important points regarding his Hejazi identity and his identity as a student in the United Kingdom.

In terms of Yasser's Hejazi identity, one might say that this identity is not fully constructed in tweets posted by Yasser. The following statement is his response in the first interview when he was asked about the closest language or variety to him:

Yasser: *Of course, Hejazi Arabic... it's a beautiful variety and I feel that is close to me because I have been using it since I was a child.*

Despite his response about the closest variety to him, Hejazi identity does not appear in his linguistic practices in his Twitter account. To begin with, although Yasser used some of the distinctive features of the Hejazi variety of Arabic throughout the two

interviews such as replacing the sound (ذ) (Ḍ) with the sound (د) (d), there is no record of any use of these features in his posts over the whole period of observation. In addition, it was noticed that there is no use of some words and expressions that are used exclusively in the region of Al-Hejaz similar to what was reported in Muna's case. Yasser explained in the second interview that he does not use these words because he wants his posts to be understood by all Twitter's users:

Yasser: I always try to use the words that all people understand. On Twitter, the person should always try to avoid using the words that are only understood by the local community.

Regarding Yasser's identity as an Arab who is studying in an English-speaking country, it can be argued that this identity is not reflected in tweets posted by Yasser. That is to say that there is no record of linguistic practices that are normally associated with Arab students in the United Kingdom as were reported in Muna's case. First, the analysis reported that there is an almost complete absence of CS between Arabic and English over the whole period of observation. Second, the analysis found that there are only 6 posts written in English out of 229 posted by Yasser. When I asked Yasser about his explanation of the lack of reflection of this identity in his Twitter account, he pointed out that he does not want Arab users of Twitter to see him as a show-off person:

Yasser: I do not like talking about my personal things like my PhD or using English words in my posts because people will think that I want to show off.

Yasser's statement above showed that Yasser does not perform his identity as a student in an English-speaking country because he does not want some Arab users of

Twitter to see him as a person who wants to show off. The reason for that is that some Arabs think that some Arabs use English with Arabic words because they want to indicate that they are familiar with modernization (Albirini, 2016).

4.3.9. Mobility

After exploring Yasser's online linguistic in his Twitter account and interviewing him two times, one might claim that mobility does not play a major role in Yasser's online linguistic practices. When I asked Yasser if he had noticed any change in terms of his online linguistic practices before and after studying in the UK, he confirmed the impact of living in this environment:

Yasser: before I arrived in Britain, I did not use English in my post, but after I arrived here, I started to follow some non-Arab users and reply to them in English.

Despite this statement which indicates the impact of living in the UK on Yasser's linguistic practices, the findings did not report any strong evidence for this impact on his online linguistic practices. In other words, it was found that that Yasser posted only 6 tweets in English out of 229 over the whole period of observation. Moreover, there is an almost complete absence of CS between Arabic and English in tweets posted by Yasser over the whole period of observation. The lack of this impact can also be noticed if we look at his answers to some of my questions in the first interview:

R: *In which situation do you use English?*

Yasser: *I use it only when I speak with non-Arabic speakers.*

R: *Do you mix between Arabic and English in your daily life?*

Yasser: *Only with my colleagues if we want to talk about engineering.*

This assertion that he uses English only with non-Arabic speakers, and thus not with Arabs, can be applied to his Twitter account because the majority of his followers are Arabs. The answer to the second question implies that CS between Arabic and English is not a habit for Yasser. This is different from Ali and Muna who mentioned that CS is a normal practice for them. Yasser uses it only with friends who shared the same subject with him. Thus, it might be expected if he does not use CS because it is not a normal practice for him, and because he uses Twitter for communicating with different kinds of people, not only with his colleagues.

Taking the previously mentioned points into consideration, it can be argued that mobility in a study abroad setting does not have a significant impact on how Yasser uses his linguistic repertoires in his personal account on Twitter.

4.4. Ahmed case

A total of 276 tweets and replies were collected as data. An examination of all these posts revealed that Ahmed used SA and CA, in addition to the use of English. Table

4.6 shows the numbers of tweets composed in each language and variety, in addition to the number of tweets that include more than a single language or variety.

The variety/ varieties used	Number of tweets
CA only	28
SA only	157
English only	41
SA + CA	36
Arabic +English	4
Borrowed words from English	5
Emoji-only	5
Total	276

Table 4.6. Language choice in Ahmed’s tweet

4.4.1. The use of SA

The analysis of Ahmed’s Twitter account revealed that SA emerges as the language of preference, as 157 posts were written entirely in SA over the whole period of observation. Tweets posted in SA can be categorised into three types: tweets that were originally created by Ahmed, participation in hashtags, and replies to tweets written by other users. As for the first category, Ahmed uses SA when he wants to post a religious supplication like in Extract 81, or when he wants to post a tweet about a religious event as he does in Extracts 82 and 83 respectively.

Extract 81

The tweet	Translation
 اللهم في النفس حاجة فاقضها لي	 There is a need in my soul, O Allah please fulfil it.

In Extract 81, Ahmed depended on a multimodal text to convey what he wanted to say when he posted a religious supplication followed by [open hands] emoji. He wrote the supplication اللهم في النفس حاجة فاقضها لي (There is a need in my soul, O Allah please fulfil it). Then, he finished by adding [open hands] emoji to show that he wanted to request help from God. This emoji can be described as an action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) which is the use of emoji to describe a physical action because this emoji resembles what Muslims do (they usually open their hands and raise them) when they want to make supplication to God. The purpose of using [open hands] emoji at the end of the post was for a reinforcement function (Evans, 2017). Simply put, Ahmed used this emoji to emphasise that the post aim was to make supplication.

Extract 82

The tweet	Translation
 كل عام وانتم الى الله اقرب	I hope that each year you become more closer to God 

Extract 83

The tweet	Translation
عام هجري سعيد للجميع... حقق الله لكم فيه الامنيات.	Happy new Hijri year. I wish that Allah will make your wishes come true.

Ahmed also used a multimodal text in Extract 82 when he wrote this post to congratulate his followers on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha, which is a major Islamic event that is celebrated by all Muslims. He used SA to hope that everybody become closer to God. Ahmed finished by using a star emoji to cue the mood of celebration. Another example is Extract is 83 when Ahmed wrote a post in SA to wish everybody a happy year on the occasion of the beginning of Hijri (an Islamic calendar) year. It can be assumed that Ahmed wrote both tweets in SA because the tweet was about an Islamic event, and therefore it would be more suitable to use SA in this context. This is the result of the strong relationship between SA and Islam, as it is always believed that SA is the closest living variety to Quranic Arabic. This can be supported by Ahmed’s statement when he was describing Fus’ha in the interview:

Ahmed: *I like it because it is the language of the Quran.*

In general, it might be claimed that posting some religious supplication, and posting about some Islamic events could be seen to enact this religious aspect of Ahmed’s identity.

Extract 84

The tweet	Translation
<p>#وفاة_ناصر_القصيبي لماذا هذا الازى؟ الرجل له عائلة و اصدقاء و محبين.. لماذا تؤذونهم؟</p>	<p># Death of _Nasse_Al-Qassabi why is this? The man has a family, friends, and people who love him... why do you hurt them?</p>

Ahmed wrote some tweets in SA when he participated in some hashtags. In Extract 84, Ahmed used Fus’ha to comment about a rumour of the death of a famous Saudi actor. He wrote “لماذا هذا الاذى؟ الرجل له عائلة واصدقاء ومحبين.. لماذا تؤذونهم؟” (why is this hurt for? The man has a family, friends, and people who love him.. why do you hurt them?). He posted this tweet to blame those who talked about the rumour. Using words such as الاذى (hurt) and تؤذونهم (hurt them) could be understood as an evaluative stance (Du Bois, 2007) which expresses Ahmad’s negative attitude towards this hashtag. Besides, Ahmed wrote this tweet in SA to blame those who started this rumour. This is because SA is the variety that is usually associated with authority in the Arab context (Bassiouney, 2012). It is used by government officials or religious scholars when they want to tell people what is right and what is wrong. Thus, Ahmed Wanted to enact a position of authority through using SA in this tweet.

Extract 85

The tweet	Translation
<p>العزاء لاهل الاردن كافة ولذوي المتوفين خاصة. مؤلم جدا ماحدث ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله #سيول_الاردن #البحر الميت</p>	<p>The condolences to People of Jordan in general, and the families of the victims especially. What happened is devastating. There is no power or strength other than in Allah. # Torrents of Jordan # the Dead Sea</p>

Ahmed also used SA when participating in hashtags about events and occasions in other Arab countries. It might be said that participating in such hashtag reflects Ahmed’s awareness of what happened in other Arab countries. Hence, this could be understood as a way of expressing a pan-Arab identity. For example, in Extract 85, Ahmed participated

in a hashtag about the tragedy of the death of several people in the torrents of Jordan. He wrote this tweet to give his condolences to the families of the victims. Ahmed used SA because the post was intended to a broader audience from many Arab countries. Therefore, the use of SA would be appropriate because it is the official language in all Arab countries, unlike CA, which is an unrecognised variety used only in local communities. The tweet also contains an evaluative stance (Du Bois, 2007) through the use of evaluative statement “مؤلم جدا ماحدث” (What happened is devastating) which describes his attitude toward this tragedy. Also, Ahmed used intertextuality when he wrote the religious phrase ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله (There is no power or strength other than in Allah). According to Bassiouney (2012), intertextuality could be an act of stance taking. To explain, Muslims use this expression when they want to express their grief over the death of someone. Thus, the goal of this expression was to express Ahmed’s grief because of the tragedy. Overall, the evaluative stance and the use of intertextuality could be seen as an indication for Ahmed’s identity as an Arab individual who cares about his fellow Arabs outside his own country. Actually, this aspect of identity might be backed if we consider the dominance use of SA in Ahmed’s tweets. According to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), language choice can be considered as an act of identity. In other words, identity can be constructed through the use of any linguistic system that is connected with a particular group (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In this context, the use of SA is always considered by most Arab individuals as the strong and the unique marker of the Arab identity (Albirini, 2011, 2016; Hoigilt, 2018; S’hiri, 2002). Therefore, the observation that more than 56% of tweets posted by Ahmed (157 out of 276) were written entirely in SA

could be seen to enact Ahmed’s pan-Arab identity. This can be backed up by his answer to my following questions in the interview:

R: *What makes you an Arab?*

Ahmed: *The language, of course, is the first one. I feel that the Arabic language is the main factor that makes me feel that I am an Arab.*

This statement denotes that Ahmed considers the ability to use Standard Arabic as the primary factor for performing the Arab identity. Here language (SA) is mainly used for the identification of someone as a member of a particular group (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

Extract 86

The tweet	Translation
<p>اليوم الوطني ل #فلسطين قضيتكم قضية الشرفاء من مختلف الاعراق و الاديان.</p> 	<p># Palestine national day Your case is the case of all honourable people from all religions and ethnicities</p> 

Ahmed’s pan-Arab identity is also constructed through participating in a hashtag about the Palestinian cause, which is usually seen as an essential issue for most people across the Arab world. In Extract 86, he participated in a hashtag about the national day of Palestine by posting a multimodal text. He wrote in SA قضيتكم قضية الشرفاء من مختلف الاعراق و الاديان (Your case is the case of all honourable individuals from all religions and

ethnicities) followed by the Palestinian flag to show his love and support for the Palestinian cause. He wrote the tweet in SA because the hashtag is about Palestine. Then, since it is expected that the tweet will be read by users from different Arab countries, using SA would be more appropriate than using CA. The meaning of the post shows Ahmed's love and support for the Palestinian cause. Ahmed's support for Palestine appeared undoubtedly not only by the text of the post but also by posting the Palestinian flag. This could be seen as online literacy practice which displayed an act of identity and a political statement as he indexes his support to Palestine (Hallajow, 2016).

Extract 87

Ahmed's reply	Translation
اعتقد انه يجب عليك مراجعة نظرتك للتعاطف الشعبي العربي للأسف.	Unfortunately, I think you should think again about how you see the sympathy of the Arab people.

Ahmed also posted in SA when he replied to tweets written by some users of Twitter. In some posts, he replied in SA to a tweet written by non-Saudi users. Extract 87 is a reply written by Ahmed to a Jordanian user who was talking about the Palestinian cause. This user argued that most Arab people have sympathy towards Palestine, and then listed reasons that make the world not focus on what Israel is doing. Ahmed replied by writing "اعتقد انه يجب عليك مراجعة نظرتك للتعاطف الشعبي العربي للأسف" (I think you should think again about how you see the sympathy of Arab people) implying that most Arab people do not care about Palestine anymore. Ahmed here performs an epistemic stance (Du Bois, 2007) through the use of the verb **اعتقد** (I think) and the modal **يجب** (should), not to mention that the whole reply was written in SA. By doing this, he positioned

himself as an educated person who can engage with political debates. Furthermore, Ahmed finished his reply by presenting an affective stance (Du Bois, 2007) which can be performed through the use of attitude markers such as (unfortunately) according to Hyland (2005). In other words, the use of the word **للأسف** (unfortunately) conveys Ahmed's disappointment for lack of Arabs' sympathy towards Palestine. This could be seen to enact Ahmed's identity as a supporter of the Palestinian cause.

Extract 88

Ahmed's reply	Translation
هو حر طوال تلك السنين و قبلها و القادم منها- الفخر لكم. مبارك فرحكم و لا رأيتم بعدها حزنا.	He is free all these years, and the following years- you should be proud. Congratulations and I hope that you will not face sadness anymore.

This aspect of identity is also constructed in Extract 88 when Ahmed replied to a Palestinian user who posted a picture of her father who just got released after 18 years in Israeli prison. Ahmed replied in SA to congratulate that user and say that he should be considered a hero. The motive for using SA in his reply is that the topic of the tweet is related to the Palestinian issue. It could be claimed that this tweet is another evidence for Ahmed's construction of his identity as a supporter of Palestine and its people. This claim can be reinforced by Ahmed's response when I asked him about posting about Palestine in the second interview:

Ahmed: I am proud of that. I support Palestine not only because of religion or because I am Arab... I support Palestine because it is also a humanitarian tragedy.

Let us look at the following two examples which show Ahmed’s reply to tweets written by two famous Twitter users. In both cases, Ahmed replied in SA to present himself as a wise and knowledgeable individual. In Extract 89 is Ahmed’s reply to a Saudi journalist who wrote in SA the following statement about mothers **”يظل الرجل طفلا حتى تموت امه. حقيقة** (The man is always a child until his mother dies. A fact). Ahmed replied in SA to write **”فاذا ماتت شاخ فجأة** (And when she died, he suddenly gets old). This reply acts like an attempt by Ahmed to complete and explain that journalist’s statement. The reason for replying in SA is the journalist’s tweet, which looks like a line taken from a poem or a novel was written in SA. Therefore, replying in SA would be more appropriate, as it is always considered by Arab individuals as the variety of literary works (Hoigilt, 2018). By completing that journalist’s tweet, Ahmed constructs his identity as a knowledgeable person who can write a piece of literary work.

Extract 89

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
فاذا ماتت شاخ فجأة	And when she died, he suddenly gets old.

Extract 90

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
هي الفجوة بين ما يقصده احدهم وما تفهمه أنت. "ما أقصده أنا وما تفهمه أنت".	It is the difference between what you understand and what someone means. "what I mean and what you understand".

Similarly, Extract 90 is a reply to a tweet written by a university professor who talked about that the main cause for misunderstanding between people is not focusing on the main point of discussion. Then, Ahmed replied in SA to present a thoughtful comment “هي الفجوة بين ما يقصده احدهم و ماتفهمه أنت” (It is the difference between what you understand and what someone means). Then, he finished the post by writing between brackets “ما أقصده أنا و ما تفهمه أنت” (what I mean and what you understand). This can be regarded as one form of intertextuality where someone used a certain text as an explanation and support of his own text (Bazerman, 2003). To explain, Ahmed in this post wrote “ما أقصده أنا و ما تفهمه أنت” (what I mean and what you understand), which is one part from a widely used statement regarding problems between people, as an explanation of what he wrote in his own words “بين ما يقصده احدهم و ماتفهمه أنت” (between what you understand and what someone means. The use of intertextuality could be seen as a stance (Bassiouney, 2012) where Ahmed positioned himself as an intelligent person who can understand and summarise what other people say easily. In fact, it is observed that this identity is also enacted by using SA in 157 out of 276 tweets posted by Ahmed. This could be understood by taking language ideology into account. It is widely believed by most Arab individuals that SA is the language of education and sophistication (Albirini, 2016; Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959; Hoigilt, 2018). According to this belief, if an individual uses Fus’ha, then this will lead other people to see him or her as a prestigious and well-educated person.

Finally, in terms of his attitude towards the use of SA on Twitter, Ahmed showed some kind of enthusiasm for this practice:

Ahmed: *I like it, and I enjoy that.*

R: *Why?*

Ahmed: *Because it is a rich language. People will find new words and then will check their meanings and how they should be used.*

Ahmed's statement here can be interpreted by considering one of the language ideologies of Standard Arabic (Brustad, 2017; Hachimi, 2013). That is the common belief among the majority of Arab individuals that Fus'ha is a rich language because it is the language of the Holy Quran, old Arabic poetry and prose (Hoigilt, 2018). Fus'ha is always seen as the variety of Arabic that has "a rich body of material– lexical, phonological, and morphological" (Brustad, 2017, p. 66). Based on this assumption, using Fus'ha will allow people to come across words and expressions "which may have been current only at one period of the literary history and are not in widespread use at the present time" (Ferguson, 1959, p. 331). Therefore, according to Ahmed, posting in Fus'ha will be an opportunity to learn some new words from Fus'ha.

