

The Jizani Arabic in Saudi Arabia: Communication Accommodation and Attitudes

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Abstract

The study attempts to examine the communication accommodation behaviours of Jizani speakers living in Riyadh-Saudi Arabia (SA). It seeks to document the existence of certain linguistic phenomena in the speech of Jizani informants in intergroup and intra-group interactions with Najdi speakers: people living in Riyadh, the centre of SA. It also aims to determine the attitude of Jizani speakers towards the Jizani variety. Riyadh and Jizan are different in the spoken variety produced by each speech community. *Najdi Arabic* is classified as a prestigious variety, whereas *Jizani Arabic* spoken in the south-west of SA is negatively stigmatized. The study comprises mixed method approach to achieve its goals using participant observation, the Matched-guise technique (MGT), and semi-structured interviews. A corpus of the Jizani accent was collected from 8 rural and urban female Jizani speakers in their interactions with 4 female Najdi speakers through participant observation. The findings reveal that the length of residence impacts the degree of convergence and maintenance to the Najdi speakers. Participants who live in Najd for less than 10 years maintain their linguistic features whereas those who were born or lived for more than 10 years in Najd are more likely to accommodate the Najdi accent. The findings also indicate that rural Jizani speakers negatively stigmatize the Jizani accent when spoken in Riyadh.

Keywords: Communication Accommodation, Attitude, Linguistic Features, Riyadh, Jizan

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Introduction

Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the official written language in Saudi Arabia (SA). However, Saudi people do not use MSA in daily speech since it is a very formal language used in literature, press, academia and law. Arabic varieties have been spoken in SA since its establishment in 1932 (Al-Rojaie, 2020). These spoken varieties are poorly documented in the literature, and the number of dialects in large areas of the Arabian Peninsula remains unidentified (Watson, 2011). Recent interest, however, has started to uncover this dialectal diversity in SA, including varieties spoken in the centre of the country (Abboud, 1964, 1979; Ingham, 1982; Prochazka, 1988) and the western region (Al-Shehri, 1995), although *Jizani Arabic* spoken in the southwestern parts of SA has received little formal attention to date. Studies which were done by Hamdi (2015), Himli (2014), Shamakhi (2016), and Ruthan (2020) focused on syntax and a description of the phonological aspects of *Jizani Arabic*. Yet, no previous study has investigated the use of this variety's phonological and morphological features when interacting with speakers in the host community, a gap the present study has sought to address.

This study examined communication accommodation behaviours and identities formation of Jizani speakers living in Riyadh-SA. It seeks to document the existence of certain linguistic features in the speech of Jizani informants in intergroup and intra-group interactions with Najdi speakers: people living in Riyadh, the centre of SA where Najdi variety is spoken, and other Jizani speakers living there and to determine the role of group inclusion and exclusion in the configuration of their identities in certain situated practices. Also, this study investigated the attitudes held by Jizani speakers towards their own variety, focusing on their perceptions of its value and prestige.

Research Context

This section will provide details about the research context: Jizan and Riyadh and their social groups.

Jizan

Jizan is one of the administrative regions of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, located in the farthest southwest corner of the country along the southern Red Sea coast. It is the second smallest area, comprising some 40,457 km² and borders the Republic of Yemen south and southeast.

According to Pinar et al. (2019), the region of Jizan has undergone low-economic growth and poor job opportunities, which encourage individuals to migrate to bigger cities like Riyadh and Makkah, which have witnessed a dramatic increase in their population size (Cheshire et al., 2008). Lowry (2020) claims that Jizan and its people experience marginalisation due to its peripheral geographical location since the high peaks of the Sarawat mountains create a barrier between Jizan and the rest of the country. The region of Jizan is largely underdeveloped economically as the first highway connecting the area with the rest of the country through Abha, a city in the southern part of SA-92 miles from Jizan, was only built in 1975 (Lowry, 2020, p. 125). Furthermore, Jizan is 1,000 km away from Riyadh, isolating it from economic and social development. Pinar (et al., 2019) claim that Jizani people prefer to live in Riyadh, which is expected by its urbanisation and the various services and facilities it provides for its residents as the hub of the country's economic and commercial activities.

