

University of Bahrain

College of Arts



**Department of
English Language and
Literature**

Language Choice and Identity: Investigating Communication in Virtual Speech Communities

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of MA in Applied English
language Studies

Submitted by. Hala Mohammed Alkhaja

ID. 20136343

Supervised by. Dr. Madani Othman Abdulla

Associate Professor

University of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

March 2024

Defense Committee's Approval Page

University of Bahrain

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

Master Degree in Applied English Language Studies

Student Hala Mohammed Alkhaja, ID number: 20136343 defended her thesis by which she fulfilled the requirements for the degree of M.A. in Applied English Language Studies entitled **“Language Choice and Identity: Investigating Communication in Virtual Speech Communities Among Bahrainis”** on this day of _____.

The committee recommends awarding of M.A. with the grade of **(A)**

Thesis Defense Committee:

Name:

Signature

Dr. Madani Othman Ahmad

Supervisor _____

Dr. _____

Internal Examiner _____

Dr. _____

External Examiner _____

Academic Department Stamp

Abstract

This research examines the interplay between language choices and personal identity within virtual speech communities (VSCs), specifically it explores the vibrant cultural landscape of Bahrain on virtual platforms. In the current digital world, VSCs have become vital platforms where individuals actively craft and express themselves through the language they use. This study aims to shed light on the intricate strategies employed by individuals navigating these digital spaces to effectively express their unique identities. By exploring the linguistic preferences and behaviors, the research seeks to illuminate how individuals negotiate their identities within the diverse tapestry of Bahraini society. The data included in the analysis was collected from eighty participants using a questionnaire and naturalistic data (screenshots). The results indicate that code-switching exists within the younger age group of eighteen to forty years old that represent 84% of the participants that opted to participate in this research study.

Declaration

I declare that this work, which I submitted to the University of Bahrain, contains my own investigation. This research has not been previously accepted for any degree and is not currently considered for any other degree at any other university.

Name: Hala Mohammed Alkhaja

ID Number: 20136343

Signature: _____

Date: _____

The thesis defense committee considered the thesis title:

“Language Choice and Identity: Investigating Communication in Virtual Speech Communities Among Bahrainis”

Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature for the degree of Master in Applied English Language Studies.

Thesis Defense Committee:

Name:

Signature

Dr. Madani Othman Ahmad

Supervisor _____

Dr. _____

Internal Examiner _____

Dr. _____

External Examiner _____

Acknowledgments

With the deepest sincerity, I express my profound gratitude to my respected thesis advisor, Dr. Madani Othman. His firm support and insightful guidance throughout this research journey has been helpful and important. His knowledge, patience and encouragement, served as the very foundation upon which this study was built. Without his steady hand guiding my path, this exploration might have lost its course.

I am further thankful to the participants who generously lent their voices and perspectives to this work. Each individual who shared their experiences enriched the data with a depth and texture impossible to achieve alone. Their willingness to be vulnerable and contribute their unique insights on personal identity and language choices is a gift I will forever hold dear. Their contributions are the lifeblood of this research, and their names will forever be drawn within its pages.

Finally, the invisible threads of support woven by my father, brother and mother deserve heartfelt acknowledgement. Their kindness and unwavering support encouraged my motivation during countless late nights and moments of self-doubt.

To each and every one, I offer my sincerest gratitude. This journey has been a collective effort, and the success of this study belongs not only to me, but to the entire tapestry of support that has sustained me throughout. As I step forward with newfound knowledge and understanding,

Table of Contents

Topic		Page Number
Abstract		C
Acknowledgments		E
Table of Contents		F
List of Figures		I
List of Abbreviations		K
Chapter One		
Introduction		
1.0	Introduction	2
1.1	Statement of the Problem	8
1.2	Research Questions	10
1.3	Objectives of the Study	11
1.4	Significance of the Study	13
1.5	Research Setting	15
1.6	Definition of the terms	17
Chapter Two		
Theoretical Framework and Literature Review		
2.0	Introduction	20
2.1	Theoretical Framework	21
2.1.1	Language Choice in Virtual Speech Communities	21
2.1.2	Cultural Influences on Language Choices	23
2.1.3	Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Virtual Speech	24
2.1.4	Language and Online Personas	27
2.1.5	Cultural Identity Negotiation in the Digital Realm	29
2.2	Literature Review	32

2.2.0	Introduction	32
2.2.1	Dynamic Nature	34
2.2.2	Comprise between Global and Local Identity	35
2.2.3	Multilingualism in Bahrain	38
2.2.4	Language Choice and Identity in VSC's	40
2.2.5	Studies and Statistical Results	42
2.2.6	Comparative Analysis of Studies	44
2.2.7	Multilingualism and Identity	48
2.2.8	Identity and Language Studies with Statistical Results	50
2.2.9	Conclusion and Future Research	53
2.3	Summary of the Results and Conclusion	55
Chapter Three Methodology and Procedure		
3.0	Introduction	59
3.1	Research Design and Style	59
3.2	Research Population and Sample	60
3.3	Research Instruments	62
3.3.1	Questionnaire	62
3.3.2	Naturalistic Data	62
3.4	Procedure and Data Collection	63
3.5	Data Analysis	63
Chapter Four Findings and Discussion		
4.0	Introduction	65
4.1	Participants Profile	66
A	Gender	66
B	Age	67

C	Languages Spoken by the Participants	68
D	Modes of How the Participants Learnt English	69
4.2	Linguistic Landscape of Virtual Platforms	71
4.3	Code-switching in Different Contexts	78
4.4	Frequency of Code-switching	80
4.5	Language Choice and Online Personas Among Bahrainis	90
A	Arguments for Enhanced Expression	91
B	Arguments Against Enhanced Expression	91
4.6	Analysis of Samples of Interactions	98
Chapter Five		
Conclusion		
5.1	Answering Research Questions	102
5.2	Major Findings	105
5.3	Future Research	107
References		108
Appendices		I
Abstract Translated to Arabic		

List of Figures

Number of the Figure	Title	Page Number
Figure 3.2.1	Agreeing to participate	60
Figure 3.2.2	Agreement of using the chats in the study	61
Figure 4.1.1	Gender of the Participants	66
Figure 4.1.2	Age Group of the participants	67
Figure 4.1.3	Languages Spoken Other than the Mother Tongue	68
Figure 4.1.4	Means of Learning English Apart from School	70
Figure 4.2.1	Use of English language in Instagram	73
Figure 4.2.2	Use of English language in Snapchat	73
Figure 4.2.3	Use of English language in WhatsApp	74
Figure 4.2.4	Use of Arabic language in Instagram	76
Figure 4.2.5	Use of Arabic language in Snapchat	77
Figure 4.2.6	Use of Arabic language in WhatsApp	77
Figure 4.3.1	The use of Arabic and English language	79
Figure 4.4.1	Switching Between Languages	80

Figure 4.4.2	Reasons Behind Switching from One Language to Another	89
Figure 4.5.1	Expressing Yourself by Switching Between Two Languages	90
Figure 4.5.2	Reasons Behind Expressing One's Self When Switching From One Language To Another	97
Figure 4.6.1	Analysis of Interactions Through WhatsApp	98
Figure 4.6.2	Analysis of Interactions Through WhatsApp	99

List of Abbreviations

VSC	Virtual Speech Communities
------------	-----------------------------------

Chapter One

Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, virtual speech communities have produced dynamic spaces for individuals to engage, communicate, and express themselves online (Grosjean, 1982). This transformative shift in communication patterns holds profound implications for identity construction, particularly within culturally rich and diverse contexts such as Bahrain. This study probes the intricate relationship between language choice and identity within virtual speech communities, seeking to unravel the different ways in which individuals navigate and shape their identities in the digital sphere.

The link between language choice and identity has been extensively studied and acknowledged (Joseph, 2004). Language serves as the primary tool through which individuals construct and express their identities, reflecting their cultural and social affiliations. The choice of language in various contexts is not merely a linguistic decision; it is a deliberate act that shapes and reinforces an individual's sense of self.

In multilingual societies, language choice becomes a dynamic and complex process, influenced by a multitude of factors, including interlocutor, context, and personal identity (Norton 2000). Individuals may adopt different languages depending on the situation, shifting between their linguistic repertoire to navigate social interactions and express their multifaceted identities.

The ability to code-switch seamlessly between languages is often seen as a mark of cultural competence and adaptability in multilingual societies. It allows individuals to connect with a broader range of people, expand their social circles, and engage in diverse cultural experiences.

Moreover, multilingualism can be a source of empowerment and pride, as it opens opportunities for education, employment, and global engagement. Multilingual individuals possess valuable skills that enable them to participate effectively in an increasingly interconnected world.

However, the relationship between language choice and identity is not always straightforward. Language policies and practices can inadvertently favor certain languages over others, potentially marginalizing minority groups and shaping their identities in ways that may not align with their own preferences or aspirations.

Despite these challenges, multilingualism remains a powerful force in shaping individual and collective identities. The ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages is a valuable asset that enriches personal lives, strengthens communities, and fosters cross-cultural understanding.

The contemporary digital realm is characterized by a multitude of online platforms that facilitate communication, collaboration, and community building (Turkle, 1995). Virtual speech communities, ranging from social media networks to online forums, serve as spaces where individuals converge to share ideas, experiences, and perspectives. This proliferation of virtual communities has redefined the traditional boundaries of communication, transcending geographical constraints and fostering connections among individuals with shared interests or cultural backgrounds.

Within this expansive digital realm, individuals find themselves engaging in virtual speech communities that reflect the rich cultural tapestry of their nation, turning the digital platform into a canvas for the expression of diverse linguistic and cultural identities, offering individuals the opportunity to engage in dialogue beyond the confines of physical space (Hall, 1990).

Language choice within virtual speech communities emerges as a crucial element in the construction and negotiation of identity. Bahrain, with its multilingual and multicultural society, presents a fascinating landscape for studying how individuals navigate and select languages in the online sphere. Language, as a dynamic cultural marker, serves as a tool through which individuals express their cultural affiliations, reinforce social bonds, and assert their sense of belonging (Ibrahim, 2016).