4.4.2. The use of CA

The analysis identified an unusual pattern in Ahmed's tweets compared with all other participants in terms of posting in CA. While it was the most preferred variety for the other participants, CA was least preferred variety compared with SA and English in Ahmed's tweets as he posted only 28 tweets in CA. Analysing these tweets indicated that it is difficult to identify which variety of CA to be more prominent because words and expressions in these tweets are used in most parts of Saudi Arabia. This reflects Ahmed's

situations as someone born in the South of Saudi Arabia then moved between Jeddah and Riyadh.

Most tweets written in CA occurred when Ahmed was joking or talking about informal topics with his followers. For example, Ahmed, in some cases, was talking with other Twitter users about sports. In Extract 91, Ahmed replied to one of his followers who said that it is funny that the new head of the referees committee in Saudi football association was a commentator implying that he had no experience. Then, Ahmed replied in CA that he was a pharmacist to show that this is even funnier. The use of the word **تراه** (he is) is a sign that the tweet was composed in CA. Ahmed replied in CA because the original post was written in CA as evident in the use of the word **يصير** (becomes) instead of the standard word **(يصبح)**.

Extract 91

Ahmed's reply	Translation
وقبل ما يكون معلق تراه صيدلي	Before he was a commentator, he was a pharmacist

Extract 92

Ahmed's reply	Translation
وليه كره الكروات؟	Why do you have this hatred for Croatians?

Similarly, Extract 92 is Ahmed's reply to another user who wrote a post to say that he does not want Croatia to win the World Cup because he hates the Croatians. Then, Ahmed replied by asking about the reason for that hatred. He wrote "وليه كره الكروات؟" which is a question is written in CA because of the use of the word **(ليه)** instead of the use

of the standard form (لماذا). Although the original tweet was written in SA, Ahmed used CA to reply to that tweet. This may be because that user was talking about football which is a topic we assume that most Arab people talk about in CA giving its informal nature.

Extract 93

The tweet	Translation
<p style="text-align: center;">مافيه شيء اشقى عشانه #السعودية_الاورغواي</p>	<p>Nothing deserves to suffer about # Saudi Arabia_ Uruguay</p>

In addition to all these tweets, on only two occasions, Ahmed used CA when he participated in hashtags about football. In Extract 93, Ahmed used CA when he participated in a hashtag about the football match between Saudi Arabia and Uruguay in the world Cup. Ahmed wanted to comment on the terrible performance of the goalkeeper of the Saudi team. He posted the picture of that goalkeeper and wrote “ مافي شيء اشقى عشانه ” to imply that the goalkeeper’s performance was terrible in the match because he does not care about the team. Since the tweet was about the Saudi football national team, the use of the Saudi variety of Arabic could be more appropriate. It is possible to claim that this could be a sign of Ahmed’s national identity. Additionally, Ahmed also presents himself as a humorous person by criticising that goalkeeper in a funny way. Another example is Extract 94 when Ahmed participated in a hashtag about a player in Al-Nasser team in the Saudi football league called Ahmed Mousa who injured himself in one match. Ahmed then wrote in CA ضرب الأرض (hit the ground) which is a comic expression used by some Saudi people when they want to say that someone has a funny accident. This could be seen to enact Ahmed’s identity as a humorous person. It is worth

mentioning that engaging with other users in discussions regarding football news and issues in the previous four tweets could be interpreted as a way of constructing Ahmed’s identity as a sports fan.

Extract 94

The tweet	Translation
علموهم ان #احمد_موسى ضرب الأرض	Teach them that #Ahmed_ Mousa hit the ground

Extract 95

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
الفصل اللي مانعرفه في السعودية	We don’t see this season in Saudi Arabia

Extract 96

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
سجل عندك واحد	Count me in.

The analysis revealed that Ahmed also used CA sometimes to joke with his followers. In Extract 95, one user posted some pictures about autumn. Then, Ahmed replied in CA by writing “الفصل اللي مانعرفه في السعودية” to make fun of the weather in Saudi Arabia. Ahmed used CA as evident in the use of the colloquial word (اللي) instead of the SA form (الذي). One might say that Ahmed used CA in this tweet because he wanted to be funny because it is the variety that is always associated with informal situations such

as joking . Another example is Extract 96 when Ahmed replied to another user who posted a funny video of an old advertisement and asked his followers if they could remember it. Ahmed wanted to say that he remembers that video by writing “سجل عندك واحد”, which is a well-known expression used by some youths in Saudi Arabia when they want to express their agreement in a amusing way. Ahmed here used that expression because the video which is the topic of the tweet was funny. We can also say that Ahmed in this tweet, also positions himself as someone familiar with trendy expression among the Saudi youths.

Regarding his attitude towards the use of CA in his posts, Ahmed pointed out:

Ahmed: It is normal. I don't see it as a problem. It is a personal preference, and it doesn't bother me. For me, most of the time I use Fus'ha because most of the followers will understand because Fus'ha is clear, unlike Ammyah.

This statement presents two opposite attitudes regarding posting in CA. On the one hand, he believes that posting in CA by other users is acceptable. One potential reason for this is that CA is the variety that people use in their daily lives. On the other hand, Ahmed explained that he does not prefer to post in CA that because he writes posts to users from different Arab countries as we discussed in Extracts 85, 86, 87, and 88. Thus, he relies on the use of SA more than CA in writing his posts because he wants his posts to be understood and taken seriously by Twitter users across the Arab world. The justification behind this is related to a significant difference between SA and CA. While the local varieties of Arabic differ from one country to another, SA is used in the same

way in each Arab country (Hoigilt, 2018). For instance, research has shown that varieties of Arabic used in countries such as Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia are different from varieties used in the rest of Arab countries (Albirini, 2016; Chtatou, 1997; Embarki et al., 2007). Therefore, it might be logical to claim that the use of SA can make communication between people from different parts of the Arab world much more accessible. In other words, SA serves as a lingua franca of the Arab world (Hoigilt, 2018).

4.4.3. The use of English

Exploring Ahmed's account revealed that he posted 41 tweets in English over the whole period of observation. These tweets could be categorised into three types. The first category is when Ahmed wrote some posts that include quotations like in the following three posts.

Extract 97

The darker the night, the brighter the stars- Dostoevsky

Extract 98

"It is too late when we die to admit we don't see eye to eye" _ The living years by Mike and Mechanics.

Extract 99

Sometimes it is the people no one can imagine anything of who do the things no one can imagine.

A. Turing.

In each one of these tweets, Ahmed simply wrote some a line from a song or a novel followed by the author such as (**The darker the night, the brighter the stars- Dostoevsky**). It might be legitimate to state that by doing this, Ahmed constructs the identity of an intellectual person who is well-read in the international literature. This

aspect of identity is also constructed through Ahmed's participation in some hashtags (the second category) about poetry or some famous writer. In Extract 100, he participated in a hashtag about Dostoevsky (a famous Russian novelist) by posting a line written by Dostoevsky. A similar pattern can be seen in Extract 101 when he participated in a hashtag called (poem) by posting a line from a poem written by the Nigerian poet Ijeoma Umebinyuo. Using English in the previous five tweets could be understood as a way of enacting Ahmed's multilingual identity.

Extract 100

"It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing, but the habits he has accumulated during the first half " - [# Dostoevsky](#)

Extract 101

So, here you are
Too foreign for home
Too foreign for here
Never enough for both
Diaspora a blues. a [# poem](#) by Ijeoma Umebinyuo

Furthermore, Ahmed posted in English when he participated in English hashtags related to football. For example, in Extract 102, Ahmed participated in the hashtag UCL (UEFA Champions league) to express his support for Manchester United. He posted a multimodal text when he wrote "**united**" followed by a red heart emoji which conveys love (Evans, 2017). Ahmed here imitated Manchester United's fans when they say

(united) instead of using (Manchester United). The emoji and the use of the (united) mean that Ahmed positioned himself as one of Manchester United’s fans. The same pattern can be seen in Extract 103 when Ahmed participated in a hashtag about the national team of Sweden during the World Cup in Russia by writing “go” followed by the national flag of Sweden. By writing the verb (**go**), in addition to posting the Swedish flag, Ahmed positioned himself as a supporter of the Swedish team during the world Cup. Furthermore, posting in hashtags about UCL and the World Cup might contribute to the construction of Ahmed’s identity as a sports fan who is interested not only about the Saudi national teams or the Saudi football league but also about some international football competitions.

Extract 102

united ❤️
#UCL

Extract 103

Go #Sweden 🇸🇪

Moreover, the previous four posts (100, 101, 102, and 103) involve Ahmed’s participation in hashtags which can be categorized as supervenaculars (Blommaert, 2019). Similarly, understanding Blommaert’s (2012) perception of supervenaculars suggests that emoji also can be considered a supervenacular. Thus, the use of emoji and participation in English hashtags could be seen as a sign of Ahmed’s cosmopolitan identity (Sinatora, 2019).

Extract 104

Ahmed's reply
That's true... they conceived no goals at that tournament

Extract 105

Ahmed's reply
Novel and original 👍

Finally, Ahmed, in some posts, used English to reply to tweets written in English by other users. The first one can be seen in Extracts 104, which is a reply written by Ahmed to another user. This user posted a tweet to ask about the national team of Switzerland in the 2006 World Cup in Germany. Ahmed replied to that user by confirming that Switzerland did not conceive any goal at that tournament. The evaluative statement **(that's true)** and finishing the tweet by confirming that information could indicate that the tweet should be viewed as an epistemic stance where Ahmed positions himself as a sports fan who is an expert in the history of football. Another example is Extract 105 when Ahmed replied to another user who wrote a tweet to make fun of the Arab teams after they failed in the World Cup. That user wrote that the actual interpretation of the letters in FIFA (the abbreviation of the International Federation of Association of English) is that Football isn't for Arabs. Then, Ahmed replied by writing "Novel and original" and thump emoji (👍) which means "I like it" (Evans, 2017, p. 25). The tweet can be considered as an alignment stance (Du Bois, 2007) as Ahmed tried to express his agreement with the writer of that tweet.

In terms of his attitude towards tweeting in English, Ahmed pointed out that it depends on the audience and topic:

Ahmed: *it is ok if I want to deliver a message to non-Arab people. If the topic is about Arabs ... I feel that there is no need for that. Sometimes I can understand especially if it's easier to use English to express you... like if you want to talk about nutrition... I feel it would be difficult in Arabic... I think it's easier in English.*

This statement goes with the same line with how Ahmed used English in his Twitter account. He posted in English when he wanted to reply to a tweet written in English by non-Arab users, when he participated in hashtags written in English, or when he wanted to post a line from a poem or a novel that was originally written in English. Ahmed gave the topic of nutrition as an example of a topic that is easier to talk about in English. This can be considered a case of 'domain loss' where the person might be a competent Arabic speaker, but he has limited medical lexis in Arabic (perhaps, these terms were introduced to him in English only. This could be the result of that some subjects like medicine are taught in English in most Arab countries (Albirini, 2016).

Before finishing this section, I would like to talk about the relationship between posting in English and identity in Ahmed's tweet. Since language choice can be considered as an act of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), it might be argued that posting 41 tweets in English could be seen as an indication of Ahmed's multilingual identity (Leppänen & Peuronen, 2012; Sinatora, 2019).

4.4.4. Emoji in the data

The analysis showed that Ahmed relied on the use of emoji, especially in tweets where the emoji were used as an addition to the texts. Nevertheless, it was also found that Ahmed posted five tweets that included the use of one emoji or more without any written language. This what Evans (2017) calls the substitution function of emoji when the individuals use emoji instead of writing something. All these five posts were replies to other users' tweets. Extract 106 is a reply to another user who wrote a supplication to ask God to make Croatia wins in the world Cup final. Ahmed used this emoji because it describe the physical action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) when Muslims do when they want to make supplication to God. They normally open their hand and raise when they make the supplication. The purpose for using open hands emoji is that the other user wrote **يارب** (Oh God) which is a supplication. To summarise, Ahmed used this emoji to tell that user that he also had the same wish.

Extract 106

Ahmed's reply


Ahmed in Extract 107 used the mouse emoji when he replied to another user who was talking about a match between Al-Etihad and Al-Hazm. That user posted "it is all because of" then added the mouse emoji. Ahmed replied by posting the mouse emoji. The mouse emoji used by some Arab Twitter user to refer to VAR (video assistant referee)

because both words (mouse in Arabic and VAR)⁵ has a similar pronunciation. It is possible to say that Ahmed’s reply shows an innovative use of language. The use of this emoji in this post can be classified under what Herring and Dainas (2017, p. 2187) call “mention versus use” which refers to the emoji itself in contrast to communicative uses of emoji.

Extract 107

Ahmed’s reply


Extract 108

Ahmed’s reply


In Extract 108, Ahmed used two emoji to reply to another user who posted a funny statement about friendship. Ahmed replied by posting one eye emoji in addition to the brain emoji. when I asked Ahmed about the reason for his use of these two emoji in this post, he said:

Ahmed: I use them to say (عين العقل).

Ahmed wanted to say *عين العقل* (**literal translation: the eye of the brain**), an expression from SA used to express their agreement and admiration to what someone is saying. Ahmed here used these emoji as a translation to what he wanted to say, which

⁵ The video assistant referee (VAR) refers to the use of the video to help the referee of the football match to make right decisions.

might be similar to what Danesi (2016, p. 168) calls “emoji-only writing”. To explain, this expression consists of two words: عين (one eye) and العقل (the brain). Ahmed used one eye emoji and the brain emoji instead of writing the expression (عين العقل). This can also be described as a narrative sequence which is the use of a group of emoji to tell a story or say something (Herring & Dainas, 2017).

In two posts, Ahmed posted only [face with tears of joy] emoji to indicate that he was laughing when he replied to another user. For example, in Extract 109, Ahmed wrote a post to recommend listening to a song to his followers. Another user replied “It seems that I am going to have the breakfast while listening to it” to indicate that he is enjoying listening to the song. Ahmed then replied by posting [face with tears of joy] emoji to indicate a physical action (Herring & Dainas, 2017) which is that he was laughing because of his friend’s humorous tweet.

Extract 109

Ahmed’s reply



Finally, when I asked Ahmed in the second interview about his use of emoji, he replied:

Ahmed: I use emoji to express my emotions like if I am happy or feeling depressed. It also helps to clarify the meaning of what is written.

The first part of the statement indicates that Ahmed uses emoji to express his emotions in his tweets. This goes in the same line with some scholars (Evans, 2017; McCulloch, 2019; Stark & Crawford, 2015) who pointed out that emoji can be used to

present feelings in digital writing. Ahmed also mentioned that emoji can help to deliver the exact intended meaning of the post. This correlates with Danesi (2016) who mentioned that adding emoji to the text can help to avoid misunderstanding.

4.4.5. Arabic posts with English words

Across the whole data set, only four of Ahmed’s posts include the use of both Arabic and English. In Extract 110, Ahmed wrote a post to ask his followers about the book ‘Ten myths about Israel’. He wrote the question in Arabic and then translated it in English. He wrote the questions in both languages because he wanted all his Arab and non-Arab followers to help him find the book. This also could help to construct his identity as a supporter of Palestine.

Extract 110

<p>Ten myths about Israel-by Ilan Pappé Anyone has the book? عشر خرافات عن اسرائيل- ل ايلان بابيه احد عنده الكتاب او رابط لتحميله</p>
--

Extract 111

The tweet	Translation
<p>قبل ساعات هبطت #NASAINsight على المريخ. شيء جميل ورائع متابعة حدث كهذا. شكرا لكل الأشخاص خلف هذا الانجاز. #MarsLanding طبعاً الارض مسطحة 🤔</p>	<p>Hours ago #NASAINsight landed on Mars. It is beautiful to see something like this. Thanks to all those who are behind this achievement. #MarsLanding The earth is flat of course 🤔</p>

In Extract 111, Ahmed participated in two hashtags about landing on Mars, which were written in English. He wrote the whole post in SA to speak to Arabs about this scientific achievement. In the end, he wrote “طبعا الارض مسطحة” (The earth is flat of course) with the smiley face emoji to contradict this statement (Evans, 2017) because he wanted to make fun of those who claim that the earth is flat. It could be said that by participating in these hashtags, Ahmed performs the identity of a well-educated person who is interested in the latest scientific achievement.

Extract 112

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
الصوت وذبذباته قد تسبب ذلك و اعراض اخرى. علم ال cognitive hearing قد يكون لديه بعض الاجابات.	The sound and its vibrations may cause this and other symptoms. The field of cognitive hearing might have some answers.

Extract 113

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
هي اساسا عبارة عن صوت في اذن و صوت مختلف في الاذن الاخرى يتم تجميعها في مقطع واحد تسمى binaural beats	Basically, it is one sound in one ear and a different sound in the other ear. They are collected in one sound clip and it is called binaural beats

In posts 112 and 113, Ahmed wrote English words in posts written in Arabic to introduce some medical terms. In extract 112, Ahmed replied to another user who posted a video about one of the ear conditions. Ahmed replied in Arabic and then introduced the medical term ‘cognitive hearing’. The same pattern can be seen in Extract 113 when Ahmed introduced the English term ‘binaural beats’ when he replied to another user who

talked about a test used to discover any problem in the ear. We can say that he used these English terms because he might do not know the exact Arabic equivalent names for these terms. These correlate with his statement when I asked about his attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English:

Ahmed: I don't know... maybe because I always mix between Arabic and English especially when I use technical terms.

In general, it might be argued that Ahmed constructs his identity as a doctor when he wrote these medical terms in English which is the medium of instruction in medical colleges in most Arab countries (Albirini, 2016).

4.4.6. Words borrowed from English

The analysis of the data showed that Ahmed used some borrowed words from English in only five posts. The following table (Table 4.7) presents a list of all such words written by Ahmed in Arabic letters. All these words are popular among Arab users of Twitter (**block, thread, retweet**).

The word in Arabic letters	The English word
بلوك	block
الريوتويت	retweet
الثريد	thread
الرفرنس	reference
سبيشل	special

Table4.7.: Words borrowed from English in Ahmed's tweets

Extract 114 underlined= borrowed word; regular font= Arabic

The tweet	Translation
تري الريتويت ببلاش... ماتبي ريتويت؟ نسخ و لصق مع ذكر الشخص و حسابه	<u>The retweet</u> is free.... you don't want to <u>retweet</u> ? You must copy and paste with mentioning the name of the person with the account.