Recently, Jizan is achieving significant development and success upon launching the kingdom vision 2030, supported by King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The kingdom's vision 2030, which has resulted in the growth of the economic sector, makes Jizan one of the most fertile regions in the kingdom for investment in different fields. Jizan's attractiveness for business investment is led by its tourism and agricultural nature, maritime wealth from fishing, and its two commercial ports. Among the most distinguished development in Jizan is the establishment of Jizan Economic City which calls for the establishment of 250 new factories in the region of Jizan with a focus on the energy and manufacturing industries (Yang et al., 2020). Further, Saudi Aramco, located in Jizan, is the biggest oil refinery in SA and the fourth biggest refinery globally (Yang et al., 2020).

Riyadh

Najd, where *Najdi Arabic* is spoken, is a rocky plateau located in the centre of SA, bordered by Jordan and Iraq from the north, the Empty Quarter in the south, the Arabian Gulf in the east, and the mountains of Hijaz in the west. Because of its inaccessible location within these borders, *Najdi Arabic* has little influence from non-Arabic languages (Ingham, 1994). Najd is divided into three administrative regions. The Riyadh region is located in the centre of Saudi Arabia, and it covers about 412,000 km². The second administrative region is Al-Qassim, an agricultural district in the centre of Najd covering 58,046 km². The third administrative region is northerly Ḥa'il, featured by the mountains of Jabal Shammar.

Social Groups in Jizan & Riyadh

There are three main societal groups in Jizan (Lowry, 2020 & Arishi, 1991). These social groups are urban, rural, and mountainous Jizanis. They are classified according to the linguistic features they speak, their interests, and their lifestyle. Urban areas are considered core centres in Jizan, whereas rural and mountainous regions share similar features related to the nature of life and the low levels of development.

Central Najdi society (Riyadh) involves two social groups: Bedouin and sedentary settlers (Al-Semmari 2010). Najdi speakers divide their spoken variety according to their speakers' origin, resulting in the Bedouin variety and the Sedentary variety.

Urban and rural Jizani speakers living in Riyadh will be the focus on this study since they share certain linguistic features with mountainous Jizani speakers having an utterly different speaking system 'dialect' that cannot be understood by urban and rural Jizani speakers.

Jizani Arabic

The Arabic dialects in Jizan exhibit unique linguistic features that have not been observed in other areas of Saudi Arabia (Hamdi, 2015). This table will describe some of these features.

Jizani linguistic features	English	Najdi	Jizani
Glottal stop deletion	drink	/ʔaʃrab/	/ʃrab/
/m/ neutralization	Your books	kutubkum	kutubkun
Perfective Ending in /-n/	she opened	/fataħat/	/fataħan/
The definite article in /ʔam/	the street	/ʔalʃariʕ/	/ʔamʃariʕ/
Apocoptation before a pause.	pen	/galam/	/gala/
/ʃ/ in the future verb form	I will talk	/baʔtkallam/	/ʃaʔtkallam/

Table 1: Jizani linguistic features

Thus, the glottal stop deletion, /m/ neutralisation, perfective ending in /-n/, the definite article /ʔam/, apocoptation before a pause, the use of /ʃ/ in the future verb form, and *Qāf* a velar plosive are salient phonological and morphological features of *Jizani Arabic*. However, this study will examine the presence of some of them, such as the perfective ending in /-n/, the definite article /ʔam/, apocoptation before a pause, and the use of /ʃ/ in the future verb in the speech of Jizani speakers living in Riyadh.

Najdi Arabic

Najdi Arabic is classified as one of the leading spoken varieties in SA and is particularly associated with the central and northern regions. It holds a special status as it preserves many features of classical Arabic, and it has a very little non-Arabic impact (Ingham, 1994). *Najdi Arabic* preserves 87 of the characteristics of the archaic, which mark it with the classical form and accordingly obtains a prestigious position among other Arabic dialects (ALothman, 2012).

According to Ingham (1994:5), *Najdi Arabic* can be divided into four dialectal sub-groups based on their geographical position and the linguistic features they share:

1. Central Najdi: spoken in central Najd by sedentary inhabitants and Bedouin tribes.
2. Northern Najdi. spoken by Shammar and surrounding tribes in the Northern Najd.
3. Mixed northern-central Najdi. spoken by the Qaşim and the Zafir tribe.
4. Southern Najdi: spoken by the Najran and tribes of Qahtan.

Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) is a key sociolinguistic theory developed early on by Howard Giles (1973), initially under the term speech accommodation theory (SAT). Thus, the main concern of SAT was to predict and interpret adjustments made in interactions to create or decrease social distance among conversational partners (Soliz & Giles 2012). Giles's earlier research primarily examined speech styles and the features that could be adjusted to those of their interlocutors in order to facilitate successful communication, such as particularly accent, speech rate, pitch, volume, lexical choices, pauses and topic (Giles and Gasiorek 2011; Giles 1973).

CAT has become applicable in both speech and interpersonal and intergroup interactions across many contexts (Pitts & Harwood, 2015). Though language is the primary concern of

CAT, it also deals with relational and identity processes in communication interactions pertaining to interpersonal and intergroup characteristics. Indeed, issues of identity, language and context have always been at the theory's core (Gallois et al. 2005, 121–130.) Pitts and Harwood (2015) for example, focus on when and why interactants adjust or converge their communicative behaviours either to express their identity or form relations. Vincze and Gasiorek (2018) concentrate on the use of language to affiliate or decrease the social distance in order to create solidarity or facilitate comprehension.

CAT consists of two main accommodative strategies, *convergence* and *divergence* to explain many of the modifications individuals make to decrease, maintain, or create social distance during social interaction (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

Convergence and Divergence

Convergence is defined as a strategy individuals use to adjust or adapt their communicative behaviours to appear similar to other interlocutors (Soliz & Giles 2012), thus, reducing social distance and fostering affiliation (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Adjusting one's speech to match that of others is a way of achieving successful communication (Gasiorek & Giles, 2012), which can be accomplished by changing one's linguistic features or paralinguistic and nonverbal behaviour corresponding with that of others. Fridland (2003) examined a midsized mid-Southern community-Memphis Tennessee to demonstrate the changes found in the vowel system in the modern South. The study aims to determine the participation of the ethnic integration of the Southern speech community in the vowel variations system. The results indicate increasing convergence between the black and white speech systems. Both groups appear to be moving toward the speech norms of the other which make their dialect less ethnically dissimilar. Correspondingly, this example shows that speakers who use convergence tactics are perceived as more cooperative and integrated within the other community.

Conversely, divergence is a communication strategy that accentuates differences in speech styles and non-verbal strategies between speakers and their co-interlocutors. The main motive that encourages individuals to diverge from their interlocutors is to emphasise their belonging to a distinct group (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This communicative behaviour is a desire to symbolise distinctiveness and reinforce group identities on the part of the speaker (Soliz & Giles 2012). For instance, Indian American media commentator Fareed Zakaria tends to shift to his native dialect, Indian English, when he tries to persuade his American audience or presents an argument—a case of performing 'real me' stances in interaction (Sharma, 2018). Although divergence is an essential human need to maintain and reinforce one's group identities, particularly in cases of gender identity, it can be regarded as undesirable behaviour by recipients when the speakers diverge from others intentionally aiming to make communication problematic (Dragojevic, et al., 2015). Speakers may tend to diverge from their interlocutors to signal their disapproval of others as individuals.

The present study examined accommodative behaviours in the speech of Jizani speakers living in Riyadh in their communication with Najdi speakers.

Language and Identity

Identity is a multi-dimensional process which resulted in multiple identities that can be constructed, presumed or disused within established contexts (Beswick, 2020). It is a matter

of how a person represents himself when being in contact with others and it is subject to vary from one context to another. Likewise, language may be constructed and modified relevant to a given discourse. Language can be used to assign identities both directly and indirectly. It is a way to judge who people are based on their speech (Eriksson, et al., 2010).

Tabouret-Keller (2017) states that language and identity are not separable. Language is an external behaviour that allows identifying a speaker as a particular group member. Tabouret-Keller mentions that Greeks identified non-Greeks as foreigners based on their speech (2017). In this case, language is seen as the means of identifying oneself to be belonging to a particular group. This identification is more than giving names to speakers, however, it draws boundaries to the start of the relationship and even develops it. Identifying others is more than naming them, but it is building a relationship of being similar to or different from such group.