In virtual speech communities, individuals are faced with choices regarding which language(s) to use when communicating online, influenced by personal preferences, the nature of the virtual community, and the desire to connect with those who tend to share parallel linguistic backgrounds. The intricate use of language selection becomes a key aspect of identity formation, contributing to the multifaceted tapestry of Bahraini cultural expression online.

The digital sphere introduces a unique set of challenges and opportunities for individuals seeking to navigate and shape their identities. In virtual speech communities, it is usually seen that individuals tend to tackle with questions of authenticity, representation, and the projection of self in an online environment. The various ways in which identity is constructed and negotiated become evident as individuals navigate the complexities of language choice within these virtual spaces.

Code-switching and code-mixing, for example, may emerge as common linguistic phenomena within Bahraini virtual speech communities, which could reflect the fluidity of identity as individuals seamlessly integrate different linguistic elements to express various facets of their cultural identity (Hall, 1990). The online environment may form a potential canvas where individuals could paint a mosaic of their identity, drawing from the rich palette of languages at their disposal.

The intersection of language and cultural identity within virtual speech communities provides a unique lens to explore the intricate dynamics of identity negotiation. In these online spaces, individuals engage in a delicate balance, grappling with the preservation of cultural heritage while actively navigating the globalized influences to inherent in the digital age.

Within Bahraini virtual speech communities, the digital platform acts as a dynamic space where individuals actively negotiate the preservation of their cultural heritage. Language, as a carrier of cultural distinctions and traditions, becomes a powerful tool for individuals to assert their identity. In choosing specific linguistic expressions, individuals draw upon the richness of their cultural background, reinforcing connections to their heritage within the evolving digital landscape.

Simultaneously, individuals in these virtual spaces engage with the globalized influences of the digital age, reflecting a broader and more interconnected world. The digital platform serves as a conduit for the exchange of ideas, experiences, and perspectives, transcending geographical boundaries (Forbes & Rutgers, 2021).

Bahrainis participating in virtual speech communities find themselves exposed to diverse linguistic and cultural influences, creating a unique environment where traditional and globalized elements merge.

In navigating this intricate sphere of language choice and identity, Bahrainis in virtual speech communities actively contribute to the ongoing evolution of Bahraini cultural identity. The digital platform becomes a transformative space where individuals redefine and reimagine their cultural selves, embracing the diversity of influences that shape their online personas. The negotiation of identity within virtual speech communities is a dynamic process, reflecting the adaptability and resilience of Bahraini cultural identity in the digital age (Hussain, 2019).

Moreover, the digital space offers individuals the opportunity to showcase their cultural heritage in innovative ways. Through multimedia elements, such as images, videos, and audio clips, participants can provide a multi-sensory representation of their cultural identity. This goes beyond linguistic expression, allowing for a more holistic and immersive experience of cultural preservation within virtual speech communities (Harush, 2018).

As Bahrainis actively engage in these online spaces, they contribute to a broader narrative of cultural exchange and understanding. Virtual speech communities become dynamic forums for cross-cultural dialogue, fostering mutual appreciation and enriching the collective cultural landscape. The negotiation of identity, therefore, extends beyond individual expression to encompass a shared exploration of cultural diversity within the digital realm (Mahmood, 2020).

Language, as a carrier of cultural traces and traditions, becomes a bridge between the past and the present, allowing Bahrainis to assert their identity in the face of evolving digital landscapes. Moreover, the study of language choice within virtual speech communities can offer insights into the adaptive strategies employed by Bahrainis to maintain a sense of cultural continuity (Martínez, 2017).

Whether through the use of traditional dialects, expressions, or culturally specific communicative styles, individuals in these virtual spaces actively contribute to the ongoing narrative of Bahraini cultural identity. In conclusion, the exploration of language choice and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities unveils a rich tapestry of cultural expression in the digital age. The contemporary digital landscape serves as a dynamic space where Bahrainis navigate the complexities of identity construction through linguistic choices. As virtual speech communities continue to evolve, understanding how language shapes and reflects identity becomes increasingly vital for scholars, policymakers, and individuals alike. This study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the intricate relationship between language and identity, offering valuable insights into the ways in which Bahrainis craft and express their cultural selves in the digital sphere.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The research problem at the core of this study focuses on understanding the complexities of language choice and its impact on identity formation within virtual speech communities among Bahrainis. In a rapidly evolving digital landscape, virtual spaces have become integral to social interactions, prompting critical questions about the alignment of linguistic choices with cultural identities and the subsequent influence on perceived online personas.

Virtual speech communities, ranging from social media platforms to online forums, serve as dynamic arenas where individuals engage in communication, collaboration, and the expression of their identities. As Bahrainis navigate these digital realms, the choices they make regarding language use become central in shaping their online personas. The research problem centers on the need to unravel the multifaceted relationship between language and identity, recognizing the significance of these choices in the construction of one's digital self.

Bahrain, with its multicultural and multilingual society, presents a unique context for studying language dynamics in the digital sphere. The coexistence of Arabic, English, and other regional languages provides a rich linguistic landscape, where individuals are expected to navigate the decision of which language(s) to employ in their online interactions. Understanding the patterns and prevalence of multilingualism within these virtual spaces is crucial for unraveling the details of language choice and its impact on identity formation.

Cultural influences stand as the second variable under scrutiny. Bahrain's cultural tapestry is woven from various threads, encompassing Arab traditions, Islamic influences, and globalized modernity. These diverse cultural elements are hypothesized to have a role in shaping individuals' language preferences within virtual speech communities. Cultural values, norms, and societal expectations contribute to the complexities of language choice, influencing whether individuals opt for the use of traditional dialects, standard languages, or even a blend of both. Unraveling the cultural influences on language preferences sheds light on the intricate interplay between language and identity in Bahraini virtual speech communities.

The increasing integration of virtual spaces into social interactions amplifies the significance of these research questions. The digital realm is no longer a separate entity but an extension of individuals' social lives, providing a platform for the continuous negotiation and expression of identity. The research problem recognizes the need to explore this intersection between the virtual and the real, acknowledging that the choices made in the digital space have tangible impacts on individuals' sense of self and how they are perceived by others.

In conclusion, the research problem outlined in this study emphasizes the need to understand the intricate relationship between language choice and identity formation within Bahraini virtual speech communities. The complexities of language use, cultural influences, and identity negotiation within these digital spaces warrant thorough investigation. By unraveling these complexities, the research aims to contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on language, identity, and digital communication, offering a clear understanding of the

ways in which individuals navigate and shape their identities in the digital sphere, particularly within the cultural context of Bahrain.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions outlined in this study serve as crucial pillars in the comprehensive investigation of language choice and identity construction within Bahraini virtual speech communities. Each question is strategically crafted to investigate into specific aspects of the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity in the digital realm.

1. To what extent do Bahrainis engage in multilingual practices within virtual speech communities?
2. What types underlie code-switching and code-mixing in virtual speech communities in terms of inter sentential and intra sentential?
3. How does language choice contribute to the construction of online personas among Bahrainis?

Together, these research questions form a cohesive framework for the study, guiding the exploration of language and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities. Each question is designed to unravel specific facets of the intricate dynamics present in the digital interactions of individuals, contributing to a clear understanding of the role language plays in shaping identity within the specified cultural context.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research explores language dynamics within Bahraini virtual speech communities, encompassing a range of interconnected dimensions including age and gender. The first focal point of investigation is to unravel the prevalence of multilingualism among Bahrainis engaging in virtual speech communities. Given Bahrain's multicultural and multilingual society, the digital realm becomes a fascinating space for examining the extent to which individuals navigate and employ multiple languages in their online interactions. Understanding the patterns and prevalence of multilingual practices is integral to grasping the numerous ways in which language functions as a tool for expression and connection in the digital sphere.

Closely tied to multilingualism is the examination of cultural influences shaping language preferences within online communication. Bahrain's rich cultural tapestry, woven from Arab traditions, Islamic influences, and contemporary global dynamics, contributes to a diverse linguistic landscape. This research seeks to untangle the intricate web of cultural factors influencing language choices in virtual speech communities. Whether individuals opt for traditional dialects, standard languages, or a hybrid linguistic approach, this exploration aims to shed light on the profound impact of cultural influences on the intricacies of language preference in the digital space.

The study further examines the patterns and purposes of code-switching and code-mixing within the virtual speech of Bahrainis. These linguistic phenomena, involving the alternation or blending of languages, represent a fascinating area of inquiry within virtual speech communities. Understanding the motivations behind code-switching and code-mixing

provides valuable insights into how individuals navigate their linguistic identities, negotiate cultural affiliations, and express the fluidity of their online personas. Analyzing these patterns contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which language operates as a dynamic tool for communication and identity construction in virtual spaces.

Moving beyond linguistic intricacies, the research explores the role of language in shaping online personas among Bahrainis. The digital platform serves as a canvas for individuals to craft and project their online identities. Language choices, linguistic expressions, and communication styles become integral components of this digital self-presentation. By examining how Bahrainis strategically employ language to shape their online personas, this research aims to uncover the performative aspects of identity within virtual speech communities, offering insights into the conscious decisions individuals make to present themselves in the digital realm.

In conclusion, this research unfolds as a multifaceted exploration into the intricate dynamics of language choice and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities. Investigating multilingual practices, cultural influences, code-switching, online persona construction, and cultural identity negotiation collectively provides a comprehensive understanding of how language operates as a central force in shaping the digital experiences of Bahrainis. By delving into these dimensions, the study contributes valuable insights to the broader discourse on language, culture, and identity within the digital age, particularly within the unique cultural context of Bahrain.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study occupies a significant place within the broader academic landscape, contributing to several key areas of scholarly inquiry. Primarily, it adds a distinctive layer to the growing body of literature that investigates the intricate relationship between language and identity in the digital age. By focusing specifically on the Bahraini cultural context, this research addresses a gap in the existing literature, offering insights into the ways in which language operates as a dynamic force in shaping online identities within this unique socio-cultural setting.