Extract 114 is an example of how Ahmed wrote an English word in Arabic alphabets. Ahmed replied to another user who wanted to tell the story of a famous song by Mohammed Abdo (a Saudi singer). Ahmed replied that the story was mentioned before by another user. Thus, he asked him to use the retweet instead of taking the content of the posts written by other users. Ahmed in this tweet wrote the word “retweet” in Arabic letters (الريتويت). Furthermore, he applied Arabic grammar to this word through using (ال) before (ريتويت), which may indicate that this word was treated as an Arabic word. It can be argued that Ahmed used the word in Arabic letters because there is no equivalent for the word (retweet) in Arabic. Besides, this word is well-known among the majority of Arab users of Twitter.

Before ending this section, it is significant to mention that there is a complete absence of the use of Arabizi (writing Arabic words in Roman letters) in all tweets posted by Ahmed over the whole period of observation. This could be justified if we consider his statement when I asked him about his attitude towards the use of Arabizi:

Ahmed: *Actually...some users do that, but I think there is no excuse... especially now phones have both Arabic and English keypads... in the past, it was acceptable...but now it's not acceptable.*

What Ahmed mentioned above seems to be in accordance with an argument made by Albirini (2016) who mentioned that writing in Arabizi is less common nowadays due to the negative attitudes toward that form of writing among Arab Internet users as they believe that it was only accepted when writing in Arabic letters was difficult.

4.4.7. SA and CA

After exploring Ahmed's Twitter account for nine months, it was possible to identify 35 tweets that included the use of both Fus'ha and the regional dialect. In some of these posts, there is a switch from SA to CA. In other cases, the switch is from CA to SA.

4.4.7.1. Switching to SA

The analysis of the data showed that Ahmed switches from CA to SA for taking a pedantic stand (Albirini, 2011). This could be related to the nature of SA as the language of educators in schools and universities in the Arab world (Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959). Therefore, when Ahmed switches to SA, he looks like a teacher who introduces a new piece of information. In the following post (115), Ahmed replied to another user who was asking about the World Cup. He asked who will be the first of the group if more than one team has an equal number of points and goals. Then, Ahmed replied by writing in CA... اذا هذا حقا صار (If this happens), then switched to SA to mention the rule that will be followed. Through using SA, Ahmed present himself as a football expert because many football coaches and analysts usually rely on SA when they appear on TV channels.

Extract 115 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Ahmed's reply	Translation
<u>اذا هذا صار... يتم النظر في نقاط اللعب النظيف. في حال التساوي ايضا يتم الاتجاه للقرعة.</u>	<u>If this happens, fair play points will be considered. If they all have the same points, then a draw will be used.</u>

Extract 116 underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

Ahmed's reply	Translation
<u>هذي مو اسمها حظ فقط...هذي شخصية و عقلية فريق لا يستطيع امتلاكها كل نادي.. هذا شيء لا يستطيع فهمه من لا يملكه.</u>	<u>It is not called luck... this a personality and a mentality that not every team has. This cannot be understood if you do not have it.</u>

In Extract 116, Ahmed replied to one user who wrote that some football teams have a great history because they are lucky. Ahmed replied by writing in CA **هذي مو اسمها** (It is not called luck) then switched to SA to explain how these teams became great. Ahmed in this post plays the role of a well-educated person because he used some expressions in SA (e.g. **هذا شيء لا يستطيع فهمه من لا يملكه.**) that normally used by intellectuals when they talk in TV shows (Albirini, 2016).

4.4.7.2. Switching to CA

The analysis showed that Ahmed switched from Fus'ha to CA for criticising or insulting someone. In Extract 117, Ahmed was replying to a journalist who mentioned that the coach of Al-Etihad would be the coach of the national team of Argentina at the same time.

Extract 117 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Ahmed's reply	Translation
مجرد التداخل اساءة في حق الاتحاد...المفروض رئيس النادي يأدبه و يعلمه قيمة الاتحاد.	<u>Coaching the two teams is an insult to Al-Etihad...</u> the club manager should punish him and teach him to respect AL-Etihad.

Ahmed replied by writing in SA that this an insult to Al-Etihad, then switched to CA by writing المفروض رئيس النادي يأدبه و يعلمه قيمة الاتحاد (the club manager should punish him and teach him to respect AL-Etihad.). This expression (النادي يأدبه و يعلمه قيمة) is normally used by people in Saudi Arabia when they want to criticise someone.

Extract 118 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Ahmed's reply	Translation
أعتقد أنني قلت بأنها قضية كل شريف فقط .. ولم أعمم .. انت ايش مضايقتك؟	<u>I think that I said it is the case of honourable people only.</u> What does bother you?

The same pattern can be seen in Extract 118 when Ahmed switched to CA to insult another user. The context is related to Ahmed's tweet in Extract 6 when he wrote (Your case is the case of all honourable individuals from all religions and ethnicities). Another user replied that this is not his case and he does not care about Palestine. Ahmed wrote (أعتقد أنني قلت بأنها قضية كل شريف فقط ولم أعمم) (I think that I said it is the case of honourable people only) then switched to CA to write (انت ايش مضايقتك؟) (What does bother you?) to imply that this user is not an honourable person.

Ahmed also switched to CA to insult another user in Extract 119. The context is related to a discussion between Ahmed and another user about slavery in Islam. Ahmed wrote a tweet to say that he did not agree with that user’s claim that slavery is not forbidden in Islam. Then, that user asked Ahmed to explain why he thinks that slavery is not allowed in Islam. Ahmed wrote in SA that it is not his job to teach him and that a word to the wise is enough. Then, he switched to CA to introduce the word “ماش”, which is a word used by some Saudi individuals to express his disappointment in something or someone. Ahmed used this word to insult that user by implying that this user is not wise. Overall, the use of a word like “ماش” that is normally associated with Saudi people could be viewed as a sign of Ahmed’s Saudi identity.

Extract 119 underlined= SA; regular font= CA

Ahmed’s reply	Translation
<p><u>لست معني بتعليمك.. هذا دورك. الحر تكفيه</u> <u>الإشارة لكن ماش.</u></p>	<p><u>It is not my job to teach you. This your job. A</u> <u>word to the wise is enough... but you are not.</u></p>

Finally, the following statement is Ahmed’s reply when I asked him about his attitude towards switching between SA and the CA:

Ahmed: I hate to use the spoken words with Fus’ha because I think writing in Fus’ha deserves respect. If I need to mix between them, I use Fus’ha with one word or two from Ammyah.

In order to understand this statement, we must consider the diglossic nature of Arabic (Ferguson, 1959). SA always holds a prestigious status as it is the language of the Quran, old literary works and the language of government’s high officials. In contrast, CA

is always viewed as the language of illiterate and uneducated individuals. The above description of the two varieties of Arabic looks similar to what Milroy (2001) identified as Standard Language Ideology. This includes regarding SA as a pure and correct variety of Arabic, and that CA is a corrupted form of Arabic (Hoigilt, 2018). Based on that, it is assumed that writing is only acceptable in SA, and that writing in CA is inappropriate. (Kindt & Kebede, 2017). In fact, articles written in CA are less likely to be accepted by most Arab magazines and newspapers (Hoigilt, 2018). Therefore, one might argue that this ideology could lead Ahmed to believe that switching between the two varieties is unrespectable because it means combining SA with the corrupted form of Arabic (CA). It is important to say that Ahmed also mentioned that it is only acceptable if only one word or two from CA is used with Fus'ha. This accords with his linguistic practices in his Twitter account. If we look carefully at most of the posts written both in SA and CA, we will find that the whole tweet was written in SA, and only one expression or a short sentence was written in CA.

4.4.8. Notes on Ahmed's online identities

The analysis revealed that Ahmed uses all his linguistic repertoires to construct different macro and micro-level identities in his Twitter account. Nevertheless, the analysis also showed some significant points regarding Ahmed's local identity and his identity as a PhD student in an English-speaking environment.

Regarding Ahmed's local identity, it can be argued that Ahmed did not perform any specific local identity. That is to say that while we can claim that some participants

(e.g. Muna) construct one local identity (Hejazi identity), we cannot have the same claim about Ahmed. In other words, over the whole period of observation, there is no record of any use of some words and expressions that are used exclusively in any region of Saudi Arabia. One possible reason for that is the fact that Ahmed lived in different parts of Saudi Arabia:

Ahmed: I don't feel that I have the closest variety to me... because I was born in the south, raised in Jeddah, and now I work in Riyadh... all these varieties don't matter to me ...I use all of them.

In terms of Ahmed's identity as an Arab PhD student who is studying in an English-speaking country, it could be said that this identity is not fully reflected in tweets posted by Ahmed. That is to say that there is no regular use of linguistic practices that are normally associated with Arab students in the United Kingdom such as CS between Arabic and English. Over the whole period of observation, it was found that only 4 tweets that were composed in Arabic and English out of 276 tweets posted by Ahmed. Also, there is no mention of anything regarding his situation as a PhD student or about his PhD project. When I asked Ahmed about his explanation of the lack of reflection of this identity in his Twitter account, he made the following statement:

Ahmed: I do not like to share my personal information because Twitter is not like Facebook because on Facebook you have people that you know... but on Twitter, you will write to people that don't know them.

To understand the previous statement, we should consider the major difference between Facebook and Twitter in terms of the nature of friendship. That is to say that

the owner of the account must accept someone's request before he or she becomes a friend on Facebook. Hence, it is expected that most of the names listed under friends list in Facebook will be people that have some social relationship with the owner of the account (Dijck, 2013). In contrast, anyone can follow the account of anyone on Twitter, which might lead that the post can be seen by many people even if they do not have a personal relationship with the author of the post. Therefore, Ahmed mentioned that he prefers not to share personal information with people he does not know them in real life.

4.4.9. Mobility

After exploring Ahmed's online linguistic practices in his Twitter account, I found that Ahmed posted 41 tweets in English. The question is whether posting in English is encouraged by living in an English-speaking country or not. The following statement is Ahmed's reply when I asked him if he had noticed any change in terms of his online linguistic practices before and after studying in the UK:

Ahmed: I hadn't used Twitter before arriving to study here... frankly, I have no idea.

This statement did not provide us with any information about the impact of mobility on his online practices. Thus, I decided to ask Ahmed about his online linguistic practices on other social media platforms such as Facebook. The next statement is his response to this question:

Ahmed: I used English on Facebook before studying in the UK, and I remember that I wrote in English when I used to participate in the Internet forum when I was in Saudi Arabia.

Based on this statement, it can be concluded that there is no immediate obvious

impact of living in the UK on Ahmed's linguistic practices, at least according to what Ahmed recalls regarding his practices over time.

Another piece of evidence is that the findings did not report any strong sign for this impact on his online linguistic practices. Let us think about his reply when I asked him about switching between Arabic and English in his daily life:

Ahmed: Yes, especially in my case with my daughter who lives here with me. Also, when I talk with my Arab friends who are not good at Arabic ... I have to use some English words.

This answer showed that CS between English and Arabic is a normal practice for Ahmed because he uses it in communication with his daughter and his friends. Nevertheless, there is an almost complete absence of CS between Arabic and English in tweets posted by Ahmed. It was found that only 4 tweets that were composed in Arabic and English out of 276 tweets posted by Ahmed over the whole period of observation. Overall, considering the previously mentioned points, it can be argued that mobility in a study abroad setting does not have a significant impact on how Ahmed uses his linguistic repertoires in his Twitter account.

4.5. Ali and Fahad

While a total of 209 tweets and replies were posted by Ali, only 174 tweets and replies were posted by Fahad during the whole period of observation. Tables 4.8 show the language choice in tweets composed by Ali and Fahad.

The variety/ varieties used	Ali	Fahad
CA only	126	82
SA only	35	51
English only	29	12
SA + CA	5	14
Arabic +English	2	3
Arabizi	1	-
Other languages	2 (French)	-
Borrowed words from English	3	9
Emoji-only	6	3
Total	209	174

Table 4.8. Language choice in tweet posted by Ali and Fahad

The table indicates that the linguistic practices of Ali and Fahad seem almost similar to the other three participants. However, it can be seen from the table that Ali posted some tweets in a language other than Arabic and English which was French. Ali told me that he posted French because he was in France at the time of these tweets. Also, the table shows that Fahad did not use Arabizi, Ali posted only one tweet that included the use of Arabizi. I explain the linguistic practices in the following sections.

4.5.1. The use of CA

CA was the most used variety for posting by Ali and Fahad. They used CA in informal situations and friendly conversation where the topic of the tweets is not serious.

Extract 120 is Ali's reply to a tweet by another user who wrote that AL-Etihad was playing better with the previous coach. Then, Ali replied by asking that user to shut up with the use of [slightly smiling face] emoji. It could be argued that the purpose of using this emoji is to soften the meaning of the tweet to avoid being misunderstood by that user (Danesi, 2016). In other words, Ali wanted to indicate that he was not serious and just wanted to tease that user. It is important to say that by posting many tweets to talk about Al-Etihad , Ali presents himself as a supporter and a big fan of Al-Etihad football club.

Extract 120 (Ali)

Ali's reply	Translation
 بالله اهجد	Shut up for the God sake 

Extract 121 (Fahad)

Fahas's reply	Translation
كل ما احاول اصفي النية مع بعض الربيع...يخلونني اتحسف  اباليس مو ربيع 	Whenever I try to be good with some of my friends, they force me to regret  they are devils not friends 

Similarly, Fahd wrote the funny tweet in Extract 121 to complain about the bad influence of his friends. We can see that he also included four faces with tears of joy emoji to show that this tweet is intended to be funny. Furthermore, the use of [see-no-

evil monkey] at the end of the tweet could be understood as an amusing demonstration of his confused feeling towards his friends.

By posting plenty of funny tweets, Ali and Fahad present themselves as a humorous individuals on their Twitter accounts. This can be supported, for example, by Ali's answer when I asked him about his purpose for using Twitter:

Ali: to be honest, most of my time I use Twitter...to know about the news and see what is written by your friends and try to have fun with them.

It might be logical to say that the extensive use of the CA in tweets posted by Ali and Fahad can be a sign of their national identity because many Arabs think that CA represents a local, national identity (Albirini, 2016). Ali and Fahad also construct their national identities through participating in many hashtags about the national days of their countries, and through posting pictures of Kings of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. These pictures can be a symbolic act of presenting their national (Hallajow, 2016). This aspect of identity is also constructed by Ali through his use of some words and expressions that are normally used in Saudi Arabia such as “*ياالله صباح خير*” (Oh God, I wish a good morning) which is an expression normally used by individuals in the Saudi culture if they want to express that they are facing a bad morning. It is essential to note that we cannot say the same thing about Fahad. Although that he showed his positive feelings about Bahraini Arabic (***it's the variety used by my family... and I have been speaking it since I was a child***), it was not possible to identify any word or expression that is associated by Bahraini people. The reason for that is that Bahraini Arabic is similar to other CA varieties in the

Gulf Aria like Kuwaiti Arabic or the variety used in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia. For example, when Fahad wrote **جدامك** (in front of you) in one of his tweets, he wrote that word in the same way that people in these areas (Kuwait, Bahrain and eastern region of Saudi Arabia) pronounce the word **قدامك**. The sound (q) is normally replaced by the sound (j) by these people. This can be supported by his response when I asked about the variety of Arabic that he uses daily:

Fahad: I use Bahraini Arabic, which is similar to the variety used in the eastern province in Saudi Arabia.

In terms of regional identity, Ali constructs a macro level of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) which is his Hejazi identity through the use of some words and expressions that are used exclusively in the region of Al-Hejaz. For example, Ali used the expression **”حقنا ياهو”**, which is an expression used in the major cities of Hejaz such as Makkah and Medina to talk about something they are passionate about. In another situation, he used **”اما كذا”**, which is an expression used by Hejazi individuals to indicate that they are surprised or amazed about something. This can be backed by his answer when he was asked about the closest variety to him:

Ali: Hejazi Arabic because I was born in Hejaz.

In terms of their attitudes, Ali and Fahad showed some kind of positive attitudes towards posting in CA as can be seen in the following two statements:

Ali: I like it... because most of my followers are Arabs, if I write in Ammyah they will understand me. It's easier to use Ammyah.

Fahad: Ammyah is a communication tool. It enables you to reach a particular audience. If you write in Ammyah, you will attract their attention.

4.5.2. The use of SA

Ali and Fahad used SA for posting religious texts like verses from the Quran or a religious supplication in some religious occasions as can be seen in Extracts 122 and 123.

Extract 122 (Fahad)

The tweet	Translation
 كل عام وانتم بخير وتقبل الله طاعتكم	A happy new year and may God accept your obedience 

Extract 123(Ali)

The tweet	Translation
#يومعرفة# الله اكبر الله اكبر	#Arafah Day Allah is the greatest. Allah is the greatest

It can be said that using SA to post religious supplications and participate in hashtag posting about some Islamic could be seen to enact the religious identity of Ali and Fahad. This is the result of the strong relationship between SA and Islam, as it is always believed that SA is the closest living variety to Quranic Arabic (Albirini, 2016).

Analysing the data shows that Fahad also used SA in some of his tweet to present a thoughtful comment. For example, Fahad used SA in Extract 124 wrote a tweet to motivate his followers. This could help to construct his identity as a well-educated person (Albirini, 2016).