Research shows that some varieties can lead listeners to classify speakers based on their speech (Evans, 2016). Kinzler and DeJesus (2013) have conducted a study to illuminate the view that a language is a powerful tool in identifying the group to which a speaker belongs, which at the same time indicates his personal and social identity. The researchers interviewed 5- to 6-year-old monolingual English-speaking American children about others' speech. The result indicates that children showed a social preference for the native English and label the foreign-accented English as being nicer. Speaking with a preferred or dis-preferred language based on given categories such as friendly and intelligent may shape the speaker's identity as an in-group or out-group member (Evans, 2016). When a speaker chooses to speak in a dis-preferred stigmatised accent (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010), he assigns his identity by creating distance between himself and other speakers. Therefore, the identity speakers tend to portray to others will affect their linguistic choices and signal their identity. Meyerhoff (1998) argues that individuals could use language as a potent symbol of identity as the following part will explain the relationship between social identity and the individual's membership 'within a social group.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory (SIT) is a fundamental theory in social communication as it comprises how we perceive and make sense of ourselves and others. Tajfel defined social identity as "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (1972, 292).

Social identity suggests that a high degree of ingroup identification and acquiring a positive social identity are sources of ingroup discriminatory behaviours ((Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1987). Discriminating outgroup shows intergroup bias as people who hold high group identification are motivated to behave according to their membership of a particular group. Research indicated that high group identification is willing to discriminate against outgroup members regarding their attitudes and cognitive judgements. Lippi-Green (2012) argued that African American speakers shift their speaking to evade overt discrimination because of their mother tongue. The linguistic flexibility of Africa American AAVE is mislabelled and even not regarded as a language by sceptical teachers, policymakers, and researchers (Bucholtz, 2003).

Intergroup Relations

One central notion of social identity theory is intergroup relation and the individual's tendency to be a member of an identified social ingroup (Hogg, 2021). This aspect of the theory is fundamental as it examines the role of conflict and cooperation between members of large social groups.

People tend to favour their group (ingroup) and its members more than other groups (outgroup). It is a way to achieve positive group distinctiveness and enhance their value. Intergroup relations can be observed in ingroup advocacy and outgroup derogation. Outgroups may experience discriminative behaviours presented through prejudice and stereotyped cognition from ingroup members. Intergroup behaviour depends mainly on struggling to gain considerable status or prestige for one's group. Accordingly, people from higher status groups will maintain their distinctive superiority. In contrast, lower-status groups will fight to eliminate any social stigma they are characterised by and replace it with a more positive evaluation.

Methods and Design

This research project employed a mixed-method approach to investigate the research topic. The study incorporated qualitative and quantitative methods, including observation, interviews, and surveys, to comprehensively understand the phenomenon under investigation. This mixed-method approach allowed for triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Research Tools

Participant observation was utilized as the primary research method for this study. Participants were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The study included a total of 10 female Saudi speakers, 6 of whom were Jizani speakers aged between 18-45 years old. Among the Jizani speakers, 4 participants were from urban areas, while 2 were from rural areas. The remaining 4 participants were Najdi speakers, with 2 Bedouin and 2 Sedentary speakers.

The observations were conducted in Alkharj, Saudi Arabia to investigate the impact of living in Najd on Jizani's speech. Four of the Jizani participants had lived their whole lives in Najd, while two had lived in Najd for 10 years. Length of residence in Najd is an important social variable to examine its impact on the way Jizani people speak.

The observation involved audio recording for conversations that revolve around issues related to the participants' everyday lives. The participants are encouraged to freely discuss various topics, allowing the conversation to flow naturally and transition from one subject to another.

In order to assess both explicit and implicit language attitudes, the survey instrument employed in this study incorporated the matched-guise technique. This technique allowed for the evaluation of participants' perceptions and evaluations of the Jizani accents while controlling for potential biases associated with the speaker's identity. The matched-guise test was included as a distinct section within the survey, following a series of initial questions that captured participants' explicit attitudes towards language varieties. In the matched-guise section, participants were presented with audio recordings of the same content delivered in

the Jizani and Najdi varieties. They were then asked to rate each guise based on dimensions such as being shy, casual, smart, educated, and pleasant. The survey questions provide insights into participants' conscious attitudes, while the matched-guise test offers an opportunity to assess their implicit attitudes towards language varieties. This integrated approach enhances the richness and depth of data collected in this study.

A total of 7 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Jizani participants living in the Najd region. The questions focused on the participants' life experiences in Riyadh and the accent they adopt when interacting with friends and relatives. Furthermore, discussions revolved around the language variety utilized in their homes and workplaces, providing insights into their intergroup and intragroup relations. Participants were also encouraged to share any situations they encountered with Najdi individuals relating to the use of the Jizani variety.

Data Analysis and Result

This section examines the correlation between accommodative strategies and language attitudes by analysing two conversational extracts that highlight instances of communication breakdown in naturally occurring dialogues.