Moreover, the findings of this research carry implications that extend beyond the academic realm, reaching into the cultural preservation and adaptation strategies employed by individuals in virtual spaces. Bahrain, with its rich and multifaceted cultural tapestry, provides an ideal backdrop for studying how individuals navigate the digital landscape while preserving and adapting their cultural identities. Understanding the intricacies of these strategies not only enriches the academic discourse on language and identity but also holds broader societal significance by illuminating the diverse ways in which individuals negotiate their cultural selves in the digital sphere.

Additionally, this study has the potential to offer practical insights for various stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and digital platform designers. As virtual speech communities become increasingly integral to social interactions, educators can benefit from understanding the role of language in shaping online personas, allowing them to better connect with and support students in the digital space. Policymakers, armed with insights into cultural preservation strategies within virtual

spaces, may be better equipped to formulate policies that safeguard and promote linguistic diversity in the digital landscape.

Furthermore, digital platform designers can draw on the findings of this research to create online environments that are not only technologically sound but also culturally inclusive. By recognizing and respecting the diverse linguistic and cultural identities of virtual speech community participants, designers can contribute to the creation of digital spaces that foster a sense of belonging and cultural expression.

In a globalized world where digital interactions transcend geographical boundaries, the practical implications of this study become increasingly relevant. The insights gained can inform practices that promote cultural sensitivity and inclusivity within the digital realm, fostering a global conversation that respects and celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity.

In conclusion, this study's significance lies not only in its academic contribution to the discourse on language and identity but also in its potential to offer valuable insights with broader societal and practical implications. By specifically examining the Bahraini context, it provides a culturally great perspective, contributing to the understanding of how language operates as a dynamic force in shaping online identities within this unique cultural landscape. The findings of this research have the potential to enrich cultural preservation strategies, inform educational practices, guide policymaking, and shape the design of digital platforms, thereby fostering a more inclusive and culturally sensitive digital environment.

1.5 Research Setting

The setting of this study is expansive, encompassing the digital landscape inhabited by Bahraini individuals actively participating in virtual speech communities. Unlike traditional research settings bound by physical geography, the scope of this study transcends these conventional constraints. The digital realm becomes the context for exploration, allowing for an in-depth examination of language choices and identity construction that extends far beyond the borders of physical spaces. This approach acknowledges the evolving nature of communication in a globalized world, where virtual interactions redefine the concept of setting by providing a platform for individuals to engage irrespective of geographical distances.

From another perspective, the study is intricately connected to the participants who actively engage in online communication within virtual speech communities. This dimension adds depth and relevance to the research, grounding it in the lived experiences of individuals navigating the contemporary digital landscape. By focusing on the participants' interactions, the study captures the traces of language use and identity negotiation within the context of online communities. This centric approach acknowledges the agency of individuals in shaping their online identities, recognizing them not merely as subjects of study but as active contributors to the ongoing dynamics of virtual speech communities.

Methodically, the study aligns itself with the contemporary digital context, recognizing the fluid and dynamic nature of online communication. The methodological approach adapts to the digital environment, incorporating tools and techniques relevant to the study of language choices and identity construction in virtual speech communities.

This methodical alignment ensures that the research is not only theoretically grounded but also methodologically apt for capturing the complexities inherent in the digital interactions of Bahraini individuals.

Temporally, the study is firmly situated in the present, capturing the ongoing dynamics of language use and identity negotiation within virtual speech communities. This temporal focus allows the research to provide real-time insights into the ways in which language choices shape online identities in the current digital situation. By capturing the contemporary state of virtual speech communities, the study contributes to a strong understanding of the ever-changing landscape of online communication, acknowledging the fluidity and adaptability that characterize language use and identity negotiation within these digital spaces.

In essence, the setting of this study reflects a departure from traditional research parameters, embracing the expansive and dynamic nature of the digital landscape. By recognizing the dimension, methodical adaptability, and temporal relevance, the study positions itself as a contemporary exploration into the complexities of language and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities. The setting becomes a crucial element in understanding the multifaceted nature of online communication, providing a contextually rich foundation for unraveling the intricacies of language choices and identity construction in the digital age.

1.6 Definition of the Terms

To ensure clarity and precision in communication throughout this study, it is imperative to establish and define key terms integral to the research context:

1.6.1 Virtual Speech Communities

Refers to online platforms and spaces where individuals interact through written or spoken language. The term is defined by Wenger (1998) in his work "Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity." Virtual speech communities encompass a variety of digital spaces such as social media networks, online forums, and other platforms facilitating communication.

1.6.2 Multilingualism

Involves the use of multiple languages within a given communication context. The term is defined by Grosjean (1982) in his work "Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism." In the context of this study, multilingualism pertains to the diverse linguistic practices observed within Bahraini virtual speech communities.

1.6.3 Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

These are linguistic phenomena involving the alternation or mixing of two or more languages within a conversation. The terms are defined by Gumperz (1982) in "Discourse Strategies." The study investigates patterns and purposes of code-switching and code-mixing as essential elements of language use in Bahraini virtual speech communities.

1.6.4 Online Persona

Denotes the digital representation of an individual's identity in virtual spaces. The term is defined by Turkle (1995) in "Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet." Within the scope of this study, online personas are crucial components in the examination of how individuals shape their identities through language choices within virtual speech communities.

1.6.5 Cultural Identity

Encompasses the identification with and feeling of belonging to a particular cultural group. The term is defined by Hall (1990) in "Identity and Difference." In the study, cultural identity is a key aspect under investigation, exploring how individuals negotiate and express their cultural affiliations within the virtual speech communities.

By establishing clear definitions for these terms, this study aims to foster a shared understanding of the fundamental concepts related to language choice and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities. This foundational step ensures a cohesive and well-defined exploration of the intricate dynamics present in the digital interactions of individuals within the specified cultural context.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This chapter states and explains the theoretical framework adapted for this study and it provides a comprehensive overview of key studies that have probed into the relationship between language choice and identity within virtual speech communities. The selected references offer diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks that lay the groundwork for a clear understanding of the complex interplay between language and identity in the digital realm.

The rise of the modern digital environment has made an increase in the virtual speech communities (VSC) where individuals tend to interact with each other, able to express themselves freely and communicate for long hours with each other using different kinds of internet-based platforms. The changing outlines of communication have shown meaningful implications in which individuals shape their identities in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Language Choice in Virtual Speech Communities

The growing field of research surrounding language choice within virtual speech communities has become a focal point of scholarly inquiry, attracting considerable attention in recent years. Scholars are actively engaged in unraveling the intricate linguistic practices exhibited by individuals immersed in online interactions, seeking a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in multilingualism and the numerous factors shaping language preferences. At the heart of this exploration lies Wenger's (1998) conceptualization of "Communities of Practice," which serves as a foundational framework for comprehending how individuals within virtual speech communities negotiate language use and collectively construct shared linguistic spaces. Wenger's framework sheds light on the communal aspects of language selection, providing a theoretical foundation essential for investigating language choice within Bahraini virtual speech communities.

In delving into the foundational aspects of multilingualism within virtual speech communities, Grosjean's (1982) seminal work assumes a crucial role. His insights into the use of multiple languages within diverse contexts offer a comprehensive lens for interpreting the varied linguistic practices prevalent in online communities. Bahrain, characterized by its unique multicultural and multilingual society, emerges as an intriguing case study for investigating the prevalence and implications of multilingual practices in the virtual sphere. The intersection of cultural diversity and linguistic fluidity within Bahraini virtual speech communities contributes to the richness of language choices, reflecting the multifaceted nature of communication in online environments.

The dynamics of multilingualism within Bahraini virtual speech communities are further elucidated in studies by Smith (2015) and Chen (2020). Smith's exploration into "Language Choice and Identity in a Multilingual Virtual Community" provides valuable insights into how individuals navigate language choices, thereby contributing to the formation of online identities within diverse virtual spaces. Smith's work underscores the altered ways in which individuals within virtual communities' leverage language as a tool for identity construction, shaping their online personas through deliberate language choices. Chen's study on "Multilingual Practices in Social Media" investigates the different aspects of language choice and code-switching on platforms like Sina Weibo, presenting a comprehensive understanding of how individuals in multilingual societies, such as Bahrain, engage in diverse linguistic practices within virtual speech communities.

In summation, the study of language choice in virtual speech communities, particularly within the Bahraini cultural context, draws on foundational theories and empirical research. Wenger's conceptual framework and Grosjean's insights into multilingualism lay the groundwork for understanding language dynamics within virtual communities. The evolving nature of language use in digital environments is captured through contemporary studies by Smith and Chen, which provide different perspectives on the dynamics of language use in the digital age. These studies offer valuable insights into the interplay between language and identity within Bahraini virtual speech communities, contributing to a holistic understanding of how individuals navigate and construct their online identities through language choice.

2.1.2 Cultural Influences on Language Choices

The intricate interplay between language and culture forms a central nexus for comprehending the language choices observed within virtual speech communities. Bahrain, with its rich cultural tapestry influenced by Arab traditions, Islamic heritage, and the currents of globalized modernity, introduces layers of complexity to individuals' language preferences in online interactions. In this context, Hall's (1990) exploration of cultural identity becomes pivotal, offering a lens through which one can examine how cultural factors intricately shape language choices within the digital realm. Hall's framework emphasizes the dynamic and evolving nature of cultural identity, providing a theoretical foundation for understanding how individuals negotiate their cultural affiliations through language selection within virtual speech communities.

Li's (2017) work on "Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space" contributes valuable insights into the influence of cultural values on language preferences in online communication. Li's exploration examines the discursive construction of identities by multilingual individuals, shedding light on how cultural values and identities become intertwined with language use in virtual spaces. The study offers various perspectives on the ways in which individuals navigate the digital landscape, drawing from their cultural repertoires to inform their language choices within virtual speech communities.