Extract 124 (Fahad)

The tweet	Translation
اغتنم الفرصه ولا تتردد .. فغداً ستندم على جميع الفرص	Do not hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity.. Tomorrow you will regret all these opportunities

Extract 125 (Ali)

The tweet	Translation
لا شكر علي واجب	No thanks on duty

The analysis also reveals that Ali used SA when he wanted to reply to a tweet written by a religious or a well-educated user in a formal exchange. Extract 125 is a reply to a tweet written in Fus'ha by one of the leaders of a voluntary association who was thanking Ali for his participation in one of their events. Ali used SA in this tweet because he was replying to a well-educated and formal person. When I asked Ali in the second interview about the reasons for replying in Fus'ha in some of his tweets, he said:

Ali: *These are formal conversations. The tweet was written in Fus'ha. I have to show them some respect, and if I don't use Fus'ha, maybe they will ignore me. You know the officials in the government are strict.*

This statement shows that SA is used by Ali if he wants to reply to a religious, formal or a well-educated person. This indicates a kind of association between SA and formal situations and formal people to show some kind of respect. This could be the result of the impact of certain language ideologies regarding SA among Arab individual such as

its prestigious status (Albirini, 2016; Anderson, 2006; Bassiouney, 2015), and its association with authority (Bassiouney, 2012) because it is the language of the government's high officials.

It was found that SA was deployed by Fahad to present the participant's pan-Arab identity. This could be reinforced by his statement in the interview when asked about the main condition for being an Arab:

R: *What makes you an Arab?*

Fahad: *Language is the main thing. If one has Arab parents and doesn't speak Arabic, it's not correct to consider him or her an Arab.*

However, Ali expressed that he has a different opinion. Although he agreed that Fus'ha is the native language of Arabic, he pointed out that there is no relation between being an Arab and speaking Arabic. In contrast, Ali mentioned that the use of CA can be a sign of being an Arab:

Ali: *If someone has Arab parents and doesn't speak Arabic, I consider him or her an Arab because it might be because the parents are immigrants. It has nothing to do with the language. If he or she is not an Arab, he tries to use Fus'ha. If he or she uses Ammyah, he or she is an Arab.*

While the other participants highlighted the linguistic factor, the first part of Ali's statement stresses the significance of the ethnic dimension of the word Arab. The basic idea of this dimension is that a person is considered as an Arab if his or her parents are Arabs even if he or she cannot speak Arabic (Webb, 2016). This is because many

individuals from different Arab countries travelled to live in the western world and have children who might not have the ability to speak Arabic. According to Ali, these children should also be considered as Arabs even if they do not speak Arabic. The second part of the statement can be understood if we consider the fact that SA is learned in school, and CA is learned naturally through the interaction inside the family (Hoigilt, 2018). Therefore, according to Ali, using CA might be a sign that a person is an Arab because it indicates that this person acquired CA since early childhood. In contrast, because most non-Arab individuals learn SA if they want to learn Arabic, the use of SA only might indicate that he or she is not an Arab.

Regarding the attitude towards posting in SA, Fahad expressed that he has a positive attitude towards this practice:

Fahad: I like if someone writes in Fus'ha. because this is the original Arabic... it's the right Arabic.

It can be said that Fahad's statement indicates that his positive attitude towards SA is the result of the language ideology which regards SA as a pure and correct variety of Arabic, and that CA is a corrupted form of Arabic (Hoigilt, 2018).

In contrast, Ali in the first interview expressed some kind of negative attitudes towards posting in SA:

Ali: I can't use it.

R: Why?

Ali: I feel it's hard to be used. It's not wrong. But you know your friends will criticise you and are pretending to be a teacher. That's why I try to avoid using it.

Despite this opinion about the use of SA in his tweets, Ali wrote some tweets in SA. When I asked him about that in the second interview, he provided the following explanation:

Ali: *All these verses from the Quran or Hadith, and these can't be written in Ammyah. I mean if I want to write something to my friend, I am not going to use Fus'ha.*

What can be understood from Ali's two statements above is that Ali has a negative attitude towards posting in SA when communicating with his friends. This can be related to the role and status of SA in social life as the language of officials and formal situations.

4.5.3. The use of English

Analysing the linguistic practices of Ali and Fahad reveal that English is mostly used when they wanted to present a quotation or a famous English saying as can be seen in Extracts 126 and 127 respectively. Also, they replied in English to tweets written in English regardless of the tweet was written by Arab or non-Arab user. This might indicate the impact of other users' linguistic choices on the participants' linguistic practices.

Extract 126 (Ali)

Sometimes you forgive people simply because you still want them in your life (According).

Extract 127 (Fahad)

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it".

--Toni Morrison

I wish one day I can start writing my book

Besides the reasons discussed above, Fahd in the interview provided another reason for posting in English:

Fahad: *I use English sometimes when I need to reply to false news about my country.*

Basically, Fahd in this statement mentioned that he sometimes posts in English to defend his country (Bahrain). This is exactly what can be seen in Extract 128 when Fahd wrote this post to celebrate that Bahrain became a member of the human rights organisation. He wrote this tweet because he wanted to defend his country against some activists who used to attack Bahrain's records in terms of human rights especially in London. This indicates that because he was targeting the non-Arab audience, posting this tweet in English would be more appropriate. Posting some tweets to defend his governments could help to construct his national identity.

Extract 128 (Fahad)

Despite the smear campaign of Bahrain's reputation especially in London, Bahrain won the membership of human rights with 165 votes from 192 votes. When enemies will understand they cannot change the truth [#Bahrain](#) [#Saudi Arabia](#) [#UAE](#)

According to Sinatora (2019) and Leppänen and Peuronen (2012), language choice in an online setting can be a strategy for expressing a person's multilingual identity. Therefore, The use of English could be seen to enact these two participants' multilingual identities as as Arab students in an English-speaking country who use in English daily in their offline practices.

In terms of their attitudes towards posting in English, Ali expressed that he has a positive attitude towards writing in English on Twitter:

Ali: I like it...and I encourage that because I understand English... and I will be happy if one of my friends uses English when he o she posts.

This could be the result of that English is viewed positively in the Arab world because it is usually associated with knowledge, globalization, and prestige (Albirini, 2016).

In contrast, Fahad expressed that he has a negative attitude posting in English:

Fahad: I don't like that if the majority of your followers are Arabs and they don't speak English. It's better to use Arabic.

This statement indicates that the main reason for him to avoid posting many tweets in English is that the majority of his followers are Arabs who might not be able to understand English.

4.5.4. The use of emoji

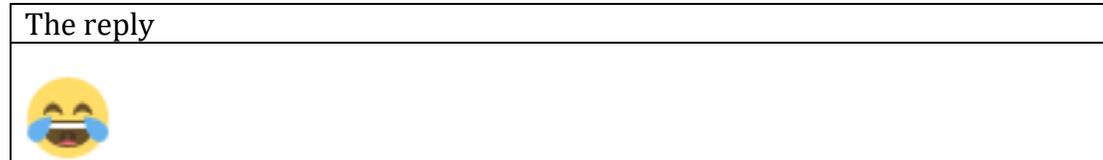
After examining all tweets posted Ali and Fahad during the whole period of observation, it was found that they used emoji in addition to the written texts. The analysis revealed that the majority of emoji occur in cases where emoji were used as an addition to the texts.

They used emoji to express their feelings when they write their tweets or to be nice with their followers. For example, the following statement is Ali's reply when I asked him about his use of emoji in his tweets:

Ali: they are signs for expressions.... For example... 😞 if I did not like something... 😊 for if I want to go along with someone... I use it sometimes because I want to avoid saying bad things.

It can be said that this statement made by Ali might indicate that he used emoji to be nice with his followers. Danesi (2016) mentioned that people in many cases rely on emoji to soften their statements to avoid being misunderstood by other people in online communication.

Extract 129

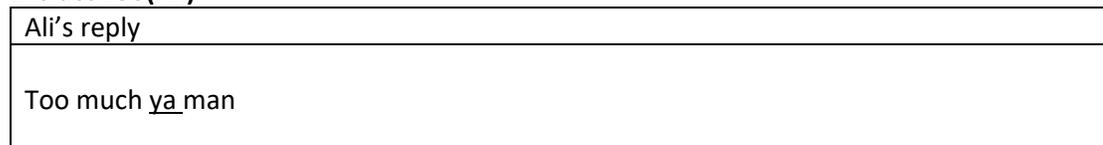


Besides the use of emoji with the texts, there are cases of using emoji without any written language. This what Evans (2017) calls the substitution function of emoji when the individuals use emoji instead of writing something. The majority of these cases involve using laughter emoji as a reply to indicate Ali or Fahad is laughing as can be seen in Extract 129.

4.5.5. Arabizi

While Fahad did not post any a tweet that included the use of Arbizi, Ali used Arabizi in only one tweet. Consider the following extract:

Extract 130(Ali)



In this tweet, Ali replied to a major Saudi company that sells phones and laptops. They posted a tweet that included an offer for iPhone X. Then, Ali replied by writing “**too much ya man**”. We can see that the Arabic word (يا) was written in English letters. Ali

mentioned in the interview that this is a translation for the Arabic expression **كثير جدا يا رجل** (too much ...man). Ali also pointed out in the second interview that he used this expression because other users tend to use it:

Ali: *Actually when I first came here, I found that my Arab friends use (Ya man) which means in Arabic يا رجل (man). So, I started to use it.*

Ali's reply suggests that his use of Arabizi in this tweet is because of the popularity of this practice among his friends. This seems to be in agreement with the findings of Al-Jarf (2010) and (Yaghan, 2008) who found that some Arab Internet users consider the use of Arabizi as fun and trendy in communicating with other users.

In terms of the attitudes towards the use of Arabizi, both Ali and Fahad hold negative attitudes towards this practice:

Ali: *I criticise that... you are mixing between Arabic and English..and numbers... it doesn't make sense.*

Fahad: *I don't support that. There is no point in ruining the two languages because a user considers it as a style.*

It can be concluded from these statements that Ali and Fahad did not like posting in Arabizi because it is a ruined could ruin Arabic and English. Yaghan (2008) explained that his participants did not like Arabizi as it, according to them, could ruin the Arabic language.

4.5.6. Borrowing

The analysis of tweets posted by Ali and Fahad revealed that there are some cases when they write English words using the Arabic letters such as (بلوك) for block, (ابليكشن) for application or (بلايستيشن) for Play station. Since these words were used usually by the participants in a way that follows the rules of Arabic grammar and spelling, they can be considered as cases of borrowing (Callahan, 2004). Most Arab Internet users are familiar with these words because these words are products of the new development in information technology.

4.5.7. Arabic and English

The findings showed that Ali and Fahad switched between Arabic and English. The analysis showed that Ali switched to English to introduce academic terms or expressions. Extract 131 is Ali's reply to one of his friends who posted a thought about friendship. Then, Ali posted this reply to indicate that his friend is not the original author of this tweet.

Extract 131(Ali)

The reply	Translation
تراه plagiarism حط المصدر على الاقل 	This is plagiarism...mention the source at least 

We can see that the whole tweet was written in Arabic except the academic term 'plagiarism' which was written in English. It can be said that Ali's use of this academic term in English could be the result of that this word was introduced to him in English only.

This can be supported by Ali's own explanation in the second interview regarding his use of 'plagiarism':

Ali: ...Frankly, when I came to the UK, I started to learn the concept of plagiarism... I learned it in English

In terms of Fahad, he switched to English to write **NBA** (American National Basketball Association) like what can be seen in Extract 132. Here, the main reason for writing the NBA could be that it is easier than writing the Arabic name which is (دوري كرة) (السلة الامريكي) as evident in Fahad's statement:

Fahad: I think writing NBA is easy because there is no abbreviation in Arabic... if I write (دوري كرة السلة الامريكي), it will take time.

Extract 132(Fahad)

The tweet	Translation
انتهى الشوط الاول 56-56 .. فعلا اجمل مباراة في نهائي ال NBA	The result of the first half is 56-56.. it is indeed the best final of the NBA

It can be said that by posting many tweets about games and news about NBA (American National Basketball Association), Fahad presents the identity of a big fan of the NBA.

Extract 133(Fahad)

The tweet	Translation
مانشستر تصدح بهاي الغنية نص نهائي ناري	Its coming home .. Manchester is singing this song.. it will be an exciting semi-final

Fahad also switched from English to Arabic to explain what he wrote in English as can be seen in Extract 133. This tweet was posted after England won against during the World Cup 2018 in Russia. Fahad wrote “Its coming home “⁶ and then switched to Arabic to explain that the English fans in Manchester are singing that song which indicates that they hopefully predict that England would win the World Cup.

Regarding the attitudes towards CS between Arabic and English, while Ali said that this practice might be only acceptable if the person uses one or two English words with the Arabic post, Fahad said that this practice can lead to unwanted meaning:

Ali: *Maybe it's ok if it's in one word or two...but if all that you write are mixed... there is no point... it does not feel right because people will not understand you.*

Fahad: *there is no point in doing that... if I don't speak English, the sentence will be incomplete... hard to understand. And if I speak English and don't speak Arabic, the sentence will be incomplete... which leads to unwanted meaning, and then a problem... so, it's better to avoid that.*

This negative attitude towards CS between Arabic and English could be the result of language ideology among some Arab individuals that CS between a foreign language and Arabic is a corrupt form of Arabic (Hussein, 1999; Saidat, 2010) as it is a language without roots or grammatical rules.

4.5.8. Switching from CA to SA

While the analysis revealed that Ahmed did not switch from CA to SA, the analysis also revealed that there are two patterns for this practice in Ali's tweets. The first one

⁶ This is how it was written by Fahad.

when Ali switched from CA to Fus’ha to use formulaic expressions. According to Wray (2002, p. 9), a formulaic expression may be defined as “a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use”. These include expressions such as “خير جزاك الله كل” (May God reward you well) and “ان شاء الله” (if Good Willed) (Albirini, 2011). An example when Ali wrote something in CA and then switched to SA to write the expression (ان شاء الله). This agrees with the findings of Albirini (2011) who found that his participants switch to SA to use formulaic expressions. These are mostly religious expressions that are viewed positively by the majority of Arab people because of “their association with piety and God-consciousness” (Albirini, 2011, p. 541). The second one is when Ali switched from CA to SA to introduce a direct quotation as can be seen in Extract 134. Ali started the tweet by CA then he switched to SA by introducing a Prophetic saying (من حسن اسلام المرء تركه مالا يعنيه) (A part of someone’s being a good Muslim, is leaving alone that which does not concern him). This is also similar to the finding of Albirini (2011) who found that switching to SA occurs in some cases for the sake of introducing direct quotations.

Extract 134 (Ali) underlined= SA; regular font= Hejazi Arabic

The tweet	Translation
<p>أتمنى بعض الناس تفهم (من حسن اسلام المرء تركه مالا يعنيه) وبس والله امنيتك عام 2019</p>	<p>I hope that some people understand (A part of someone’s being a good Muslim, is leaving alone that which does not concern him) and that’s it</p> <p># your wish 2019</p>

4.5.9. Switching from SA to CA

The analysis revealed that Ali did not switch from SA to CA in his tweets. In contrast, Fahad switched from SA to CA when he wanted to be sarcastic with his followers. For example, Fahad in the following tweet (Extract 135) wrote a statement about leadership in SA and then switched to CA by writing “موظفينكم لتلوعون جيد” which means a funny way of saying (don’t make the life of your employees miserable). This can be supported by the fact that Fahad used a group of funny emoji. This could help to construct his identity as a humorous person in his Twitter account.

Extract 135 (Fahad) underlined= SA; regular font= CA

The tweet	Translation
<p>معلومة للناس العجيبة... القيادة هي فن ، ألهام ، <u>تشجيع ، دعم من القائد الى الموظف .. يعني لتلوعون</u>  جبد موظفينكم</p>	<p><u>Information for the strange people ... Leadership is an art, inspiration, encouragement, support from the leader to the employee ... it means don't make the life of your employees miserabl</u></p> 

In addition to these patterns, the analysis found that Ali and Fahad in some cases used both varieties of Arabic in the same tweet in a dynamic way to the extent that it is difficult to identify patterns associated with switching from one variety to another. These cases can be considered examples of translanguaging. Consider the following examples:

Extract 136 (Ali) underlined= SA; regular font= CA

The tweet	Translation
مساء الخير بس حاب استفسرا اذا في شخص اختبر الاختبار التحريري لوظيفة مساعد مهندس في الجامعة و شكرا مقدما @	Name @ <u>good evening..</u> but I want to know <u>if there is someone who took the written exam for the engineering job in the university.. and thanks</u>

Extract 137 (Fahad) underlined= SA; regular font= CA

The tweet	Translation
ويما ان شووت راعي رسمي للبطولة ليش ماتبتدي تطرح تذاكر مجانيه بصوره تجريبية لاعتمادها الموسم القادم والتذاكر يكون فيها شعار الرعاة .. منها راح تساعد في ان تبين لنا عدد صحيح ورسمي للجمهور ومنها تسويق للرعاة.. راح تساعدنا بتنظيم نفسنا للموسم الياي وتبقى وجهة نظر	<u>And since Shoot is an official sponsor of the tournament,</u> why don't they start <u>offering free tickets as a trial in the next season,</u> and tickets will <u>have the sponsors 'logo .. it will help to show us a valid and official number for the audience,</u> and <u>promote the sponsors .. It will help us organise ourselves for the season.. it is only an opinion</u>

These examples indicate that translanguaging can exist in their tweets because words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic were used in a fluid way by them. This can be backed, for example, by the following statement by Ali which indicates the fluidity of and the blurry boundaries between different varieties of Arabic:

Ali: I frankly did not differentiate between Fus'ha and Ammyah... I sometimes use a word and consider it as Ammyah although it is Fus'ha.

4.5.10. Mobility

Ali pointed that there is an impact of living in the UK on their linguistic practices on Twitter:

Ali: Yeah... because before I arrived in Britain, I was not good and English, and my followers were Arabs. Now, I can speak English and ...also have non-Arab friends.

The impact of mobility can be supported by considering that Ali posted many tweets in English. Ali explained that living in the UK helped them to improve their English. This enabled Ali to post some of his tweets in English.

In terms of Fahad, he confirmed that living in the UK affected their online linguistic practices:

Fahad: I started to post in English in the beginning of my Master's course. I did not post in English before living in the UK because I did not have non-Arab friends on Twitter.