Convergence as an Assertion of Ingroup Relation

This extract is from one of the conversations between the rural Jizani and the Najdi speakers. The female Jizani speaker explains how her four-year-old daughter behaves at home focusing on her desire to wear dresses all the time. The female Najdi speaker questioned how this little girl can make decisions and thinking about her future actions. When the Jizani speaker mentioned the story of losing her daughter's earrings, she used the words [ʔalhalq], [ʔalsajarah], [rumatuh], and [fakat] converging to the Najdi speaker's talk. The extract below highlights the accommodative practices of interactants showing the desire of the speaker to be part of the group.

Extract 1:

- | | | | |
|----|------|---|------------------------|
| 77 | NAS2 | sanatjn wa ʔrbaʕ fuhur wa tataħ akam bi ʔllilbs wuʕlun azal la sarat ʔrbaʕ sini:n yoooh | |
| | | two years and four months and she controls the way she dressed what will happen when she gets four years | |
| 78 | JAS1 | fakat ħalqha wa rumatuh fi ʔsajarah wa mita fufatuh ʔafatuh θani jawm. mama win alħalq | |
| | | [-n2 DEL] | [ʔam DEL] |
| | | /rumatuh/ /fakat/ | /ʔalhalq/ /ʔalsajarah/ |
| | | Threw it took off | the earring the car |
| | | she took off her earrings and threw it in the car and when did I notice, the next day I asked her where the earring is. | |

The Jizani speaker in this extract is a rural Jizani who lived her whole life in Najd converges her speech towards the Najdi interactant. the Jizani speaker shifts her use of the /ʔam/ as a Jizani linguistic feature into /ʔal/ as a definite article, and she converges to the Najdi speaker

by replacing the perfective ending [n] by [t]. Thus, in this instance, the Jizani speaker adjusts her way of speaking to align more closely with the speech patterns of the Najdi interactant. This adaptation reflects an ingroup relation, where the speaker modifies her speech to establish a linguistic connection and foster a sense of belonging with the Najdi individual (Gasiorek, Giles, Soliz, 2015).

Jizani and Najdi Speakers' Interactions

The Jizani speakers in this extract are an urban who lived her whole life in Najdi and a rural Jizani who lived for 9 years in Najd. Unlike the urban Jizani, the rural Jizani speaker maintains her Jizani linguistic feature in her interaction with Najdi and Jizani interlocutors. The speakers talk about their daily care routine of their skin. The rural Jizani speaker maintains her linguistic features when she said [baddan] means "started", [ʔamutʔbax] means "The kitchen", [ʔamʃu:fan] means "the oats", and [ʔamʃasʔarah] means "the blender". The extract below explains the accommodative practices of interactants showing the desire of the speaker to preserve her identity of being a Jizani speaker.

Extract 2:

21	JAS2	Layan badan Laylan started The presence of Perfective Ending [n] [baddan] "started"
22	NAS1	badat taħutu started to apply
23	JAS2	ʔqulik adʒi ʃaljhum xalatuħ fi ʔlmutʔ bax wa ʔamʃufan jʃsurunuh fi ʔamʃasarah I tell you, I saw them in the kitchen mixing even the oats they mix it in the blender Definite article [ʔam] [ʔamutʔbax] "The kitchen" [ʔamʃu:fan] "The oats" [ʔamʃasʔarah] "The blender"
24	NAS1	ʔalʃufan Mumtaz Oats are perfect

In this conversation, the Jizani speaker, who comes from a rural background and has spent 9 years living in Najd, remains committed to preserving her distinct Jizani linguistic features during interactions with the Najdi individual. The salient linguistic features are found in instances like [baddan], [ʔamutʔbax], and [ʔamʃu:fan]. This conscious effort to maintain her Jizani identity through language choices highlights her desire to uphold her unique linguistic heritage even in a different linguistic environment (Gasiorek, Giles, Soliz, 2015).

Evaluation of Speaker's Social Traits

In this part, we can observe the perceptions of shyness and being educated among the respondents for both the rural and urban populations.