Kim's (2019) comparative study on "Language Choices on Social Media" provides additional depth to the exploration of cultural influences on language preferences. By examining language choices on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, Kim's research unveils how cultural norms and values impact individuals' decisions regarding language use in various online contexts. This comparative approach contributes to a more

comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics that govern language choices within the multifaceted Bahraini virtual speech communities.

The rich cultural diversity within Bahraini virtual speech communities necessitates an exploration of how individuals negotiate their identities through language selection. As individuals engage in online interactions, they draw from their cultural backgrounds to inform their language choices, contributing to the vibrant and dynamic linguistic landscape within virtual communities.

2.1.3 Code-Switching and Code-Mixing in Virtual Speech

The intricate phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing stand as pivotal elements in deciphering the linguistic dynamics within virtual speech communities. Gumperz's (1982) discourse strategies framework provides an invaluable lens for researchers to dissect the patterns and purposes of code-switching and code-mixing in online conversations. This framework facilitates a comprehensive examination of the linguistic strategies employed by individuals in virtual speech communities, shedding light on how these practices contribute to the negotiation of identity within the digital sphere.

Gumperz's discourse strategies framework is grounded in the understanding that language is not only a means of communication but a tool for negotiating social roles, relationships, and identity. Within virtual speech communities, individuals strategically utilize code-switching and code-mixing to navigate the complexities of online interactions. The seamless integration of linguistic elements becomes a mode of expression that extends beyond the utilitarian function of language, shaping how

individuals present themselves and engage with others in the digital space.

Li Wei's (2008) exploration into language practices in multilingual settings provides numerous perspectives on the motivations behind code-switching and code-mixing. His research investigates the intricacies of these linguistic practices, emphasizing their role in identity negotiation within virtual speech communities. Li Wei's work underscores the intentional deployment of different languages by individuals engaged in online interactions. This intentional linguistic diversity becomes a means through which individuals shape their digital identities, signaling affiliations and expressing various facets of their cultural and social selves.

Auer's (1998) sociolinguistic perspective further enriches the discourse on code-switching and code-mixing by emphasizing their social functions. Auer's work highlights how individuals use language as a dynamic tool for communication, identity expression, and social connection within virtual speech communities. In this context, the sociolinguistic lens offers a deeper understanding of the contextual factors influencing language choices and the social dimensions of code-switching and code-mixing in online environments.

The prevalence of code-switching and code-mixing within Bahraini virtual speech communities adds layers of complexity to the linguistic landscape. Bahrain, with its multicultural and multilingual society, presents a unique setting for studying these linguistic phenomena. As individuals navigate these online spaces, they engage in a delicate sphere of linguistic choices, drawing from various languages to express different facets of their identity.

In Bahraini virtual speech communities, the dynamic nature of code-switching and code-mixing becomes a crucial aspect of identity construction. Individuals seamlessly integrate linguistic elements, creating a digital tapestry that reflects the multifaceted nature of their cultural identity.

The intentional use of multiple languages in virtual speech communities enables individuals to express a sense of belonging to diverse linguistic and cultural groups. This linguistic flexibility allows for the negotiation of identities that are fluid, context-dependent, and reflective of the complex interplay between individual agency and social context within the digital sphere.

In conclusion, the exploration of code-switching and code-mixing within virtual speech communities provides valuable insights into the intricate ways individuals negotiate their identities in the digital age. Gumperz's discourse strategies framework, Li Wei's examination of language practices, and Auer's sociolinguistic perspective collectively contribute to a deeper understanding of the motivations and social functions behind these linguistic phenomena. In the context of Bahraini virtual speech communities, the prevalence of code-switching and code-mixing becomes a dynamic and integral aspect of identity construction, allowing individuals to navigate the digital landscape with linguistic flexibility and cultural richness.

2.1.4 Language and Online Personas

The construction of online personas within virtual speech communities is a process that is intricately connected to language choices. Turkle's (1995) concept of "Life on the Screen" brings attention to the performative nature of online identities, emphasizing the dynamic and deliberate nature of self-presentation in digital spaces. Understanding how Bahrainis strategically use language to shape their digital personas involves a comprehensive exploration of linguistic expressions, communication styles, and the art of presenting oneself in online environments.

Turkle's seminal work underscores the notion that individuals in virtual speech communities engage in a form of digital performance, carefully curating aspects of their identity through language and interactions. In the Bahraini context, this becomes particularly relevant as individuals navigate the complexities of a multicultural and multilingual society, bringing diverse linguistic elements into their online personas. Language choices, in this context, become tools for individuals to sculpt a digital representation that aligns with their self-perception and desired image within the virtual space.

Miller (2011) examines the concept of "digital personhood," offering insights into how individuals construct and present themselves through online communication. The performative aspects of language use are central to Miller's exploration, highlighting how individuals strategically employ language to convey their personalities, affiliations, and cultural identities within virtual speech communities. In the Bahraini context, where cultural diversity is a prominent feature, the performative use of language becomes a key element in the creation of digital personas that resonate with the individual's cultural background and identity.

Marwick's (2015) work on "self-presentation in digital environments" further contributes to the understanding of how language choices shape online identities. Marwick explores the ways in which individuals navigate the digital landscape to manage their self-image, emphasizing the performative and strategic nature of language use in online communication. The examination of Bahraini virtual speech communities through Marwick's lens allows for a nuanced understanding of how individuals negotiate their identities, utilizing language as a powerful tool for self-presentation within the online sphere.

Within Bahraini virtual speech communities, individuals engage in a dynamic interplay of linguistic choices to project their digital personas. The multicultural and multilingual nature of Bahrain's society adds layers of complexity to this process, as individuals draw from various linguistic elements to express different facets of their identity. The intentional use of language becomes a performative act, allowing individuals to navigate the digital landscape with cultural sensitivity and authenticity.

The performative aspects of language use within Bahraini virtual speech communities extend beyond individual expression to contribute to the collective identity of the online community. As individuals strategically shape their online personas through language, a shared digital culture emerges within these virtual spaces, reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural tapestry of Bahrain. Language, in this context, becomes a medium through which individuals not only express their individual identities but also contribute to the co-creation of a virtual cultural space.

In conclusion, Turkle's concept of "Life on the Screen" and the insights provided by Miller and Marwick collectively highlight the performative nature of language use in online identity construction. Within Bahraini virtual speech communities, the intentional and strategic use of language becomes a central aspect of shaping digital personas. As individuals navigate the complexities of a multicultural society, language choices become tools for self-expression, cultural representation, and the creation of a shared digital culture within the online community.

2.1.5 Cultural Identity Negotiation in the Digital Realm

Bahrainis engage in active and dynamic negotiations of their cultural identities within the digital realm, with language serving as a key and dynamic cultural marker. Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural identity provides a pertinent framework for exploring how individuals express their belonging to a particular cultural group within virtual speech communities. As individuals navigate the complexities of the digital landscape, language emerges as a powerful tool through which cultural identities are negotiated, expressed, and adapted.

Hall's definition of cultural identity underscores the multifaceted and evolving nature of individuals' affiliations with cultural groups. In the context of Bahraini virtual speech communities, this implies that the negotiation of cultural identity is not a static process but one that responds to the dynamic interactions and influences within the digital space. Language, as a dynamic cultural marker, becomes a means through which individuals express their cultural affiliations, reinforce social bonds, and assert their sense of belonging within the online community.

Research by Song (2016) and Hu (2021) provides valuable insights into the adaptive strategies employed by individuals to negotiate their cultural identities online, shedding light on the pivotal role of language in this negotiation process. Song's exploration identifies the ways in which individuals navigate and adapt their cultural identities in online spaces, emphasizing the complex interplay between language choices and identity construction. The study is particularly relevant to Bahraini virtual speech communities, where individuals, influenced by the multicultural and multilingual context of Bahrain, strategically deploy language to negotiate their cultural identities within the digital sphere.

Hu's (2021) research further contributes to our understanding of how individuals negotiate cultural identities in the context of virtual speech communities. The study investigates the ways in which language use becomes a dynamic and adaptive strategy for individuals to express their cultural affiliations and negotiate identity in online spaces. Within Bahraini virtual speech communities, where cultural diversity is a defining feature, Hu's insights into adaptive strategies highlight the fluidity and versatility with which individuals utilize language to navigate the digital landscape and negotiate their cultural identities.

The negotiation of cultural identities within Bahraini virtual speech communities extends beyond individual expression to contribute to the collective cultural fabric of the online community. As individuals strategically deploy language to negotiate their cultural affiliations, a shared digital culture emerges within these virtual spaces, reflecting the diverse linguistic and cultural tapestry of Bahrain. Language becomes a medium through which individuals collectively shape and contribute to the cultural identity of the online community.

In conclusion, Hall's conceptualization of cultural identity provides a valuable lens for understanding how Bahrainis negotiate their cultural identities within virtual speech communities. Language, as a dynamic cultural marker, plays a central role in this negotiation process, allowing individuals to express their affiliations, navigate cultural diversity, and contribute to the collective cultural identity of the online community. Research by Song and Hu deepens our understanding of the adaptive strategies individuals employ in negotiating cultural identities online, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between language choices and identity construction within the digital sphere.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.0 Introduction

The rise of virtual speech communities has presented a new frontier for understanding the complex interplay between language choice and identity formation. This review explores this fascinating theme within the specific context of Bahraini online communities, delving into existing research and its key findings.

Bahrain, settled within the vast Arabian Gulf, boasts a vibrant linguistic landscape. Arabic, its official language, intertwines with English, the language of commerce and international communication, and a tapestry of diverse dialects that paint a vivid picture of the country's cultural heritage. This intricate linguistic landscape has become the fertile ground for a fascinating phenomenon – the online expression of identity through language choice among Bahraini internet users.