Nevertheless, the findings did not report any strong evidence for this impact on his online linguistic practices because only small numbers of English tweets posted by him over the whole period of observation. This suggests that living in the UK does not have an impact on his online linguistic practices.

4.6. Cross-case Analysis

In this section, I present a detailed analysis of the similarities and the differences between the participants in terms of their linguistic practices.

4.6.1. The use of CA

The findings showed that CA was used by all the participants to write their tweets. The following table (4.9) demonstrates the total number of tweets posted in CA by each participant. The last column (order of preference) refers to the order of using CA over the use of other varieties.

The participants	Number of CA tweets	The total number of tweets	percentage	Order of preference
Muna	170	422	40.4%	1 st
Yasser	149	228	65.3%	1 st
Ahmed	28	276	10.1%	4 th
Ali	126	209	60.2%	1 st
Fahad	82	174	47.1%	1 st

Table 4.9.: Total number of tweets written in CA by each participant

Looking at the table, it can be noticed that CA was the most preferred variety for posting by four participants (Muna, Yasser, Ali, and Fahad). The only exception is Ahmed who posted only 28 tweets (10.1% of his total) in CA which makes it fourth in his order of the preference after SA, English and mixing between SA and CA.

In terms of motivation for the use of CA, it seems that all the participants used CA in situations where the topic of the tweets is not serious. This can be supported by the fact that most of these funny tweets included the use of funny emoji. According to Danesi (2016), emoji are usually used in informal messages to add a sarcastic tone, and they are rarely used if the tone is serious.

Overall, the use of CA by these participants in informal conversations goes in the same line with the findings of (Albirini, 2016). It can be claimed that is the result of the common ideology among many Arab individuals that CA should be mainly used in informal or friendly conversation or joking.

In terms of their attitudes, all the participants showed some kind of positive attitudes towards posting in CA because of it's the variety they use to project their local identities (Albirini, 2016), in addition to its role in positive social communication (Saidat, 2010).

4.6.2. The use of SA

The analysis revealed that all the participants wrote many tweets in SA. Table 4.10 demonstrates the total number of tweets posted in SA by each participant.

The participants	Number of SA tweets	The total number of tweets	percentage	Order of preference
Muna	134	422	31.7%	2 nd
Yasser	38	228	16.6%	2 nd
Ahmed	157	276	56.8%	1 st
Ali	35	209	16.7%	2 nd
Fahad	51	174	29.3/%	2 nd

Table 4.10.: Total number of tweets written in SA by each participant

The table shows the high presence of SA as it was the preferred variety for posting by Ahmed and the second preferred variety of the other participants. The analysis revealed that there are three major functions for posting in SA. First, the participants used SA for posting religious texts like verses from the Quran or a religious supplication in some

religious occasions. In general, the reason for posting these texts is that the majority of these tweets were written in the time of some Islamic occasions like Eid. This can be supported, for example, by the use of red rose emoji which is sometimes used to give a sense of celebration (Al Rashdi, 2015). Therefore, it would be more suitable to post these religious texts SA in this context.

Analysing the data shows that the second context in which the participants use SA is characterised by the desire to present a thoughtful comment. This was done particularly by Muna, Ahmed, and Fahad. In all these tweets, they wrote advice or wise comments which were all written in SA. This could be the result of language ideology which indicates that SA is the language of education and sophistication (Albirini, 2016; Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959; Hoigilt, 2018). Therefore, it would be more appropriate to write these pieces of advice or comments in SA if the writer wants to be taken seriously by other Arab users of Twitter.

The third pattern is when the participants (especially Ali and Yasser) wanted to reply to a tweet written by a religious or a well-educated user in a formal exchange. Both Ali and Yasser mentioned that SA is used if they want to reply to a religious, formal or a well-educated person. This indicates a kind of association between SA and formal situations and formal people to show some kind of respect. This could be the result of the impact of certain language ideologies regarding SA among Arab individuals. For instance, SA always holds a prestigious status because it is associated with Islam (Albirini, 2016; Anderson, 2006; Bassiouney, 2015). Besides, many Arab individuals associate SA with knowledge and linguistic superiority (Haeri, 2003), and with authority (Bassiouney, 2012)

because it is the language of the government's high officials. One piece of evidence for the prestigious status of SA is the rare use of funny emoji in tweets written in SA by the participants.

Regarding participants' attitudes towards posting in SA, three of them (Yasser, Ahmed and Fahad) expressed they have positive attitudes towards this practice. These participants' reasons for positive attitudes revolve around language ideologies such as the belief that Fus'ha is a rich language (Brustad, 2017). Another important reason was mentioned by Yasser who thinks that SA should be used as a lingua franca in the Arab world. This is because some local varieties might not be easy to understand by all Arab individuals (Albirini, 2016; Chtatou, 1997; Embarki, Yeou, Guilleminot, & Al Maqtari, 2007). Therefore, Yasser thinks that the use of SA will facilitate communication between people from all Arab countries.

In contrast, Ali and Muna showed a negative attitude towards posting in SA when communicating with his friends. This can be related to the role and status of SA in social life as the language of officials and formal situations. The attitude of Muna and Ali towards posting in SA could be the result of that some people will make fun of individuals who use SA in casual conversation (Saidat, 2003).

4.6.3. The use of English

It was found that each one of the participants wrote some tweets in English. Table 4.11 presents the total number of tweets posted in English by each participant.

The participants	Number of English tweets	The total number of tweets	percentage
Muna	61	422	14.4%
Yasser	6	228	2.6%
Ahmed	41	276	14.8%
Ali	29	209	13.8%
Fahad	12	174	6.8%

Table 4.11.: Total number of tweets written in English by each participant

Analysing the linguistic practices of the participants reveal that English is mostly used when they wanted to present a quotation or a famous English saying. Also, they use English to reply to tweets written in English regardless of the tweet was written by Arab or non-Arab user. This might indicate the impact of other users' linguistic choices on the participants' linguistic practices.

In terms of their attitudes towards posting in English, the participants showed different patterns. While Ali expressed that he has a positive attitude towards writing in English on Twitter, the other four participants mentioned that their attitudes towards posting in English depend on the intended audience. To explain, they revealed that they would have positive attitudes if the post was written to non-Arab followers. In contrast, they would have a negative attitude if the tweet is written to Arab users. They indicated that the main reason for them to avoid posting many tweets in English is that the majority of their followers are Arabs who might not be able to understand English.

4.6.4. The use of emoji

After examining all tweets posted by the participants during the whole period of observation, it was found that all of them used emoji in addition to the written texts. The

analysis revealed that the majority of emoji occur in cases where emoji were used as an addition to the texts.

All the participants mentioned that they used emoji to express their feelings when they write their tweets. Ahmed also mentioned that emoji can help to deliver the exact intended meaning of the post. This correlates with Danesi (2016) who mentions that adding emoji to the text can help to avoid misunderstanding.

The participants	Number of emoji only tweets	The total number of tweets
Muna	1	422
Yasser	5	228
Ahmed	5	276
Ali	6	209
Fahad	3	174

Table4.12.: Total number of emoji-only tweets posted by each participant

Besides the use of emoji with the texts, there are cases of using emoji without any written language. This what Evans (2017) calls the substitution function of emoji when the individuals use emoji instead of writing something. As can be seen in Table 4.12, only a small number of emoji-only tweets were posted by all participants during the period of the observation. the majority of these cases involve using laughter emoji as a reply to indicate that the writer of the post is laughing. The only exception is Ahmed who showed an innovative use of emoji to replace the texts as evident in Extract 106, 107 and 108. This can also be described as a narrative sequence which is the use of a group of emoji to tell a story or say something (Herring & Dainas, 2017).

4.6.5. Arabizi

As can be seen in Table 4.13, the analysis revealed that there is no record of any use of Arabizi (writing Arabic words using Roman alphabets) in posts written by three participants (Yasser, Ahmed, and Fahad).

The participants	Number of Arabizi tweets	The total number of tweets
Muna	1	422
Yasser	-	228
Ahmed	-	276
Ali	1	209
Fahad	-	174

Table4.13.: Total number of Arabizi tweets posted by each participant

Only two participants (Muna, and Ali) wrote tweets that included the use of Arabizi. Both wrote Arabizi in only one tweet like when Muna wrote the word (insha allah) in extract 38. She explained that she used this word in that form because everyone knows this word even her non-Arab followers. In contrast, Ali pointed out his use of Arabizi is the result of the popularity of this practice among his friends. This seems is in agreement with the findings of Al-Jarf (2010) and (Yaghan, 2008) who found that some Arab Internet users consider the use of Arabizi as fun and trendy in communicating with other users.

In terms of the attitudes towards the use of Arabizi, it seems that there is agreement among the participants for having negative attitudes towards this practice even among those who used Arabizi (Muna and Ali) . It can be concluded that the participants did not like posting in Arabizi because it is a ruined could ruin Arabic and English. Yaghan (2008) explained that his participants did not like Arabizi as it, according to them, could ruin the Arabic language.

4.6.6. Borrowing

The analysis of tweets posted by the participants revealed that there are some cases when the participants wrote English words using the Arabic letters (e.g. منشن for mention, and هاشتاك for hashtag, الريتويت for retweet, (بلوك) for block, (ابليكشن) for application or (بلايستيشن) for Play station. All these words are originally from English although they were written in Arabic letters. Therefore, since these words were used usually by the participants in a way that follows the rules of Arabic grammar and spelling, they can be considered as cases of borrowing (Callahan, 2004). The majority of these words are products of the new development in information technology. Nowadays, most Arab Internet users are familiar with these words. Actually, these words are now famous to the extent that it is possible to be categorised under 'international code' as Salia (2011) suggested. Therefore, some Arabs might find that it would be much easier to write these words in Arabic letters than writing their Arabic equivalent, which might not be widely known among Arab individuals.

4.6.7. CS between Arabic and English

The findings showed that all the participants switched between Arabic and English. Nevertheless, looking at the numbers in table 4.14 above indicates that switching between Arabic and English is a rare practice in their posts.

The participants	switching between English and Arabic	The total number of tweets
Muna	5	422
Yasser	2	228
Ahmed	4	276
Ali	3	209
Fahad	3	174

Table 4.14.: Number of tweets that included cases of switching between Arabic and English

It might be logical to claim that language attitudes could be the main motivation for the participants to try to avoid writing many tweets that included CS between Arabic and English. This can be backed by participants' answers when I asked them about their attitudes towards this practice. To begin with, Yasser mentioned that he did not like this practice because, according to him, *(some people have a negative attitude towards that)*. The same negative attitude was expressed by Fahad who said that this practice can lead to unwanted meaning. In terms of Ali, he said that this practice might be only acceptable if the person uses one or two English words with the Arabic post. In general, it can be said that Yasser, Ali and Fahad showed negative attitudes towards this practice. This negative attitude could be the result of language ideology among some Arab individuals that CS between a foreign language and Arabic is a corrupt form of Arabic (Hussein, 1999; Saidat, 2010) as it is a language without roots or grammatical rules.

While Yasser, Ali and Fahd hold negative attitudes towards switching between Arabic and English, Ahmed and Muna expressed more tolerable attitudes towards this practice. In terms of Muna, she believes that this practice is acceptable in informal types of communication like Twitter despite her awareness that some Arab people have negative attitudes towards switching between Arabic and English *(I do that sometimes which makes people get angry. As I told you if it's informal, everyone has the freedom)*. In order to understand Muna's statement, we can use the concepts of dominant and emerging ideologies (Rampton & Holmes, 2019). The former refers to mainstream social beliefs about the language, and the latter, in contrast, refers to the ideologies that emerge as a result of practices. Her statement *(makes people get angry)* represents the dominant

ideology among Arab individuals about switching between Arabic and English. At the same time, when she said (*I do that sometime.....As I told you if it's informal, everyone has the freedom*) it can be considered as an ideology that emerges as a result of engaging with many posts that use switching between Arabic and English on Twitter. Hence, this ideology might be the main reason for Muna's positive attitude towards this practice. Similarly, the impact of this emerging ideology in the attitudes towards CS between Arabic and English can be also noted in Ahmed's statement (*I don't know... maybe because I always mix between Arabic and English especially when I use technical terms.*). We can also see that Ahmed in the statement mentioned that he switches to English if he does not know the exact Arabic equivalent of some English terms. This agrees with his online linguistic behaviour because analysing tweets posted by Ahmed indicates that switching in English occurred only when medical or scientific terms were introduced.

Another important point is related to the patterns for switching between Arabic and English. The first pattern is when the participants switched to English for introducing quotations. A perfect example would be Muna when she switched to English to write "**it's coming home**" in Extract 34 and Yasser when he wrote "**Dear Canada**" in Extract 71. In these two tweets, Muna and Yasser simply quoted a statement said by someone. Another reason for switching to English is to indicate personal emotions. This was done only by Muna in Extract 35 when she switched to English by writing "**so proud of you**" to convey her emotions towards her friend.

The analysis showed that some of the participants switched to English to introduce scientific terms or expressions. This was done by Muna when she switched to English

when she wrote ‘**voice mail**’ in tweets posted in Arabic. Similarly, Ahmed switched from Arabic to English to introduce the medical term ‘**cognitive hearing**’. The same thing was done by Ali who used the academic term ‘**plagiarism**’. This is because they do not know the Arabic equivalent, or they thought that the English term is more convenient than the Arabic term as evident in Muna’s use of ‘**the young adults**’ in extract 33. In other cases, the individual switches to mention an academic term in English could be the result of that this word was introduced to him in English only.

The analysis revealed that Fahad switched to English for reasons that are not similar to the reasons for switching by Muna, Yasser, Ahmed and Ali. First, Fahad in two tweets switched to English to write **NBA** (American National Basketball Association). This is because writing **NBA** is easier than writing the Arabic name which is (دوري كرة السلة) (الامريكي). Fahad also switched from English to Arabic to explain what he wrote in English as can be seen in Extract 132.

4.6.8. Switching from CA to SA

The analysis revealed that there are many cases of switching between SA and CA. Table 4.15 shows the number of tweets that included cases of switching between CA and SA.

The participants	switching between SA and CA	The total number of tweets
Muna	27	422
Yasser	20	228
Ahmed	36	276
Ali	4	209
Fahad	12	174

Table 4.15.: Number of tweets that included cases of switching between CA and SA

In terms of switching from CA to SA, three of the participants (Muna, Yasser and Ahmed) switched from CA to SA to take a pedantic stand assuming the role of a teacher or an expert who wants to teach his followers. While Fahad did not switch from CA to SA, the analysis also revealed that there are two patterns for this practice in Ali's tweets. The first one is when Ali switched from CA to Fus'ha to use formulaic expressions. The second one is when Ali switched from CA to SA to introduce a direct quotation as can be seen in Extract 133.

4.6.9. Switching from SA to CA

All the participants except Ali switched from SA to CA in their tweets. The analysis identified several reasons for the four participants to switch from SA to CA. To begin with, Yasser and Ahmed switched to CA for criticising or insulting someone. Moreover, for Muna and Fahad only, the switch occurred when they wanted to be sarcastic with their followers. Another reason for switching to CA which was done only by Yasser is to simplify and explain a particular idea.

4.6.10. Translanguaging

Translanguaging means the movement between different varieties and languages in a dynamic way to the extent that it might be difficult to find patterns for switching between languages or varieties (Wei, 2017). As shown in table 4.16, the analysis revealed that translanguaging was documented in tweets posted by all the participants except Ahmed. They in a few cases used words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic

with English words in highly fluid and dynamic ways to the extent that it is difficult to identify patterns associated with switching from one variety or dialect to another.

The participants	Translanguaging	The total number of tweets
Muna	2	422
Yasser	1	228
Ahmed	-	276
Ali	1	209
Fahad	2	174

Table 4.16.: Number of tweets that included cases of translanguaging

4.6.11. Identity

4.6.11.1. Pan-Arab identity

It was found that SA was deployed by the students to present the participant's pan-Arab identity. This could be reinforced by their statements in the interview when asked about the main condition for being an Arab. Muna, Yasser, Ahmed and Fahad mentioned that the ability to use SA is the main condition by which to be identified as an Arab. In terms of Ali, although he agreed that Fus'ha is the native language of Arabic, he pointed out that there is no relation between being an Arab and speaking Arabic. In contrast, Ali mentioned that a person is considered as an Arab if his or her parents are Arabs even if he or she cannot speak Arabic. Therefore, considering Ali's opinion and what the other participants said about the term "Arab" suggests the complexity of the terms.

Besides, we found that SA was deployed by Ahmed to construct his pan-Arab identity by presenting himself as a supporter of the Palestinian cause. This is because it

is believed that the Palestinian cause is an essential issue for most people across the Arab world.

4.6.11.2. The religious identity

The analysis indicates that all the five participants posted many tweets that included some religious supplications or religious sayings which were written in classic Arabic. This could be seen to enact the religious identity of the participants. This identity was also enacted through participation in hashtag posting about some Islamic events such as Eid and Ramadan. Hashtags can be used as a way of self-categorisation with a particular group (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). In that case, when a person participates in hashtags about an Islamic event, that person is trying to perform her or his association with other Muslims. It can be also noticed that participation in all these hashtags were all written in SA. This is because all these hashtags were about Islamic events, and therefore it would be more suitable to use SA in this context. This is the result of the strong relationship between SA and Islam, as it is always believed that SA is the closest living variety to Quranic Arabic.