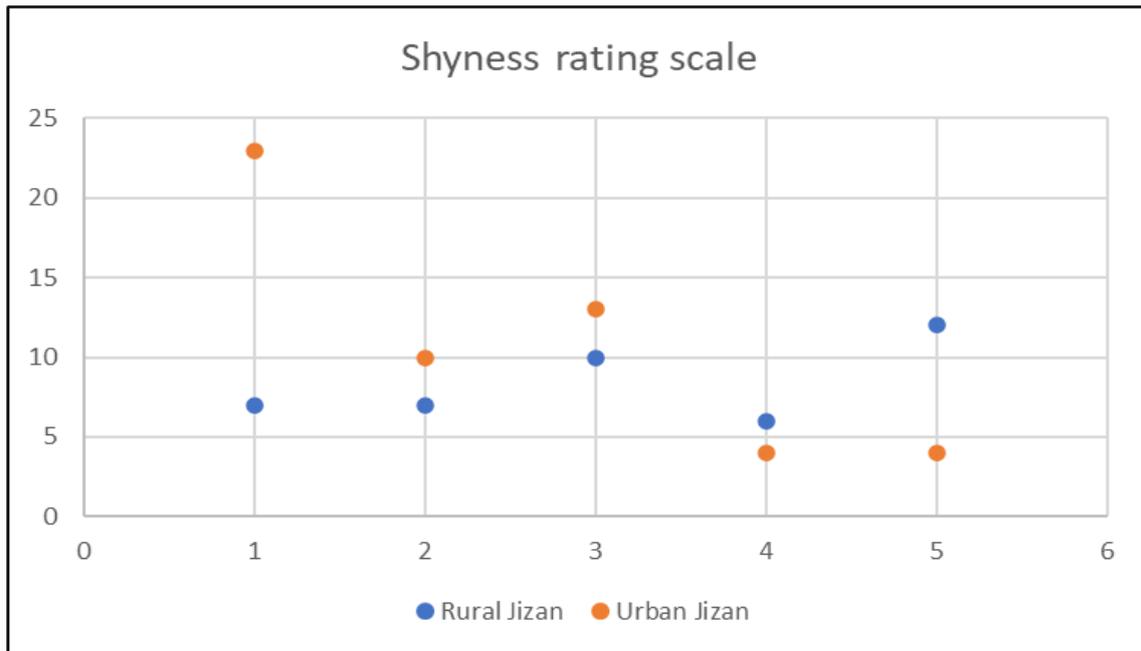


Figure 1: Shyness rating scale

The statistical analysis suggests that there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of shyness between the rural and urban speakers. The mean difference between the rural and urban populations is 0.004, and the standard error difference is 0.84140. This indicates that the mean rating of shyness is significantly higher in one population compared to the other. Based on these results, the urban Jizani speakers hold positive perceptions towards the Jizani speaker.

Interviews With Female Jizani Speakers

This section analyses the attitudes held by the interviewee towards their accent.

The respondent describes the people from Jizan as having innocence, good intentions, and positive energy. They enjoy being with them and feel at ease and comfortable in their presence. This suggests a favourable attitude towards the people from Jizan and expresses a strong sense of belonging and comfort when interacting with people from Jizan. Also, this indicates that they may feel a stronger connection to their hometown and its culture.

On the other hand, the interviewee acknowledges the kindness and generosity of the people from Najd. However, they also mention feeling a sense of barrier or less freedom in interacting with them. This suggests that while they hold a positive view overall, there may be some reservations or differences in communication style or cultural norms that affect their comfort level. In addition, the respondent highlights the importance of using the Najdi variety at work to communicate effectively with colleagues and supervisors. They emphasize the need to avoid misunderstandings or comments about their speech which signifies the necessity of using the dominant dialect in their work environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the communication accommodation behaviours exhibited by Jizani speakers residing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Its primary objectives were to uncover linguistic phenomena in Jizani speech during interactions with both Najdi speakers and their attitudes towards their own linguistic variety. The study's findings revealed compelling insights. Notably, the duration of residence in Najd significantly influences the degree of linguistic convergence and maintenance observed among Jizani speakers towards the Najdi accent. Individuals who lived in Najd for less than a decade maintained their linguistic traits, while those with over a decade of exposure were more inclined to accommodate the Najdi accent. Furthermore, the study illuminated the negative stigmatization of the Jizani accent by rural Jizani speakers when spoken within the Riyadh context. This attitudinal dimension highlights the complex interplay between linguistic variation and sociocultural perceptions. In essence, this study contributes valuable knowledge to the intricate relationship between dialectal diversity, sociolinguistic dynamics, and individual attitudes, thereby enriching our understanding of communication practices within the Saudi Arabian context.

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