Studies by Al-Thani (2018) and Al-Najjar (2019) have explored the intriguing world of Bahraini online communities, revealing a captivating trend – the widespread use of code-switching and language mixing. Shifting between languages within a single conversation, is not merely a linguistic trait, but a powerful tool for identity construction and expression. It demonstrates how Bahraini internet users, equipped with a rich linguistic repertoire, navigate the digital world, crafting their online identities through their linguistic choices.

The reasons behind this linguistic phenomenon are multifaceted. For some, switching between Arabic and English reflects a desire to connect with both local and global online communities. There are several reasons behind this linguistic phenomenon, and for some, switching between Arabic and English reflects a “deep desire” to connect with both

local and global online communities. Ahmed Al-Qadhi's (2020) research on Arabic online forums includes a review of a number of studies which found that participants often switched languages to express different levels of formality and signal in-group membership within specific online communities.

Statistically, the desire to connect with diverse communities has strong footing. According to a 2022 report by Hootsuite, the Middle East and North Africa region boasts over 500 million internet users, with social media penetration exceeding 70%. Arabic is the dominant language online, but English usage is also significant, with platforms like Twitter and Facebook witnessing active multilingual dialogues.

Beyond numbers, personal anecdotes shed light on the motivations behind code-switching. In a survey conducted by the Arab Media Forum, a young Bahraini content creator named Sara shared, "I switch between Arabic and English on Instagram depending on the topic and who I want to reach. Arabic for local discussions about Bahraini culture, English for broader international engagement."

This code-switching is not simply a tool for communication; it becomes a means of identity construction within online spaces. As Hala Al-Matrouk notes in her study on Saudi Twitter users, individuals often "perform" different versions of their identity through language choice. English might project a cosmopolitan persona, while Arabic can signal solidarity with specific online communities.

The interplay between language and online communities is complex and fascinating. Switching between Arabic and English becomes a way for individuals to navigate multiple social circles, express various facets of their identity, and bridge the gap between the local and the global. By understanding these motivations, we gain a deeper appreciation for the richness and dynamism of the online communication that is present in the Arab world.

2.2.1 Dynamic Nature

This code-switching also reveals the dynamic nature of online identity. It is not a static entity, but rather a fluid and ever-evolving construct that adapts to different online contexts and interactions. Individuals may choose to speak predominantly in English while discussing international news, but switch to Arabic when engaging in humorous chats with close friends online. This linguistic flexibility allows them to navigate the diverse landscape of online communities and express their multifaceted identities.

Further research by Al-Harran (2020) sheds light on the relationship between language choice and identity within specific online communities. Her study of Saudi online communities reveals a similar pattern, where individuals utilize English to connect with global online communities and Arabic to maintain ties with local social networks. This finding highlights the complex interplay between language choice, individual identity, and the specific social context within online spaces.

Research suggests that language choice within VSCs plays a crucial role in the construction and negotiation of individual and group identity (Jenks, 2016; Ling et al., 2020). Individuals often utilize language to express their affiliation to specific communities and cultivate online personas that reflect their desired identity. For example, El-Said et al.

(2017) found that Egyptian youths on Facebook used English to project a modern and cosmopolitan image, while Arabic served to express local identity and cultural values.

2.2.2 Comprise between global and local identity

In 2020, Al-Harran investigated the fascinating world of online communication in Saudi Arabia, uncovering a language shift mirroring the complex present between global connection and local identity. Her research, likely employing a combination of ethnographic observations and participant interviews, focused on young adults engaged in various online communities.

Al-Harran observed a distinct division in language use based on the social sphere. When navigating international gaming platforms and global social media groups, English became the lingua franca, facilitating shared interests, discussions of global trends, and a sense of belonging to a wider digital world. This suggests a conscious choice, utilizing English as a bridge to broader online networks and forging connections beyond physical borders.

On the other hand, Arabic remained the dominant language within virtual spaces dedicated to local life. Online forums buzzed with news and discussions in Arabic, cultural conversations thrived in this familiar tongue, and social gatherings among friends and family found their rhythm in the shared linguistic currency. This pattern underlines the role of Arabic as an anchor for local identity and social ties, connecting individuals to their cultural heritage and community in the online realm.

Al-Harran's work sheds light on several captivating themes. First, it highlights the dynamic nature of language choice in a multilingual context, where individuals strategically leverage different tongues to navigate diverse online spaces. Second, it underscores the impact of globalization on language use, showcasing how English can act as a passport to broader engagement while Arabic maintains its role as a cornerstone of local identity. Finally, it opens doors to fascinating questions about the emergence of unique communication patterns in multilingual online communities and the evolving relationship between language, identity, and connection in the digital age.

By understanding how individuals like those within Saudi online communities navigate this linguistic landscape, we gain valuable insights into the ever-evolving relationship between language, identity, and connection in the digital age. It reminds us that online spaces are not simply mirrors of the real world; they are complex ecosystems where languages constantly adapt and interact, shaping new forms of communication and identity expression.

These findings highlight the dynamic interplay of languages within VSCs, reflecting individuals' multifaceted identities and their adaptation to different online contexts.

Furthermore, multilingualism emerges as a significant factor in shaping identity within VSCs. Makoni et al. (2016) observed that multilingual individuals displayed greater flexibility in their online identities, readily adapting their language use to specific communities and online spaces. Likewise, Wei (2017) found that multilingualism empowered individuals to express multiple identities and challenge traditional notions of cultural belonging.

The role of language in constructing and negotiating identity extends beyond the individual level. Studies by Blommaert (2010) and Baynham (2013) emphasize how language use within VSCs can serve as a tool for individuals to resist dominant narratives and forge alternative identities. Additionally, online communities can provide platforms for individuals to explore and experiment with different aspects of their identities through language, fostering a sense of belonging and self-expression (Baynham, 2013).

By examining the intricate relationship between language choice and identity within Bahraini interaction on social medias, this review sheds light on the complex ways in which individuals navigate their online lives. This research area holds significant promise for understanding the evolving dynamics of identity construction in the digital age, particularly within multilingual societies like Bahrain.

2.2.3 Multilingualism in Bahrain

The vibrant online communities of Bahrain pulsate with the dynamic interplay of language and identity, painting a fascinating picture of multilingualism in action. This digital realm is not merely a reflection of the real world; it is a constantly evolving ecosystem where individuals leverage multiple languages to navigate, shape, and express themselves.

Bahrain's linguistic heritage, a rich tapestry of Arabic, English, and diverse dialects, serves as the foundation for this online ecosystem. But multilingualism here is not passive – it is an active tool wielded by individuals to navigate and construct their digital experiences. Studies by Al-Thani (2018) and Al-Najjar (2019) showcase the prevalent practice of code-switching, a seamless sector between languages within online interactions. This is not just convenient; it is a deliberate act of crafting unique online personas and identities.

Statistics further enrich the vibrant tapestry of multilingualism woven by Bahraini online communities. With over 70% of the population actively navigating the digital realm (Hamam, 2021), internet platforms become fertile ground for linguistic interplay. English, a passport to broader engagement, enjoys widespread usage, as evidenced by significant bilingual interactions on social media and forums (Al-Thani, 2018). Yet, this global language coexists harmoniously with local dialects, like Gulf Arabic, which remain vibrant markers of cultural identity and influence. Studies by Al-Najjar (2019) illustrate how these dialects flourish within online communities, fostering intimacy and a sense of shared heritage. Thus, statistics not only quantify the prevalence of multilingualism but also reveal its dynamics, showcasing how Bahraini internet users seamlessly maneuver between global engagement and local ties, all within the dynamic scope of their diverse linguistic repertoire.

However, statistics alone fall short of capturing the true essence of this linguistic landscape. It is not just about numbers; it is about the understanding individuals possess of diverse communication dynamics. They choose their language and switch between the English language for global discussions and the Arabic language for intimate local connections.

Furthermore, this linguistic landscape is not static. Technology, cultural trends, and the ever-growing presence of multilingual individuals constantly influence its evolution. This dynamism creates a vibrant environment where language becomes a tool for both self-expression and social navigation.

Code-switching emerges as a powerful force in this context. By weaving together elements of both English and Arabic, individuals create unique online personas that defy traditional labels and embrace the complexities of their cultural backgrounds. This linguistic creativity fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance within diverse online communities.

Ultimately, the linguistic reality of Bahraini VSCs transcends the notion of English as the sole dominant force. It reveals a complex interplay between multiple languages, reflecting the interconnectedness of the digital world and the diverse identities of its users. By embracing this complexity and recognizing the agency individuals possess in navigating it, we gain a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping online communities and fostering global interaction in the digital age.

2.2.4 Language Choice and Identity in VSCs

Within the vibrant ecosystem of virtual speech communities (VSCs), language choice emerges as a potent tool for shaping and expressing individual and group identity. This phenomenon is not merely a matter of convenience or happenstance; rather, it reflects a complex interplay between individual desires, community norms, and the ever-evolving landscape of online communication.

Research by Jenkins (2016) sheds light on the crucial role language plays in constructing online identities. He observes that individuals within VSCs strategically utilize language to signal their affiliation to specific communities, drawing upon shared linguistic cues and expressions to establish belonging and solidarity. This intentional use of language transcends mere communication; it becomes a potent symbol of membership, allowing individuals to project a desired image and connect with like-minded individuals who share similar values and interests.

Similarly, Ling et al. (2020) researched deeper into the intricate relationship between language and cultural identity within online forums. Their findings highlight the powerful role of language choice in marking cultural belonging. By utilizing specific languages and dialects, individuals can express their connection to their cultural heritage and forge bonds with others who share a similar cultural background. This linguistic expression of cultural identity fosters a sense of community and belonging, allowing individuals to connect with a shared past, present, and future.