4.6.11.3. The national identity and the local identity

A clear aspect of identity construction in the participants' Twitter account is the national identity. First, this was done through the extensive use of the CA in tweets posted by the five participants because many Arabs think that CA represents the national identity (Albirini, 2016). The participants also construct their national identities through participating in many hashtags about the national days of their countries, and through

posting pictures of Kings of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. These pictures can be a symbolic act of presenting their national (Hallajow, 2016). The analysis also revealed that some of the participants (Yasser and Fahad) posted many tweets to defend their governments against some allegations. This also could help to construct their national identity. This aspect of identity is also constructed through the use of some words and expressions that are normally used in Saudi Arabia as we explained before by Muna, Yasser, Ahmed and Ali. The use of these words and expressions could be seen to enact participants' national identities. It is essential to note that we cannot say the same thing about Fahad. Although that he showed his positive feelings about Bahraini Arabic, it was not possible to identify any word or expression that is associated by Bahraini people. One possible reason for the similarity between Bahraini Arabic and these varieties is that they are all used in areas that are close to each other around the Arabian Gulf.

In terms of local identity, the analysis indicates that only two of the participants performed their local identity. This was done particularly by Muna and Ali when they construct their Hejazi identity through the use of some words and expressions that are used exclusively in the region of Al-Hejaz. In terms of Yasser, although he mentioned that Hejazi Arabic is the closest variety to him, he did not post words and expressions that are used exclusively in the region of Al-Hejaz like what was found in Muna's and Ali's cases. Yasser explained in the second interview that he does not use these words because he wants his posts to be understood by all Twitter's users not only Hejazi followers. Finally, Ahmed is the only participant that he mentioned that he does not have any preferred variety because he lived in different parts of Saudi Arabia.

4.6.11.4. English and identity

The analysis indicates that English is deployed by the participants to construct different aspects of identity. One aspect of identity construction in the participants' Twitter account is a multilingual identity. According to Sinatora (2019) and Leppänen and Peuronen (2012), language choice in an online setting can be a strategy for expressing a person's multilingual identity. In that case, considering that the five participants mentioned that most of their followers are Arabs who share the same language (Arabic) with the participants, any use of another language (English) could help to construct their multilingual identities as individuals who can use another language beside Arabic. Thus, posting in English by the participants can be seen as a reflection of their multilingual identities as Arab students in an English-speaking country who use in English daily in their offline practices as they mentioned in the interview.

It was also found that Ahmed constructed his identity as a doctor through CS between Arabic and English when he wrote some medical terms in English while describing those terms in Arabic. This could be the result of that English which is the medium of instruction in medical colleges in most Arab countries (Albirini, 2016).

In addition to these identities, it was found that each one of the participants constructs his or her cosmopolitan identity (Sinatora, 2019) through participating in English hashtags and using emoji which are features of global social media that can be identified as supervernaculars (Blommaert, 2019). By doing this, each one of these students performs the identity of an individual who is familiar with the new linguistic forms resulted from communication in global social media applications.

4.6.11.5. Sports and identity

It was found that all the participants posted many tweets about some sports events like the World Cup. This could be because this international tournament happened during the period of observation of these participants' accounts. It might be argued that when a person posts about a sporting event, he or she constructs the identity of a sports fan (Shank & Beasley, 1998).

Furthermore, Twitter helps them to present their identities as fans of certain clubs. For example, Ali presents himself as a supporter and a big fan of Al-Etihad football club through posting many tweets to talk about Al-Etihad and his participation in some hashtags about Al-Etihad. Ali's participation in these hashtags demonstrates that he is a member of the community of Al-Etihad supporters (Noon & Ulmer, 2009; Starbird & Palen, 2011; Zappavigna, 2012). Another example is Yasser who presents himself as a supporter and a big fan of Al-Ahli football club. This was done by posting many tweets about Al-Ahli. Besides, this identity is also constructed through his funny posts about Al-Etihad football club (the rival of Al-Ahli in the same city "Jeddah").

Twitter also helps Ahmed to construct his identity as someone who is an expert in the history of football by providing some information about the history of the World Cup. In terms of Fahad, it was noted that he used Twitter to present the identity of a big fan of the NBA (American National Basketball Association). This was done by posting many tweets about games and news about NBA. Finally, as we discussed before, writing about sports helped Muna to construct the identity of a modern Arab woman who does not

hesitate to talk about topics that are always seen as exclusive to men in the Arab world such as football.

4.6.11.6. The participants as humorous people

It was found that each one of the participants posted plenty of tweets that can be considered funny. By doing this, the participant presents herself or himself as a humorous person on her Twitter account.

It was noted that the majority of these funny tweets were written in CA. One possible reason for this is that Arab people use CA for joking and telling funny stories especially by comedians in films and TV shows. This could be the result of that CA is the variety used in informal conversations like joking with friends.

4.6.12. Mobility

The five students are affected by mobility which means, in their case, the physical movements across different borders (Urry, 2002, 2007) as they left their home country to study in the UK. Some researchers have claimed that living in a new country will have a strong impact on individuals' linguistic practices (Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Deumert, 2014). This can be applied to all the participants as they all reported that many of their daily offline practices because they live in an English-speaking community like using English or CS between Arabic and English.

The important question, however, is whether these practices occur in their tweets because they live in the UK or not. First, Muna and Ali pointed that there is an impact of

living in the UK on their linguistic practices on Twitter. The impact of mobility can be supported by considering that Muna and Ali posted many tweets in English. This is the result of that living in a new environment which may help them to improve their English. Also, since they are studying in the UK, it is expected that they have non-Arab friends or colleagues on social media platforms as they indicated in the interviews. As a result, in order to communicate with them, Ali and Muna should post their tweets in English.

Second, although Yasser and Fahad confirmed that living in the UK affected their online linguistic practices, the findings did not report any strong evidence for this impact on their online linguistic practices. In other words, it was found that that only small numbers of English tweets posted by them over the whole period of observation. This suggests that living in the UK does not have an impact on their linguistic practices on Twitter. The same thing can be said about Ahmed who although posted 41 tweets in English, he reported that he used to post in English on Facebook before the start of his study in the UK. One possible reason for that is related to the fact that Ahmed is a doctor because most doctors in Saudi Arabia have good proficiency in English.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on presenting the linguistic practices of the participants in their Twitter accounts. It can be said that their online linguistic practices are affected by their backgrounds, their academic lives, personal ideologies, and their diverse social networks. This indicated the individual nature of the linguistics repertoires online. Overall,

It is hoped that this research has succeeded to provide a clear picture of how Arab study abroad students in the UK use their rich and diverse linguistic repertoires in digital communication. The following chapter presents a theoretical discussion of the findings of the current research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the participants used a wide range of linguistic repertoires alongside other semiotic resources that are offered by Internet technology such as emoji (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Together, these communicative repertoires (Rymes, 2014) were deployed by the participants to construct different macro and micro-level identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). These repertoires include different varieties of Arabic, English, borrowed words from English, in addition to the rare occurrence of Arabizi. There were also cases of CS between Arabic and English, or between SA and CA. It was also possible to identify some cases which can be categorised as examples of translanguaging. This chapter discusses the significance of the research findings in relation to the existing literature in order to have a better understanding of how and why Arab study abroad students use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter.

The first section argues for treating Twitter as an online space, rather than just a social networking site. In section 5.2, I discuss the findings in relation to the situation of SA and CA in the Arabic sociolinguistic context. The use of English and the impact of mobility are discussed in Section 5.3. The fourth section talks about the use of emoji as a part of meaning-making by the participants. The use of Arabizi and borrowing is discussed in section 5.5. In section 5.6, I discuss the use of CS and translanguaging by the participants. I talk about the use of Twitter for constructing different online identities in

section 5.7. The final section revisits the research questions in order to show how the findings address each question.

5.1. The construction of the online place

The majority of previous studies about Arab social networking users' linguistic practices (e.g. Al Alaslaa, 2018; Albirini, 2016; Al-Jarf, 2010; Eldin, 2014; Kosoff, 2014) have depended mainly on text-based analysis. However, this study highlights the need to go beyond online data as text and treats online spaces as complex places which are constantly shaped and reshaped by their users. An online space such as Twitter is a place for mutual interaction between individuals (Androutsopoulos, 2013b; Milner, 2011) where they deploy digitally afforded semiotic resources in addition to the use of texts (Pennycook, 2017). Through conducting interviews with the participants, I was able to know more about the construction of this online place which reinforces the methodological contribution of interviews. A perfect example is the two tweets which were written in French by Ali. When I asked Ali in the interview about the motivation behind these two tweets, he told me that such a practice is simply because he was in France at the time of these tweets. If I had depended on online observation alone, it would not have been possible for me to know that Ali was in France at the time of these tweets. As a result, I might not have been able to access the appropriate interpretation of these two tweets.

Another important point in the construction of online spaces is that communication on Twitter is dialogic, dynamic, and is performed with some sort of audience in mind.

The findings show that users of Twitter use their linguistic repertoires to include and exclude certain audience. This suggests the importance of considering audience design theory (Bell, 1984, 1997) when discussing individuals' linguistic practices in social networking sites such as Twitter. Overall, the findings of this study are in agreement with Tagg and Seargeant (2014) who argue that language choice is a strategy of audience design in social networking sites. For instance, if we consider participants' attitudes towards posting in English, we realise that they indicate that this depends on the intended audience. They indicate that the main reason to avoid posting many tweets in English is that the majority of their followers are Arabs who might not be able to understand English. This means that they want their audience, who are mostly Arabic speaking, to understand their posts. This could possibly mean that they want to exclude non-Arabic followers.

Audience design is relevant not only at the level of languages but also within Arabic varieties. For example, it was noticed that there is no use of some words and expressions that are used exclusively in the region of Al-Hejaz. Yasser explained in the second interview that he does not use these words because he wants his posts to be understood by all Arab Twitter users. This might indicate that Yasser avoids using Hejazi words or expressions to include all Arab users.

According to Tagg and Seargeant (2014), addressivity, the use of the 'at' sign (@) before another user's account name (boyd, Golder, & Lotan, 2010; Starbird & Palen, 2011) is a strategy for audience design in social networking sites. The findings show that addressivity is used by some of the participants on Twitter to interact with other users.

According to Seargeant, Tagg, and Ngampramuan (2012), when someone uses addressivity on Twitter, he or she usually chooses an appropriate language or variety of that speaker. Similarly, when Muna uses addressivity with some of her friends, she uses CA which is socially deemed as an appropriate variety in informal communication with friends.

Also, the findings of the current study show that other users of Twitter can have an impact on an individual's linguistic practices. A good example is when Yasser mentions that his use of SA and CA depends on the person he was replying to. He indicates that CA is used by him if he wants to reply to a friend or a young person. In contrast, he said that if he wants to reply to a religious scholar, he uses SA in his reply. This can be interpreted as an example of accommodation whereby a person changes how he uses his or her linguistic style based on his addressee (Giles & Powesland, 1997).

These examples indicate that links between individuals influence the use of language on Twitter as an online place. In this place, individuals choose to use their language depending on their social relationships and social distance. This indicates that communication in online places is somehow reflective of communicative practices offline. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that Twitter is not simply a site with text but is a place constructed through language, the meanings attached to it by the participants, and sustained through the links with other people, relationships, geographical places and objects.

5.2. CA and SA in the Arab sociolinguistic context

It can be noticed that CA was the most used variety for posting by four participants (Muna, Yasser, Ali, and Fahad). This is consistent with previous studies (Al-Saleem, 2011; Khalil, 2012; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003; Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002). This could be due to the nature of social media sites such as Twitter, which facilitate and legitimise the use of CA which rarely exists in a written format beyond social media. Brustad (2017) argues that this is because these technologies allow people to write without the control of language correctors and editors, who believe that writing is only acceptable in SA, and that writing in CA is inappropriate (Hoigilt, 2018; Kindt & Kebede, 2017). However, the findings also show the high presence of SA as it was the preferred variety for posting (by Ahmed) and the second preferred variety of the other participants. This means that Arab individuals still use SA in spaces where there is no control of language correctors and editors as argued by Brustad (2017). The presence of SA in informal platforms such as Twitter suggests that SA is perceived by Arab individuals as the variety that still has distinctive ideological and communicative functions that might be not achieved through the use of CA. These findings suggest that it is hard to generalise when it comes to linguistic practices since these are informed by different dominant or emerging language ideologies (Rampton & Holmes, 2019).

In terms of CA, the findings of this study disagree with how it is negatively viewed in the literature. CA is commonly described as a low variety compared with SA which is regarded as the high variety (Ferguson, 1959). Besides, CA is ideologically regarded as a corrupt form of Arabic and as the language of illiterate and uneducated individuals

compared with SA which is viewed by many Arabs as the alleviated and correct variety of Arabic (Hoigilt, 2018). This narrative is also used by some studies on the linguistic practices of Arab Internet users. For example, in a study about the use of Standard Arabic, Colloquial Arabic, and English by Syrian users of Facebook, Albirini (2016) establishes a connection between the user's educational level and their use of CA online, suggesting that educated users rarely use CA. However, my findings disagree with Albirini's opinion because all of my participants are educated individuals, yet CA is an important variety for them. It is a tool they use to project their own linguistic identities and connecting with their regional roots (e.g. Hejazi Arabic, Bahraini Arabic, etc.). Also, CA is important because it helps them to project different identity aspects. For example, it helped each one of the participants to construct the identity of a humorous person. This can be difficult to achieve through posting in SA. Instead, joking or making fun of other users was all done through tweeting in different forms of CA (e.g. Hejazi Arabic, Egyptian Arabic). Another important point is that CA is always used by the participants to connect with their friends and to discuss with other local football fans. Communicating with friends using CA is more suitable than SA as mentioned by some of the participants (Muna and Ali) in the interview. This can be related to the role and status of SA in social life as the language of officials and formal situations.

The discussion in the previous paragraph is that CA is an important variety and not as a low variety as it is sometimes described. This can be supported by their positive attitudes towards posting in CA. This attitude towards the use of CA can be understood if we acknowledge that many Arabs believe that using regional dialects plays a major role in

positive social communication (Saidat, 2010). This is because of its simplicity, as it is the language that individuals use in their daily lives in interpersonal communication. Moreover, another possible reason for this positive attitude is the prestigious situation of some Arabic colloquial varieties as argued by Theodoropoulou (2018). Let us think of the status of Hejazi Arabic for example. The Hejaz is a special part of Saudi Arabia as it hosts the two most holiest cities in Islam (Makkah and Medina). Therefore, Hejazi people are proud of Hejazi Arabic and do not feel the need to change their Hejazi variety online. This can be backed, for example, by Mun's statement (*Hejaz means Makah and Medina. . . I am Hejazi and proud of that*).

In terms of SA, the findings indicate that SA was used by the participants in their tweets for different reasons. The first and second patterns are examples of intertextuality (Quran verses Hadith) and formulaic Arabic (Eid greetings, religious sayings, etc.). These are memorised and not necessarily individually produced. That is why they maintain the SA register. When one of the participants writes a verse of the Quran or a hadith, he or she wants to project a religious identity. The third pattern is to communicate with people of higher status or more educated. Here, SA is used for its ideological value as the language that is normally associated with education in the Arab world. Thus, the user wants to project the identity of an educated person through tweeting or replying in SA. Also, the user's linguistic choice in such tweets is determined by the nature of the interaction. The third pattern highlights the impact of language ideologies on how these students use SA in their tweets. This can be supported by considering their positive

attitudes towards posting in SA. Their reasons for positive attitudes revolve around language ideologies such as the belief that Fus'ha is a rich language (Brustad, 2017).

Another interesting reason for the positive attitude towards SA was mentioned by Yasser who mentioned that SA should be used as a lingua franca in the Arab world. This is because some local varieties might not be easy to understand by all Arab individuals (Albirini, 2016; Chtatou, 1997; Embarki, Yeou, Guilleminot, & Al Maqtari, 2007). Therefore, Yasser thinks that the use of SA will facilitate communication between people from all Arab countries. This role cannot be achieved through posting using the local varieties which differ from one country to another (Hoigilt, 2018). This finding suggests that SA was used not necessarily for its ideological supremacy but for its communicative value as a lingua franca, or a Pan-Arab variety. It is also a tool for establishing Pan-Arab identities. For example, when Ahmed addresses other Arab nationals about issues in Palestine or other Arab countries, he uses SA to project a pan-Arab identity.

To conclude, the findings of the present study indicate the importance of SA and CA in social networking sites. The participants' ability to use SA and CA has offered them the flexibility to engage with different types of audiences and to enact different types of online identity.

5.3. English and mobility

The result showed that each one of the participants wrote some tweets in English. The analysis showed that English is mostly used when they wanted to present a quotation

or a famous English saying. Also, the participants used English when they wanted to reply to tweets written in English regardless of whether the tweet was written by an Arab or non-Arab user. English was also used by Fahad when he wrote some English tweets to defend his country (Bahrain). This suggests that English is used sometimes to send a political message. This is similar to the findings from Albirini (2016) who found that English was deployed by some Syrian Facebook users for attracting non-Arab users to tell them about the Syrian revolution.

Although all the participants tweeted in English, it can be noticed that the existence of English is not dominant in the participants' tweets. Furthermore, two of the participants (Yasser and Fahad) posted a small number of tweets in English. This is not in agreement with what has been reported in previous studies on Arab internet users (Al-Saleem, 2011; Eldin, 2014; Etling, Kelly, Faris, & Palfrey, 2010; Kosoff, 2014; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003; Strong & Hareb, 2012; Warschauer et al., 2002). At the same time, this result corresponds with (Albirini, 2016) who did not notice any dominance of English among a group of Syrian Facebook users. Albirini (2016) suggests that this could be due to the availability of technical support for Arabic, which was not available at the time of those studies.

As for the current study, the lack of dominance of English in the participants' tweets is surprising if we take mobility into consideration. The five students are affected by mobility which means, in their case, the physical movement across geopolitical borders (Urry, 2002, 2007) as they left their home country to study in the UK. Most sociolinguistics of mobility research (e.g. Blommaert & Dong, 2010; Deumert, 2014) have claimed that living in a new country will have a strong impact on an individual's linguistic practices. This

can be applied to all the participants as they all reported that their daily offline practices include the use of English or CS between Arabic and English because they live in an English-speaking community. The important question, however, is whether or not these practices occur in their tweets. The findings show that mobility has an impact on the online linguistic practices of Muna and Ali as discussed in chapter 4. First, it can be argued that living in the UK helped them to improve their English. Also, since they are studying in the UK, it is expected that they have non-Arab friends or colleagues on social media platforms as they indicated in the interviews. As a result, in order to communicate with them, Ali and Muna needed to post some tweets in English.

In terms of the other three participants (Yasser, Fahad and Ahmed), the results indicate that mobility in a study abroad setting does not seem to have a significant impact on how they use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter. One significant reason is that these participants use Twitter mainly for communicating with users from their home country and with other users from different Arab countries. This is similar to the notion of 'connectivity' (Doutsou, 2013) because when people feel separated from their home country when they travel, they have regular contact with the home country using digital technologies (Blommaert, 2010). These technologies (e.g. smartphones) allow individuals to be more connected with their families, friends, and informed of the news in their home countries (Deumert, 2014; Doutsou, 2013). Similarly, Twitter is a tool used by these participants to interact with those who are in different geographical locations, not with those who are around them in the UK (family, friend). Hence, to guarantee the success of

this interaction, these participants post their tweets in SA or CA which can be more suitable than English for communicating with their Arab audience (Bell, 1984).

Taking these points into consideration, the findings of my study contribute to the growing research on language and mobility. This research presents new insights into online sociolinguistic spaces and the virtual connectivity with home speech communities which are different from those communities accessed as a result of geographical mobility.

5.4. The use of emoji

The findings indicated that all the participants relied on the use of emoji in addition to the written texts. This correlates with an argument made by Pennycook (2017) who states that online linguistics practices should be understood as social practices that are the result of the manipulation of written forms and semiotic resources. The analysis revealed that the majority of emoji occur in cases where emoji were used as an addition to text. This accords with Danesi (2016) who claims that the most common use of emoji is when they are added to text in electronic messages.

All the participants mentioned that they use emoji to express their feelings when they write their tweets. This goes in line with some scholars (Evans, 2017; McCulloch, 2019; Stark & Crawford, 2015) who point out that emoji can be used to present feelings in digital writing. Furthermore, the findings showed that the use of emoji can help to deliver the exact intended meaning of the post and to help the participants connect with their followers. This correlates with Danesi (2016) who mentions that people in many

cases rely on emoji to soften their statements and to avoid being misunderstood by other people in online communication.

Besides the use of emoji with the texts, there are cases of using emoji without any written language. This what Evans (2017) calls the substitution function of emoji when individuals use emoji instead of writing something. However, only a small number of emoji-only tweets were posted by all participants during the period of the observation. This could be due to the difficulty of interpreting these tweets (Danesi, 2016). A perfect example when Ahmed posted the one eye emoji in addition to the brain emoji ( ) in one tweet. As mentioned in section 5.1, without asking Ahmed about the meaning of this post, other followers might find this post vague. This suggests that the one possible reason for the lack of regular use of emoji-only writing is that other users might not understand these tweets that lack contextualising text .

Overall, the findings suggest that the participants have an expansive understanding of language and semiotic resources. They are using not only their diverse linguistic repertoires. Rather, they are also using digital affordances such as emoji as part of their meaning-making. This is because there is a wide range of emoji already available in the participants' devices. (McCulloch, 2019). Therefore, while the use of emoji has been almost neglected by most research on online interaction among Arab users, this study highlights the importance of considering emoji as an important part of the process of meaning-making.

5.5. Arabizi and borrowing

The findings showed that all the participants used borrowed words from English. The use of borrowing by the participants in the current study corresponds to what has been found in previous research (e.g. Al-Jarf, 2010; Albirini, 2016; Sirraj, 2013). The fact that these words are products of the new development in information technology suggests that necessity is the main reason for these words. This agrees with Campbell (1998) who states that people normally borrow a word from another language when they need to name new concepts or inventions that are acquired from abroad.

While the use of borrowing was documented, the analysis revealed that there is no record of any use of Arabizi (writing Arabic words using Roman alphabets) in posts written by three participants (Yasser, Ahmed, and Fahad). This is not in line with previous research (Al-Jarf, 2010; Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Al-Tamimi & Gorgis, 2007; Albirini, 2016; Kosoff, 2014; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003; Salia, 2011; Strong & Hareb, 2012; Warschauer et al., 2002; Yaghan, 2008) who have documented regular use of Arabizi among Arab Internet users. There are two possible reasons for the absence of Arabizi in tweets written by those participants. The first one is related to the existence of technical support for Arabic. To explain, in the early days of the Internet, the Arabic writing system was not yet supported. However, recent technology development has enabled Arab users to write Arabic texts without the use of the Roman script. The other explanation is related to their attitudes toward that form of writing. The findings show that there is agreement among the participants for having negative attitudes towards Arabizi. Albirini (2016)

argues that the negative attitude towards Arabizi among Arab Internet users is the result of their belief that it was only accepted when writing in Arabic letters was not possible.

It is worth mentioning that the negative attitude was also found even among those who used Arabizi like Muna and Ali. This correlates with the findings of Yaghan (2008) and Bani-Ismaïl (2012) who have reported negative attitudes towards Arabizi among Arab users of the Internet. Moreover, the fact that Muna and Ali have negative attitudes towards Arabizi despite their use of it goes along with Mimouna (2013) who found that Algerian university students reported negative attitudes towards Arabizi even though they admitted using it in their online writing. Yaghan (2008) explained that his participants did not like Arabizi as it, according to them, could ruin the Arabic language.

5.6. Code-switching and translanguaging

The findings showed that all the participants switched between Arabic and English. They switched from Arabic to English for introducing quotations, showing personal emotions, introducing scientific terms or English expressions, and for shortening Arabic phrases. This suggests that simplicity is an important factor for switching to English as it can be easier and quicker than posting in Arabic in some cases. In contrast, the switch to Arabic happened when the participant wrote something in English and then explained it in Arabic. In general, these patterns reflect participants' ability to use Arabic and English. Hence, this could be seen as a strategy by the participants to project their multilingual identities.

Nevertheless, while all the participants switched between Arabic and English, the findings indicate that it is a rare practice as only a small number of tweets that included switching between Arabic and English. It is possible that the language attitudes of their followers could be the main motivation for the participants to try to avoid writing many tweets that included CS between Arabic and English as evident from, for example, by Yasser's statement (*some people have a negative attitude towards that*) and Muna's reply (*I do that sometimes which makes people get angry*). This negative attitude could be the result of dominant language ideologies (Rampton & Holmes, 2019) among some Arab individuals that CS between a foreign language and Arabic is a corrupt form of Arabic as it is a language without roots or grammatical rules (Hussein, 1999; Saidat, 2010).

In terms of switching between SA and CA, it can be concluded that the participants switch to SA to 1) take a pedantic stand, 2) use formulaic expressions, 3) introduce direct quotations. In contrast, switching to CA happens for 1) criticising or insulting someone, 2) simplifying and explaining a particular idea, 3) saying a sarcastic statement. These patterns correspond with Albirini (2011) who investigated the patterns of CS between SA and CA by Arab speakers in religious lectures, political debates, and soccer commentaries. This suggests that patterns for switching between SA and CA in online interaction overlap with the patterns for switching offline. Again, this highlights the importance of both varieties in the Arab sociolinguistic context as I mentioned before. SA is used for performing the identity of an educated person because of its association with education and sophistication (Albirini, 2016; Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959; Hoigilt, 2018). On the other hand, the participants switch to CA for projecting the identity of a humorous

person. This is because most Arab people normally use CA for joking and telling funny stories more than SA especially by comedians in films and TV shows.

One of the major targets of the current project is to investigate the occurrence of CS and translanguaging. The difference between the CS and translanguaging is that while the former involves cases where there is a shift between one language to another and this shift comes in different patterns, translanguaging, in contrast, indicates that an individual uses his or her linguistic repertoires dynamically to the extent that it might be difficult to find patterns for switching between languages or varieties (Wei, 2017). Applying this differentiation to the tweets written by the participants showed that the two phenomena were used in their posts. There are many cases of CS whether between English and Arabic or between SA and CA, those cases where there is a complete switch from one language to another. In the same time, there are many cases which can be identified as instances of translanguaging, the fluid and the flexible movement between CA and SA or between Arabic and English, and the instances where the participants specifically mentioned that they did not pay regard to the separation between Arabic and English or between SA and CA.

It might be argued that the existence of CS in the data does not support the argument made by Bailey (2012) that adapting CS for analysing individuals' linguistic practices might not help to understand the complexity of individuals' linguistic practices. Also, the occurrence of CS in the participants' tweets does not mean that it is possible to consider all online linguistic practices as translingual practices as suggested by Dovchin (2015), because these cases of switching between Arabic and English, and between SA

and CA, indicates that there are instances where individuals give regard to named languages and make conscious decisions to switch from one language to another. However, this does not mean that translanguaging could not happen because it was documented in tweets posted by the participants. I have discussed before that the participants in some cases used words and expressions from different varieties of Arabic with English words in highly fluid and dynamic ways.

Furthermore, the present study goes in the same line with Seargeant and Tagg (2011) who talk about the paradox of analysing different linguistic repertoires. While we have a new ontological turn in applied linguistics that challenges the boundaries between, and the discreteness of, languages and varieties, it is almost inevitable not to end up quantifying instances of different named languages and varieties. For me to analyse cases of translanguaging, I had to categorise the participants' linguistic repertoires based on whether they belong to SA,CA or English in each tweet.

It is worth mentioning that most cases of translanguaging in participants' tweets appear when there is a flexible movement between a different variety of Arabic even in cases when the translanguaging involves the use of an English word like the example from Muna in Extract 36. In that tweet, Muna used only one English word (**perfect**) in the middle of multiple movements between SA and CA. This suggests that while translanguaging could happen between SA and CA, it may be difficult to happen between Arabic and English. This could be because of the nature of online writing which does not support the occurrence of translanguaging. In order to translanguage between Arabic and English in online communication, the participants have to change keyboards settings to

write something in Arabic and then change the setting again to write a sentence in English. This can be time-consuming for the user. Also, this could make the tweet somehow messy and difficult to read because the order of writing of Arabic and English words is different. In contrast, translanguaging between SA and CA is easier in online communication because the user does not need to change the setting of the keyboard.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the ongoing debate regarding CS and translanguaging by many scholars (e.g. Bailey, 2012; e.g. Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; Flores & Lewis, 2016; García & Wei, 2014; Jaspers, 2017; Jaspers & Madsen, 2019; MacSwan, 2017; Wei, 2017). The findings of the present study suggest that it is possible to consider both practices. Using either code-switching or translanguaging alone is not enough to understand the online linguistic practices of users in social networking sites. While translanguaging exists in individuals' online practices, there are instances where individuals give regard to named languages and make conscious decisions on shifting the keyboard script from one language to another.

5.7. Online identities

The findings in the present study showed how these students construct different macro (e.g. Arab, Muslim, Saudi, Bahraini, Hejazi) and micro-level (e.g. humorous, well-educated, sport fan) identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) in their online communication. A macro level identities include This supports the argument that online communication, especially in social networking sites, may help individuals to adopt multiple and diverse

identities (Gonzales & Hancock, 2008; McKenna & Bargh, 1998; Turkle, 1996). These identities were constructed through several linguistic practices such as language use, CS, stances or semiotic practices (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). This may suggest that there is a strong relationship between language and identity as some scholars have suggested (e.g. Joseph, 2004).

The results suggest that the main reason for using Twitter is related to identity. When the participants post on Twitter, they engage in the process of promoting themselves (Page, 2013) on their Twitter accounts. First, it was noted that SA is deployed by the participants to construct a prestigious and educated identity. To explain, these students present themselves as well-educated individuals to other Arab Twitter users. This could be understood by taking language ideology into account. It is widely believed by most Arab individuals that SA is the language of education and sophistication (Albirini, 2016; Brustad, 2017; Ferguson, 1959; Hoigilt, 2018). According to this belief, if an individual uses Fus'ha, then this will lead other people to see him or her as a prestigious and well-educated person. Moreover, the participants' desire to promote themselves was also done through the use of many SA expressions that could be viewed as epistemic stances (Bassiouney, 2012). By doing this, they position themselves as well-educated individuals because these expressions are used mainly by educated Arabs. The epistemic stance was also achieved through the use of intertextuality in SA by some of the participants like Ahmed when he positions himself a well-educated person (Albirini, 2011; Bassiouney, 2012). Furthermore, the results showed that SA was deployed by Ahmed to play the role of a person who has a kind of authority. This is because SA is the variety that

is usually associated with authority in the Arab context (Bassiouney, 2012) since it is the language of the government's high officials in most Arab countries.

It is significant to say that the participants did not only use SA to promote themselves on Twitter. The participants also used CA to project themselves as funny people by posting many funny tweets. They write these funny tweets in CA because it is the variety used for joking by the majority of Arab people.

Moreover, the analysis showed that these students also promote themselves by posting some English tweets. For example, all the participants posted tweets that included some sayings in English. It might be claimed that by doing this, they construct the identity of an intellectual person who knows some wise international sayings, or who is well-read in the international literature. Similarly, writing English translation or a comment after writing sayings in Arabic could be seen to enact their multilingual identities (Leppänen and Peuronen, 2012). It might be argued that promoting the self through using English could be the result that, in the Arab world, there is a strong association between English and knowledge, globalization, and prestige (Albirini, 2016).

5.8. Revisiting the research questions

The main purpose of the present study is to explore the nature of digital communication on Twitter by Arab study abroad students. This will be done through answering the following research questions:

1-How do Arab study abroad students in the UK use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter?

2-How do Arab study abroad students project online identities on Twitter?

3- What are the attitudes of Arab study abroad students in the UK towards language use and identity in online communication, and the role of mobility in this?

With respect to the first research question (How do Arab study abroad students in the UK use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter?), the research findings showed the participants used a wide range of linguistic repertoires and other semiotic resources that are offered by Internet technology such as emoji to connect with different types of audience, and project different aspects of identity. In their tweets, they use SA for its ideological power and for its communicative value as a lingua franca, or a Pan-Arab variety of Arabic. At the same time, the findings also showed that the participants use CA in their tweets because it helps them to communicate formally with other Twitter users and to project different identity aspects such as their own national and local identities.

Regarding English, it is used for presenting a quotation or a famous English saying. Also, the participants used English when they wanted to reply to tweets written in English regardless of whether the tweet was written by an Arab or non-Arab user. Moreover, while the analysis revealed that there is no record of any use of Arabizi (except by Muna and Ali in two tweets) , it was also found that the participants used borrowed words from English. These words are products of the new development in information technology.

They use these words because they are more popular than their Arabic equivalents among Arab Internet users. There were also cases of CS between Arabic and English, or between SA and CA in addition to a few cases of translanguaging.

In terms of the second question (How do Arab study abroad students project online identities on Twitter?), the findings showed that the participants used Twitter to construct different macro and micro-level identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). These identities were constructed through several linguistic practices (e.g. language use, CS, semiotic practices). The findings revealed that those participants use Twitter for promoting themselves (Page, 2013). They use Twitter to construct a prestigious and educated identity in addition to religious and pan-Arab identities. In addition, they use their tweets to present themselves as humorous people by posting many funny tweets. They also use their linguistic repertoires on Twitter for projecting their identities as sports fans. The participants also use Twitter to present their multilingual identities as Arabic-English bilingual speakers. Lastly, the findings showed that Twitter enables Muna to project her identity as a modern Arab woman.

Moreover, the analysis showed that these students also promote themselves by posting some English tweets. For example, all the participants posted tweets that included some sayings in English. It might be claimed that by doing this, they construct the identity of an intellectual person who knows some wise international sayings, or who is well-read in the international literature. Similarly, writing English translation or a comment after writing sayings in Arabic could be seen to enact her identity as a well-educated person who can translate from Arabic to English. It might be argued that

promoting the self through using English could be the result that, in the Arab world, there is a strong association between English and knowledge, globalization, and prestige (Albirini, 2016).

The third question is: What are the attitudes of Arab study abroad students in the UK towards language use and identity in online communication, and the role of mobility in this?. In terms of attitudes, the findings revealed that the participants showed some kind of positive attitudes towards posting in CA. Also, while three of some of the participants expressed they have positive attitudes towards posting in SA, some of them indicated that they have a negative attitude towards posting in SA when communicating with his friends. In terms of posting in English, one of the participants (Ali) mentioned that he has a positive attitude towards writing in English on Twitter, the other four participants, however, mentioned that their attitudes depend on the intended audience. They stated that they have positive attitudes towards posting in English if the post was written to non-Arab followers. In contrast, they would have a negative attitude if the tweet is written to Arab users.

The findings also showed that there is an agreement among the participants for having negative attitudes towards Arabizi. Furthermore, while Yasser, Ali and Fahd hold negative attitudes towards switching between Arabic and English, Ahmed and Muna expressed more tolerable attitudes towards this practice. In contrast, Ahmed and Muna expressed more tolerable attitudes towards this practice especially in informal types of communication like Twitter. It was also that the participants showed some kind of positive

attitude toward this practice. This practice is described as the 'white variety' as it was done by Muna.

In terms of the role of mobility in participants' linguistic repertoires, while the findings revealed that there might be an impact of living in the UK on linguistic practices of Muna and Ali on Twitter, the findings showed that there is no immediate obvious impact of living in the UK on their linguistic practices, at least according to what they recall regarding his practices over time.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the findings showed that Twitter is a complex place which is continuously shaped and reshaped by its users under the influence of different types of audience. In this place, communication is dialogic, and is performed with diverse audience who can influence users' language choice. Second, this chapter discussed how the findings challenge the idea of categorising SA as the high variety and CA as the low variety. The dominance of both varieties in the dataset suggest that they are both important as they help Arab users to project different aspects of identity. Thirdly, the lack of dominance of English in the participants' tweets suggest that Twitter is a tool that helps them to have a virtual mobility through communicating with Arab individuals in their home country using Arab varieties. Fourth, this chapter demonstrated the importance of emoji in the meaning-making process. In addition, the chapter illustrated that the participants' language ideologies affect their attitudes and online linguistic practices. For example, the rare number of cases of CS between Arabic of English is the result of

participants' negative attitudes towards this practice. Also, the chapter explained that translanguaging can be more common between SA and CA in comparison with translanguaging between Arabic and English on Twitter. In order to translanguage between Arabic and English in online communication, users have to change keyboards settings each time they want to move dynamically which can be time-consuming. In contrast, translanguaging between SA and CA does not require changing the setting of the keyboard. Finally, I discussd how Twitter was used by those students to construct and adopt multiple and diverse identities through several linguistic practices.