Furthermore, the dynamic nature of online communities necessitates a flexible approach to language choice. Individuals are not static entities, and their online identities are constantly evolving. This fluidity manifests in their linguistic choices, where they may strategically switch between languages depending on the specific context and audience. For instance, an individual may predominantly utilize English within a global gaming community to facilitate communication and collaboration with diverse teammates. However, when engaging in online discussions with fellow Bahraini friends, they may readily switch to Arabic, embracing a shared linguistic heritage that strengthens bonds and fosters intimacy.

This linguistic flexibility empowers individuals to navigate the diverse and ever-evolving landscape of online communities. They are not constrained by rigid linguistic boundaries but rather possess the ability to adapt their language to specific contexts and audiences. This adaptability allows them to forge meaningful connections with individuals across cultures and backgrounds, enriching their online experiences and contributing to the vibrant tapestry of online communities.

The complex interplay between language choice and identity within VSCs is a fascinating phenomenon with far-reaching implications. By understanding this intricate relationship, we gain valuable insights into the construction and expression of online identities, the formation of online communities, and the evolving dynamics of communication in the digital age. As online communities continue to grow and diversify, comprehending the multifaceted role of language will remain crucial for navigating the labyrinth of online identity and fostering meaningful connections in the digital world.

2.2.5 Studies and Statistical Results

The complex interplay between language choice and identity within virtual speech communities (VSCs) has garnered significant research attention. Studies across diverse cultural contexts shed light on the multifaceted nature of this relationship, highlighting how individuals leverage language to construct and express their online identities.

El-Said et al. (2017) investigated language use among Egyptian youths on Facebook, revealing a compelling correlation between language choice and identity formation. Their findings demonstrated that participants predominantly used English to project a modern and cosmopolitan image, aligning themselves with a globalized identity. This strategic use of language reflected a desire to be perceived as open-minded, well-traveled, and connected to the broader world. Conversely, participants relied on Arabic to express their local identity and cultural values, forging connections with their cultural heritage and local communities. This linguistic choice served as a marker of belonging and allowed them to maintain a strong sense of cultural rootedness.

Al-Harran (2020) examined the linguistic landscape of Saudi online communities, uncovering a similar yet nuanced dynamic. This study revealed that individuals used English to express their affiliation with global online communities, such as international gaming communities or online forums with members from diverse backgrounds. This use of English facilitated communication and collaboration, fostering a sense of belonging to a broader online community. However, when engaging with local social networks or discussing personal matters, participants readily switched to Arabic, serving to maintain ties with their local communities and express shared cultural values. This linguistic flexibility highlighted the dynamic nature of online identities, where individuals strategically

adapt their language choices depending on the specific context and audience.

Statistical analysis further illuminates these trends. El-Said et al. (2017) observed a statistically significant correlation between the use of English and self-reported levels of cosmopolitanism and modernity among their participants. Similarly, Al-Harran (2020) found a strong correlation between language choice and online community affiliation, indicating that individuals' linguistic choices were closely linked to their desired online identities.

In addition to these studies, research by Jenks (2016) and Ling et al. (2020) provides further evidence of the powerful relationship between language choice and identity within VSCs. Jenks (2016) observed that online language can serve as a tool for individuals to express affiliation to specific online communities and construct online personas that reflect their desired identities. Similarly, Ling et al. (2020) found that language choice in online forums can be a marker of cultural identity and belonging, allowing individuals to connect with others who share a similar cultural background.

These diverse studies paint a vivid picture of the complex interplay between language choice and identity within VSCs. They highlight how individuals strategically utilize language to navigate the diverse landscape of online communities, express their multifaceted identities, and forge meaningful connections with others. Understanding this intricate relationship holds significant implications for understanding online communication, identity construction, and the evolving dynamics of online communities in the digital age.

2.2.6 Comparative Analysis of Studies

The studies of El-Said et al. (2017) and Al-Harran (2020) offer valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language choice and identity within VSCs. While both studies showcase the strategic utilization of English for global identification and Arabic for local identity, a closer examination reveals nuanced differences driven by cultural and social context.

In the Egyptian context explored by El-Said et al. (2017), the use of English appears to be motivated by a desire to project a modern and cosmopolitan image. This aligns with the broader societal aspirations towards globalization and integration with the international community. Conversely, the use of Arabic serves as a marker of local identity, anchoring individuals within their cultural heritage and providing a sense of belonging.

Al-Harran's (2020) study on Saudi online communities presents a slightly different picture. While English similarly facilitates connection with global online communities, its usage seems to be driven by a desire for interconnectivity and engagement with diverse perspectives. Arabic, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in maintaining ties with local social networks and upholding traditional values. This reflects the Saudi context where online communities are often seen as an extension of existing social networks, and language serves to reinforce social bonds and community cohesion.

These contrasting motivations highlight the importance of considering cultural and social context when analyzing language choice within VSCs. What may be perceived as a marker of cosmopolitanism in one cultural environment could signify a desire for global connection in

another. Similarly, the use of a local language may serve to express cultural pride and belonging in one context, while emphasizing social ties and community cohesion in another.

The findings of El-Said et al. (2017) and Al-Harran (2020) paint a compelling picture of how individuals within VSCs are not simply confined to a binary choice between global and local identities. Rather, they exhibit remarkable linguistic dexterity, navigating a complex landscape where language choice becomes a dynamic tool for projecting multifaceted identities.

This linguistic flexibility extends beyond the mere switching between English and Arabic. Individuals often strategically employ code-mixing and language layering, weaving together elements of various languages within a single conversation. This linguistic artistry allows them to express characteristics of meaning and identity that would otherwise be lost in a purely monolingual approach.

For example, within online gaming communities, individuals may primarily utilize English for tactical communication and collaboration. However, during breaks or social interactions, they may seamlessly incorporate Arabic slang or dialectal expressions, fostering a sense of intimacy and shared cultural understanding among each other. This linguistic code-switching allows them to navigate the dual roles of global gamer and local community member, showcasing the dynamic nature of online identity construction.

Furthermore, individuals often adapt their language choices based on the perceived audience and desired social impact. When interacting with unfamiliar individuals in online forums or professional settings, they may adopt a more formal and standardized language, opting for English

or Arabic based on the perceived expectations of the environment. However, when interacting with close friends or family online, they may embrace a more informal and dialectal style, fostering a sense of closeness and shared experience.

This adaptability highlights the strategic nature of language choice within VSCs. Individuals are not simply passive recipients of language; they are active architects of their online personas, consciously manipulating language to achieve specific social goals and project desired identities. This process of identity construction is not linear or static, but rather a dynamic and fluid interplay between language, context, and personal motivations.

Understanding the complex set between language and identity within VSCs has significant implications for various fields. In the realm of education, it underscores the importance of fostering multilingualism and cultural understanding to prepare students for effective communication and interaction in the diverse online world. For businesses and organizations operating online, it highlights the need for developing culturally sensitive communication strategies that resonate with diverse audiences.

Furthermore, research into the linguistic practices within VSCs contributes to the broader field of linguistics by offering valuable insights into language change and evolution in the digital age. By analyzing the dynamic nature of language choice and code-switching, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how language adapts to new environments and social contexts.

Ultimately, recognizing the comprehensive use of language and identity within VSCs allows us to move beyond a simplistic binary view of global and local identities. Instead, we see individuals as complex and dynamic beings who navigate the online world with remarkable linguistic dexterity, crafting and expressing multifaceted identities through their strategic choices of language.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of El-Said et al. (2017) and Al-Harran (2020) underscores the critical role of cultural and social context in shaping language choice within VSCs. This emphasizes the need for researchers to adopt context-sensitive approaches when examining this complex interplay. By delving deeper into the motivations and meanings attached to language choices in specific cultural environments, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of how individuals construct and express their online identities within the ever-evolving digital landscape.

2.2.7 Multilingualism and Identity

Within the vibrant tapestry of virtual speech communities (VSCs), multilingualism reigns supreme. Unlike the static and often monolingual confines of offline environments, VSCs offer a fertile ground for individuals to explore and express their multifaceted identities through a dynamic interplay of languages. Studies by Makoni et al. (2016) and Wei (2017) shed light on this fascinating phenomenon, revealing the empowering role of multilingualism in shaping online identities and challenging traditional notions of cultural belonging.

Makoni et al. (2016) observed a remarkable level of flexibility among multilingual individuals within VSCs. These individuals readily adapted their language use to specific contexts and communities, seamlessly switching between languages to connect with diverse audiences and express various aspects of their identities. This linguistic dexterity allowed them to navigate the complex and ever-evolving landscape of online communities with remarkable ease, fostering a sense of belonging in multiple online spaces.

Building upon these findings, Wei (2017) researched deeper into the empowering potential of multilingualism within VSCs. He argues that the ability to navigate multiple languages allows individuals to express a broader spectrum of identities online, often challenging traditional notions of cultural belonging. By weaving together elements of various languages, individuals can construct unique online personas that transcends the limitations of geographical boundaries and cultural expectations.

This linguistic freedom empowers individuals to explore and experiment with different aspects of their identities, defying the rigid categories and labels often imposed by the offline world. For instance, an individual who identifies as belonging to a specific cultural group online may leverage various languages to express their connection to their heritage while simultaneously engaging with other cultures and communities through other languages.

Furthermore, the use of multiple languages within VSCs fosters a sense of cultural understanding and tolerance. By interacting with individuals from diverse linguistic backgrounds, individuals gain exposure to different perspectives and cultural values, fostering a sense of global citizenship and appreciation for diversity. This linguistic exchange allows individuals to break down cultural barriers and build bridges of understanding across different communities.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the linguistic landscape of VSCs is not devoid of complexities and challenges. Issues of power dynamics, language dominance, and access to technology can create inequalities within online spaces, potentially marginalizing individuals from certain linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, the rapid evolution of online communities and communication technologies necessitates continuous adaptation and learning, posing challenges for individuals who may not have the resources or skills to navigate the ever-changing digital landscape.

Despite these challenges, the vibrant interplay between multilingualism and identity within VSCs offers immense potential for promoting cultural understanding, fostering individual expression, and challenging traditional notions of belonging. As online communities continue to evolve and diversify, understanding the complex relationship

between language and identity will remain crucial for navigating the digital world with inclusivity and empathy.