Next, Chapter 6 presents the main contributions of the present study. Besides, it outlines research limitations, suggestions for future research, research reflections, and concluding remarks.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Summary of the thesis

This qualitative research has explored the linguistic practices of five Arab study abroad students in the UK by analysing their language use on Twitter. The purpose was to understand how Arab online users deploy their communicative repertoires to communicate and construct online identities. The methodology includes observing Twitter accounts of the participants for nine months, in addition to conducting two rounds interviews with them to invite them to reflect on language in their world, how they think they use their repertoires online as well as to, comment on their linguistic behaviour in their tweets. The findings show that the participants mainly posted their tweets in CA and SA, as well as English and some borrowed English words, but no Arabizi. There were also cases of CS between Arabic and English, or between SA and CA. It was also possible to identify some cases which can be categorised as examples of translanguaging. All these linguistic repertoires were deployed by the participants to communicate with different followers formally and informally and to construct different macro and micro-level identities.

In Chapter 1, I introduced the rationale for conducting the study, in addition to the context of the study. Chapter 2 presents the literature review of some related concepts such as identity, CS, translanguaging, language attitudes, and mobility. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of all the methodological considerations, justifications and challenges that have helped to design this practical part of the study. Chapter 4

presents the findings of the study by providing a full description of the participants' linguistic practices in their Twitter accounts. In chapter 5, I discussed the findings in relation to the existing literature. This concluding chapter (Chapter 6) talks about the study's contributions, implications, limitations and suggestions for future research.

6.2. Contributions of the study

The findings of the present study have important contributions to a growing paradigm in sociolinguistics, known as sociolinguistics of mobility and globalisation (C.F. Blommaert, 2010). First, the study contributes to the ongoing debate regarding CS and translanguaging by many scholars. While some researchers (e.g. Bailey, 2012; García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015) have problematized the notion of CS and proposed that adopting translanguaging can help to understand the complexity of individuals linguistic practices, other researchers (e.g. Bhatt & Bolonyai, 2019; Flores & Lewis, 2016; Jaspers, 2017; Jaspers & Madsen, 2019; MacSwan, 2017) have argued that CS is already a complex construct and that translanguaging does not offer anything new for understanding linguistic practices. However, the findings of this study indicate that both concepts are indeed useful for analysing the way Internet users use their diverse linguistic practices. This is because while the nature of the social networking sites encourages their users to use their linguistic repertoires in a fluid and dynamic way, individuals still give regard to named languages and make conscious decisions on shifting the keyboard script from one language to another. While it is sometimes hard to decide on whether a certain tweet is an example of translanguaging or code-switching without

interviewing the participants -who might not have a conscious explanation or justification for their language use, it is useful to draw on both constructs as interpretive and analytical lenses.

Secondly, the current study adds a significant contribution to research investigating the sociolinguistic situation in the Arab world. The high presence of SA in participants' tweets contradicts the assumption that informal platforms such as Twitter encourage individuals to not post in SA. Rather, it shows that many Arab users still use SA in spaces where there is no control of language correctors and editors as argued by Brustad (2017). Another contribution of the study is that it challenges the idea of categorising SA as the high variety and CA as the low variety. Instead, the findings suggest that both varieties are important. Arab Individuals use SA for its ideological dominance and for its communicative value as a lingua franca, or as a Pan-Arab variety. On the other hand, they use CA because it helps them to project personal and regional linguistic identities which help them (re)connect with their national roots. Also, CA is a tool they use to project other aspects of identity as I discuss in 5.7.

Thirdly, this study contributes to research investigating the linguistic practices of Arab online users. It helps to have a better understanding of how Arab individuals use their linguistic repertoires in social networking sites. Previous research looked at users' online linguistic practices by focusing on one area such as language use, CS, and identity. In contrast, the current study explores these practices by considering all these areas together in addition to investigating participants' language attitudes and their impact on online linguistic practices. Also, it shows the impact of dominant and emerging ideologies

(Rampton & Holmes, 2019) on individuals' attitudes and behaviour online. Moreover, the study brings a translanguaging perspective instead of only using CS when investigating online linguistic practices. Furthermore, the study explores the use of emoji which has been almost neglected by previous research on similar contexts. The findings of the study emphasise the importance of emoji as it helps individuals to communicate various meanings and feelings. To conclude, the findings of this study contribute to have a clearer understanding of the linguistic practices of Arab users of social networking sites.

Methodologically, the study offers some contribution for exploring online linguistic practices. While the majority of previous studies have heavily relied on exploring what is written on the screen, making assumptions about individual's intentions when using their linguistic repertoires online, this study used interviews to understand the participants' motives for their linguistic practices. The findings indicate that interviewing social networking sites users is an essential tool that enables the researcher to delve into contextual and ideological details that are difficult to obtain by using text analysis alone. Also, combining interviews and text analysis helps to have a clear insight into users' language ideologies, attitudes and aspects of their construction of online identities.

6.3. Research implications

The current study has some practical implications for language educators in the UK, and for individuals in the Arab world. First, thousands of Arab students come to study in many universities in the UK every year. Knowing how these students communicate on social media can inform university educators about students' dominant and emerging

language ideologies and attitudes. Language educators can use this information to raise awareness about linguistic fluidity, language and identity, prescriptivism vs. descriptivism. They can also gain insights into study abroad students' social networks and ways to ensure that they are integrated in academic online spaces

Another important implication for this study is that it helps to increase the sociolinguistic awareness in the Arab world. In many Arab countries, there is still this perception that languaging through using different repertoires such as English and CA results in the 'corruption of Standard Arabic'. However, the findings of this study suggest that although the participants' tweets include different linguistic repertoires, they still use SA when needed in its correct form. Another point is that some Arab individuals assume that when someone uses English or mixes Arabic with English words, she or he wants to show off. Nevertheless, the findings of this study help to change this perception, as there are various reasons for this mixing. For example, Arab students in the UK use English because it is the variety they use every day. English words are also used in some occasions because of the lack of the Arabic equivalent or due to domain loss. Overall, this study calls for developing an expansive understanding of online languaging and of the values online users attribute not only to the separate named languages they speak but also to the mixing and switching they deploy in their everyday online communication.

6.4. Limitations and suggestions for future research

As a qualitative case study research, this project has limitations which can open various doors for future research. First, the study investigates how the participants deploy

their linguistic repertoires on Twitter. Thus, it is hard to claim that these students use the same practices in other social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), bearing in mind that these sites differ in terms of how they operate, and in how individuals use them. As I explained in Chapter 1, Twitter was chosen to be the focus of the study because it is the most commonly used social networking site among the study's target audience. Other researchers might find other social networking sites to be more popular with their target audience and when they do, there is a room for comparing and contrasting their findings with the findings reported herein.

Second, any findings from the current study are limited to the period at which the data were collected. Crystal (2001, p. 224) argues that "any attempt to characterize the language of the internet, whether as a whole or with reference to one of its constituent situations, immediately runs up against the transience of technology". Indeed, Internet tools such as social networking sites are developing rapidly, and any change can have a potential impact on users' linguistic practices. For example, Twitter doubled this word limit from 140 to 280 characters in November 2017 (Murthy, 2018). However, the majority of tweets collected from the participants did not exceed 140 characters. One possible explanation is that users were used to writing their tweets based on the 140 characters limit especially if we keep in mind that the data were collected soon after the increase of the character limit. This means that the current study does not reflect the impact of changing the character limit on individuals' linguistic practices on Twitter after they become familiar with that change. This highlights the relevance of merging time and place as factors that affect the type of the collected data. Future research can look into

the impact of increasing the character limit on users' linguistic behaviour. For example, in a recent study by Taibi and Badwan (forthcoming), they report that Algerian study abroad students in the UK tend to write Facebook statuses in CA first, followed by English translations. They explain that the use of translation was heavily featured in their data when they compared pre- and post- sojourn periods. Would an increase in character limit on Twitter encourage Twitter users to add translations to reach out to more followers? This remains an unanswered question which deserves further investigation.

Thirdly, since the participants of this project are from only two Arab countries, it is not possible to claim representation of the linguistic practices of all Arab students in the UK. Since generalisation based on in-depth qualitative analysis is almost impossible, I invite Arabic sociolinguists to research online practices among users from different countries. This is likely to provide rich comparative lenses to enable further understandings of linguistic behaviour among different Arabic users in contexts of mobility. These studies could also highlight the relevance of religion and culture to online linguistic use.

Finally, the study finds that some of the participants use the term 'white variety' to describe one of their linguistic practices. This concept is popular among non-linguistic writers in some Arab magazines and newspapers. Yet, as far as I know, there is no mention of this term 'white variety' in the literature regarding different varieties of Arabic. Thus, this study suggests that future research needs to explore the notion of the 'white variety' in the Arab context. Future researcher should investigate its meaning, its origin, in addition to the reason for describing it as the 'white variety'.

6.5. Research reflections

Conducting this research has been an eye-opening learning experience for me. Engaging with the literature has made me realise that I had naive knowledge about most of the theoretical concepts presented in this study before the beginning of this project. For example, when I read about the concept of identity, I learned that it is more complex than how it is always linked to broad categories (e.g. Muslims, Arabs) in the Arab world. I also realised the existence of language ideologies and that they have a big impact on individuals' attitudes and their behaviour. Towards the end of my PhD, I was able to theoretically interpret my own linguistic practices not only online, but also in the spoken discourse. Furthermore, reading about various aspects of methodology and research design in addition to the existence of different epistemological and ontological beliefs has made me realise that I should not take what other researchers say for granted. This helped me grow as a critical reader. I look forward to utilising the knowledge and awareness I developed through this academic journey in my future discussions with young Arab individuals about language and identity in the world.

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Appendix 1: Ethical approval letter



17/01/2019

Project Title: Online Identities and Translanguaging Practices: A case of Arab Study Abroad students in the UK on Social Media

EthOS Reference Number: 1718

Ethical Opinion

Dear Ghazi Alhejely,

The above application was reviewed by the Arts and Humanities Research Ethics and Governance Committee and, on the 17/01/2019, was given a favourable ethical opinion. The approval is in place until 21/09/2019 .

Conditions of favourable ethical opinion

Application Documents

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Project Proposal	proposal ethics	01/11/2018	3
Consent Form	Consent-Form November 2018	01/11/2018	3
Information Sheet	Information Sheet November 2018	01/11/2018	3

The Arts and Humanities Research Ethics and Governance Committee favourable ethical opinion is granted with the following conditions

Adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies and procedures

This ethical approval is conditional on adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies, Procedures, guidance and Standard Operating procedures. These can be found on the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages.

Amendments

If you wish to make a change to this approved application, you will be required to submit an amendment. Please visit the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages or contact your Faculty research officer for advice around how to do this.

We wish you every success with your project.

Art and Humanities Research Ethics and Governance Committee

Appendix 2: A copy of private message to the Twitter account of a potential participant

Dear....

I am a researcher at Manchester Metropolitan University. I am interested in studying the linguistic practices of Arab students in the UK on social networking sites. I want to conduct a linguistic analysis of your Twitter account. This will involve observing your account for nine months in addition to conducting two interviews with you: the first one before the observation and the other one after the end of the observation. Your identity will be protected if you agree to take part in this study. Also, this is a sociolinguistic study and that the focus would be on the language of the tweet. In other words, I would not judge you because of your religious and political beliefs. I am ready to send you a copy of the information sheet if you are interested in this study. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any question.

Ghazi Alhejely

g.alhejely@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Participant information sheet



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

Ghazi Alhejely
Department of Languages, Information and Communications
Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: +447490322668

Online Identities and Translanguaging Practices: A case of Arab Study Abroad Students in the UK on Social Media

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The study investigates the online linguistic practices of Arab university students in the UK. It is a part of my PhD study at Manchester Metropolitan University.

This study aims at investigating the Online linguistic practices of Arab university students in the UK. It focuses on how Arab students use English with different varieties of Arabic (Standard Arabic (alfusha) and regional dialects) in addition to the use of English in their posts on Twitter.

Why have I been invited?

The participants chosen for this project will be 7 Arab students of both genders who have been admitted to a postgraduate course to study in UK universities.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide. We will describe the study and go through the information sheet, which we will give to you. We will then ask you to sign a consent form to show you agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The study will focus only the linguistic practices. It will not focus on any political or religious opinions.

What will happen to me if I take part?

It will include online observation of your Twitter account for nine months. This study will not look at any private message. It also includes two interviews with you. The first one will be conducted before the observation and will include asking you about your ideology and attitude towards online linguistic practices. In the second one (after observation), you will be asked about some words and expressions you used in some tweets or posts. Each one of the interviews will be held in your university and will take approximately 30 minutes. **Both interviews will be recorded.** The following table describes what will happen if you agree to participate in this study.

	Tool	Length
1	First Interview	30 minutes
2	Observation	9 months
3	Second interview	30 minutes

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

We cannot promise the study will help you but the information we get from the study will help thousands of Arab students who come to study in the UK annually. Knowing how these students communicate on social media will tell university educators about their ideologies and attitudes to the languages they speak. Furthermore, in many Arab countries, there is this perception that using different repertoires results in the 'corruption of Standard Arabic'. Therefore, the study will discuss this with the participants, aiming to encourage Arab individuals to understand the motives for bilingual individuals to use different repertoires.

What if there is a problem?

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it to the researcher. If you have any concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researcher who will do her best to answer your questions. ghazi.alhejely@stu.mmu.ac.uk .

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally you can contact my supervisor Dr Khawal Badwan, k.badwan@mmu.ac.uk Department of Languages, Information and Communications, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. 431 Geoffrey Manton Building

(ext. 6299).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

1. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained by using a study code number on the interview transcripts. Tweets and posts will be collected using screenshots. Any information that could lead to your twitter or account will be deleted.

2. All the recorded data will be stored either on a computer at the university which is password protected or in a locked filing cabinet. It will not be possible to identify participants from the data presented in the study. All the data used in this study will be kept for 5 years and then destroyed.

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. If you withdraw from the study all the information and data collected from you, to date, will be destroyed and your name removed from all the study files.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will discuss the preliminary results with you to ensure that you are happy to include these tweets. This is will be done after the end of the online observation of your Twitter account.

In addition, after the end of the study, I will contact you to provide you with the final results of the study. You will not be identified in any report/publication unless you have given my consent.

Who is organising or sponsoring the research?

Manchester Metropolitan University

Department of Languages, Information and Communications

Appendix 4: Consent form



Manchester
Metropolitan
University

Department of Languages, Information and Communications
Geoffrey Manton
Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: +447490322668

Title of Project:

**Online Identities and Translanguaging Practices: A case of Arab Study Abroad Students in the UK on
Social Media**

Name of Researcher: Ghazi Alhejely

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the observation of my Twitter account, and the interview procedure.
2. I agree that my Twitter account will be observed for nine months and that the interviews will be recorded.
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.
4. I understand that my responses will be used for analysis for this research project.
5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.
6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Appendix 5: First interview questions

Language learning history

1. What languages do you speak?
2. What varieties of English do you use? Why?
- 3.
4. Which dialects of Arabic do you speak? Why?
5. What Arabic variety did you speak as a child?
6. Did you move houses? Lived in other cities before going to school?
7. How did your Arabic skills change after going to school?
- 8.
9. Did you study in a private or government school?
10. When did you start learning English?
11. Did you join any English learning courses besides schools?
12. How do you assist your proficiency in English?
13. How do you assist your level in Standard Arabic (SA)? Speaking and writing?

Language in your life

14. Do you use MSA in your daily life? Why?
15. In which situation do you use MSA?
16. Do you speak English at home? Why?
17. Do you speak English with your friends? Why?
18. How often do you use English? What do you use it for?

19. Do you read books, newspapers, or magazines in English?
20. Do you watch English movies or English programs?
21. Do you mix between Arabic and English in your daily life? Why?
22. Do you have an English or Arabic keypad on your device?
23. Do you text in English? Why?
24. How often do you participate in Facebook or Twitter?
25. What language or languages do you normally use in your tweets or posts? Why?
26. Do you have friends and followers from different countries?
27. Does the audience matter in terms of the language you use online?
28. Do you use Standard Arabic in your posts? Why?
29. Do you use your regional dialect in your posts? Why?
30. Do you use English in your posts? Why?
31. Do you mix between Arabic and English in your posts? Why?
32. If someone responds in English, do you shift to English?

Language and identity

33. What is the native variety of Arabic?
34. How do you feel about Modern Standard Arabic? Why?
35. How would you identify yourself?
36. What makes you Arab?
37. What language/variety represents you most? Or is closest to you?

Language in social networking sites

38. What is your attitude towards using Standard Arabic by other students in their posts?

Why?

39. What is your attitude towards using regional dialects by other students in their posts?

Why?

40. What is your attitude towards using English by other students in their posts? Why?

41. What is your attitude towards mixing between Arabic and English by other students in their posts?

42. What is your attitude towards writing Arabic words using and English letters?

43. What is your attitude towards mixing between CA and SA by other students in their posts?

44. Do you use emoji in your tweets? Why do you use them?

45. Do you see any difference between communicating online with people in your home and people in the UK?

46. Which language do you think that Arab university students in the UK should use in their posts? Why?

47. Finally, do you have anything to say about language or social media sites, comment on any of my questions?