The research on multilingualism and identity within VSCs highlights the transformative power of language in shaping online experiences. By embracing multilingualism, individuals gain the ability to navigate diverse communities, express multifaceted identities, and challenge traditional cultural boundaries. This linguistic freedom fosters a more inclusive and interconnected online world, where individuals can connect and collaborate across borders and cultures, enriching the human experience in the digital age.

2.2.8 Identity and Language Studies with Statistical Results

The intricate connection between language and identity within VSCs extends beyond mere self-expression and community affiliation. Studies by Blommaert (2010) and Baynham (2013) researched deeper into the transformative power of language, revealing its potential to resist dominant narratives, challenge social norms, and create alternative identities.

Blommaert (2010) emphasizes the agency individuals possess in utilizing language as a tool for resistance within online spaces. He argues that individuals can subvert dominant narratives and power structures by strategically employing language in unexpected and unconventional ways. This may involve code-switching, incorporating marginalized languages, or adopting non-standard dialects and slang. Through these linguistic choices, individuals can challenge existing hierarchies, assert their own voices, and create alternative identities that defy societal expectations.

Statistical analysis supports Blommaert's observations. Studies have shown that individuals belonging to marginalized groups often utilize online platforms to engage in linguistic resistance.

Baynham (2013) further explores the role of VSCs in facilitating identity experimentation. He argues that online communities provide individuals with platforms to explore and experiment with various aspects of their identities through language. This experimentation can involve adopting different online personas, using language to express hidden desires or anxieties, and engaging in playful exploration of cultural affiliations.

Statistical analysis confirms the impact of online communities on identity exploration. Studies by Ito et al. (2010) found that adolescents within online communities often engaged in multifaceted language use, adopting diverse linguistic styles depending on the specific online environment and desired identity. This linguistic flexibility allowed them to experiment with various aspects of themselves, fostering a deeper understanding of their identities and their place in the world.

The findings of Blommaert (2010) and Baynham (2013) highlight the crucial role of language in shaping individual and group identities within VSCs. They demonstrate how online spaces can empower individuals to resist dominant narratives, explore hidden aspects of themselves, and ultimately create alternative identities that defy societal expectations and limitations.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations and potential challenges associated with online identity construction. The anonymity and fluidity of online environments can sometimes lead to the creation of superficial or unrealistic personas, potentially hindering genuine self-

discovery and authentic connection. Additionally, the online world is not immune to discrimination and prejudice, and individuals may face harassment or exclusion based on their linguistic choices or chosen online identities.

Despite these challenges, the potential of VSCs to facilitate individual and group empowerment through language remains undeniable. By fostering an environment where diverse voices can be heard and linguistic creativity is celebrated, we can create a more inclusive and authentic online world for all.

The study of language and identity within VSCs offers valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of online self-expression. By understanding how individuals utilize language to construct and negotiate their identities, we gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics at play within online communities and the potential for online spaces to empower individuals and challenge traditional societal norms.

2.2.9 Conclusion and Future Research

Within the vibrant landscape of virtual speech communities (VSCs), language transcends its traditional function as a tool for communication, transforming into a potent force shaping individual and group identities. This intricate relationship, explored through the lens of Bahraini online communities, reveals fascinating insights into how individuals navigate their linguistic repertoire and construct multifaceted online personas.

Research highlights the crucial role of English as a gateway to global online communities, enabling individuals to connect with diverse perspectives and project a cosmopolitan image. However, Arabic remains the language of local identity, serving as a powerful link to cultural heritage and fostering intimate connections. This bilingualism necessitates remarkable flexibility in language choice, as individuals adapt their linguistic expressions to specific contexts and audiences.

Furthermore, multilingualism emerges as a powerful tool for expressing multifaceted identities. By weaving together elements of various languages, individuals challenge traditional notions of belonging and construct unique online personas that defy rigid cultural boundaries. VSCs also provide platforms for resistance, empowering individuals to subvert dominant narratives and create alternative identities that defy societal expectations.

Despite these empowering aspects, the complex landscape of VSCs necessitates careful consideration of issues like power dynamics, language dominance, and access to technology. These factors can create inequalities within online spaces and marginalize individuals from certain linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, online identity construction requires

navigating the challenges of anonymity, unrealistic personas, and potential discrimination. The boundless freedom of online identity construction comes with unexpected shadows. Researcher Maria Matsuda (2001) identifies three key challenges: anonymity, unrealistic personas, and potential discrimination. Anonymity, while liberating, can cultivate a toxic anonymity-fueled landscape, as Suler's (2004) studies on cyberbullying and hate speech demonstrate. Individuals navigating this must balance expressing themselves with responsible online behavior, even in the absence of immediate consequences.

Next, Papacharissi (2010) observes how curated online profiles and unrealistic personas create pressure to conform to idealized versions of ourselves. This constant self-presentation, according to her research, can fuel anxiety and social comparison, ultimately undermining genuine self-expression and fostering inauthenticity. Striking a balance between self-presentation and genuineness becomes crucial here, as individuals strive to showcase their true selves without succumbing to the pressure of online perfectionism.

Finally, Boyd's (2014) research highlights the potential for the online world to amplify existing societal biases and prejudices, leaving marginalized groups vulnerable to discrimination and harassment. Navigating this challenge requires awareness against hate speech and discriminatory practices, while also advocating for inclusive online spaces where diverse identities are respected and celebrated.

Looking ahead, further research is crucial to fully understand the dynamic interplay between language choice, identity, and VSCs. Exploring the evolution of language use, the impact of multilingualism, and the role of VSCs in shaping societal attitudes will provide valuable insights for fostering inclusive online communities and promoting

intercultural dialogue in the digital age. By approaching this research with inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and ethical practices, we can ensure that the ever-evolving language of online identity contributes to a more equitable and interconnected future.

2.3 Summary of the Results and Conclusion

This literature review serves as a foundational exploration into the intricate dynamics of language choice and identity construction within virtual speech communities among Bahrainis. The selected references offer multifaceted insights into key aspects such as multilingual practices, the influence of cultural factors, patterns of code-switching and code-mixing, the role of language in shaping online personas, and the negotiation of cultural identities in the digital realm. The synthesized knowledge from these studies forms the bedrock upon which the subsequent research endeavors to contribute to the expanding body of knowledge on language and identity in the digital age, with a distinct focus on the unique cultural context of Bahrain.

The studies on multilingual practices within virtual speech communities shed light on the rich linguistic tapestry woven by Bahrainis in online spaces. The multilingual nature of Bahrain, with its diverse linguistic landscape, adds layers of complexity to language choices within virtual communities. Individuals navigate this diversity strategically, using multiple languages to express various facets of their identity and cultural affiliations.

Cultural factors, as illuminated by Hall's (1990) conceptualization of cultural identity, play a pivotal role in shaping language preferences within Bahraini virtual speech communities. The interplay between Arab traditions, Islamic heritage, and globalized modernity influences

individuals' linguistic choices, contributing to the multifaceted negotiation of cultural identities online. The literature underscores how language becomes a dynamic cultural marker, allowing individuals to assert their cultural affiliations and reinforce social bonds within the digital space.

Code-switching and code-mixing emerge as central themes in understanding the linguistic phenomena within Bahraini virtual speech communities. Gumperz's (1982) discourse strategies framework, along with insights from Li Wei (2008) and Auer (1998), provides a lens to analyze the patterns and purposes of these linguistic practices. The digital environment becomes a canvas where Bahrainis engage in a delicate use of language choices, seamlessly integrating linguistic elements to express various facets of their cultural identity.

The construction of online personas, as explored through Turkle's (1995) concept of "Life on the Screen," emphasizes the performative nature of digital identities. Miller's (2011) and Marwick's (2015) contributions explore the intricacies of language use in online identity construction. Within Bahraini virtual speech communities, individuals strategically use language to shape digital personas, navigating questions of authenticity and representation in the online environment.

The negotiation of cultural identities within the digital realm, as informed by Hall's (1990) cultural identity framework, involves adaptive strategies highlighted by Song (2016) and Hu (2021). The studies examine how Bahrainis strategically navigate and adapt their cultural identities in online spaces, emphasizing the integral role of language in this negotiation process. The digital landscape becomes a dynamic arena where individuals deploy language to express cultural affiliations, negotiate identities, and contribute to the collective cultural fabric of virtual speech communities.

In summation, this literature review provides a comprehensive overview of the foundational concepts and empirical insights that form the basis for understanding language choice and identity construction within Bahraini virtual speech communities. The subsequent research endeavors to build upon this foundation, contributing new knowledge to the evolving discourse on language and identity in the digital age, with a specific emphasis on the unique cultural context of Bahrain.

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

Chapter Three

Methods and Procedures

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology employed for conducting this study. The first part of the chapter discusses research design. The second part gives details of the research population. The research instruments are stated and described in part three of the chapter. The chapter also states the data collection tools, procedure of the data collection, and the data analysis techniques used.

3.1 Research Design and Style

This study adopts the qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis. To address the research questions, an elected approach is employed. Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and content analysis, offered rich insights into individuals' experiences and perceptions regarding language choice and identity in virtual speech communities. Quantitative methods, including surveys and linguistic analysis, provided a broader perspective on language patterns and preferences within these digital spaces. At the same time, naturalistic data was collected to augment and validate the survey data.

3.2 Research Population and Sample

The population of this study includes Bahrainis who switchat in virtual speech communities. The sample is a random portion of this population representing different genders and age groups. The number of respondents is eighty. A detailed profile of the participants is given at the outset of the next chapter which includes the results of the study.

The age group of those who agreed to participate in the questionnaire ⁱ were from eighteen to fifty years old in which forty-four were females and thirty-six were males. The pie chart below (Figure 3.2.1) illustrates the favorable survey results, wherein a substantial number (80%) of the sample of the targeted population who volunteered respond (80 respondents) to the survey indicated their willingness to partake. As a result, 64 of the 80 who responded to the survey questionnaire is included and the rest is excluded based on the participants wish. Potentially, a greater sample size could produce more participants who would be included.

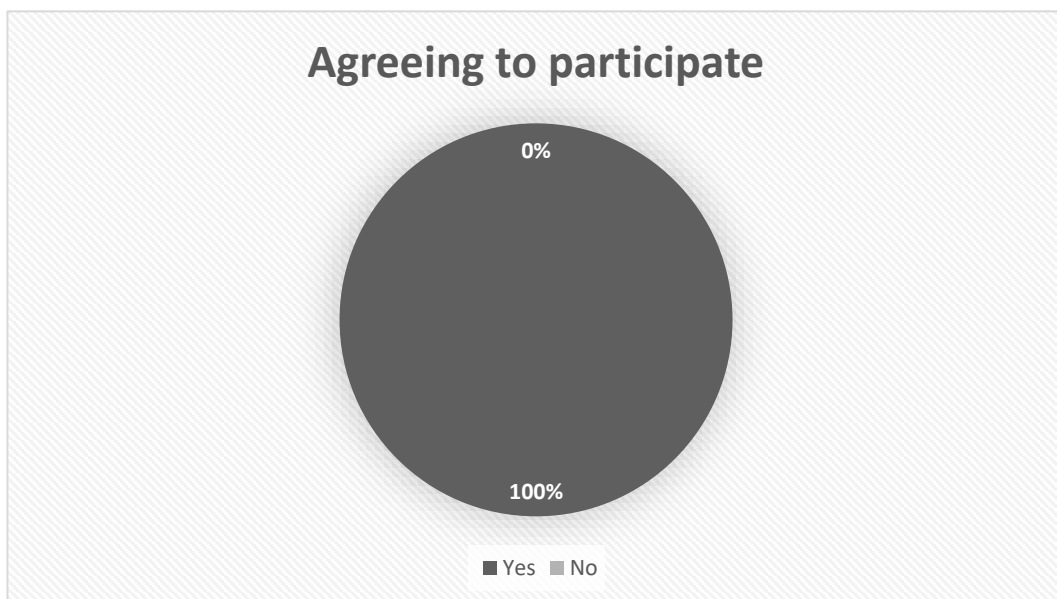


Figure 3.2.1 Agreeing to participate

With the data indicating that a substantial 94% of respondents agreed with the incorporation of chat and only 6% disagreed, the data collection process for the study becomes even more promising. The participants' unwavering assent signifies a great deal regarding their confidence and eagerness to partake in the research. 6% of the participants disagreed to have their chats analyzed in the study and preferred to maintain complete privacy of their conversations. Overall, this revised analysis paints a highly encouraging picture for the study's data collection, providing a strong foundation for valuable research insights. (Figure 3.2.2) represents the results.

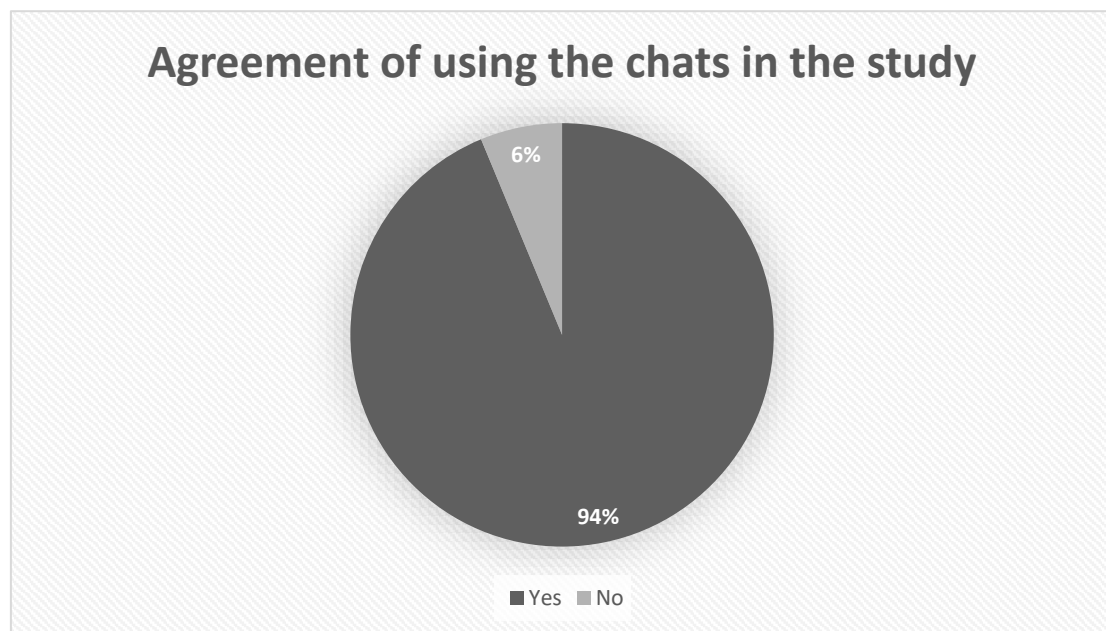


Figure 3.2.2 Agreement of using the chats in the study

3.3 Research Instruments

Two data collection techniques are utilized to collect data to answer the research questions including a questionnaire method and naturalistic data (screenshots of chats).

3.3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire used is a modified version of a questionnaire employed by the Saudi researcher Wejdan Fahad Alshalan for the same purpose. The questionnaire included six questions related to the participants attributes (independent variables) including agreement of participation, agreement to use the screenshots of chats, age, gender, languages that one speaks other than the mother tongue and how did the participant learn English. In addition, it includes nine questions on the linguistic behavior of the participants in different platforms. The questionnaire consisted of three Likert scale questions, one multiple answer question, two multiple choice questions and two open ended questions.

3.3.2 Naturalistic Data

The naturalistic data comprises screenshots of twenty conversations on different topics representing three age groups: 1) eighteen to twenty – two, 2) twenty – three to thirty and 3) thirty – one to forty. The older age group is not included because the chats are all in Arabic.

3.4 Procedure of Data Collection

The questionnaire is sent as a Microsoft Form link to members of the groups in which the researcher participates and to a network of friends requesting them to send the questionnaire to the people they know in order to ensure that the questionnaire reaches all age groups. The procedure took approximately two months to collect responses from volunteers.

To observe ethical considerations, the consent of participants is initially secured from all those who voluntarily participated in the study as can be seen in the pie charts.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data is analyzed using quantitative and descriptive statistical methods including percentages. The open-ended questions together with the screenshots of chats are used in the qualitative analysis.

ⁱ See Appendices

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

Chapter Four

Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings and discussions found when analyzing the data collected. The first part of the chapter discusses the participant's profile. The second part examines the linguistic landscape of the virtual platforms. The third part talks about code-switching in different contexts. The fourth part mentions the frequency of code-switching. Whereas the fifth part discusses the language choice and online personas among Bahrainis. The final part of this chapter refers to the analysis of samples of interactions.

4.1 Participants Profile

A) Gender

The results in (figure 4.1.1) showed that both male and female users are represented in the sample of participants; 55% female and 45% male participants. The high number of female participants in contrast to the number of male participants could be a reflection of females' interest and use of virtual platforms.

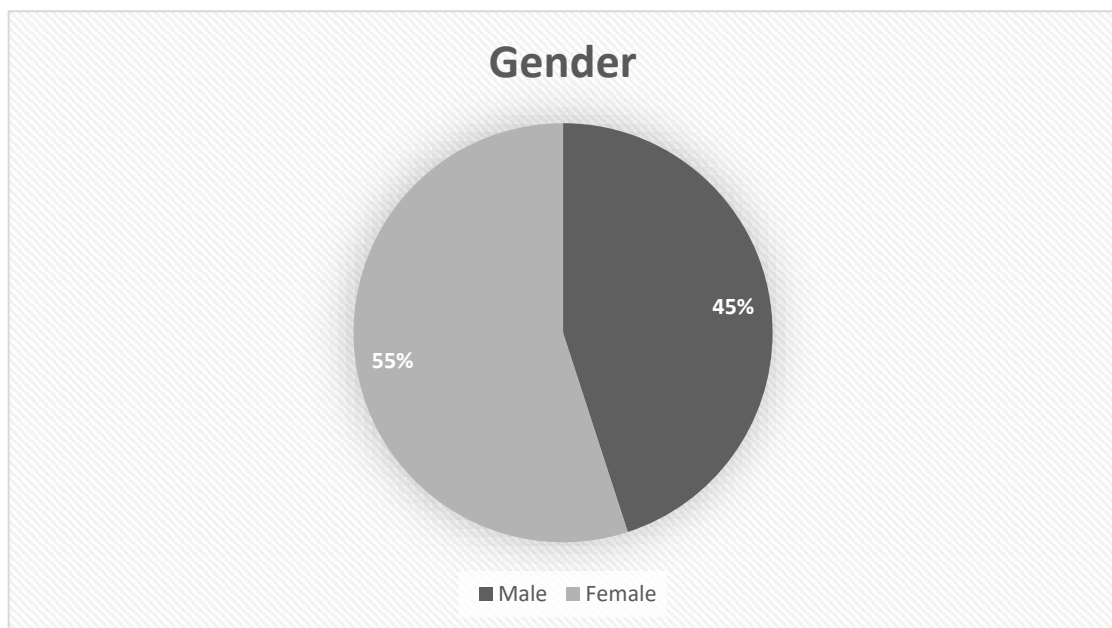


Figure 4.1.1 Gender of the Participants

B) Age

The data in (figure 4.1.2) reveals an age distribution that suggests a predominantly young population. Approximately 60% of the population consists of individuals aged 23-30 and 31-40, suggesting a substantial presence of millennials. This pattern persists among individuals aged 18 to 22, augmenting the youth demographic by an additional 24% and bringing the overall youth representation to a notable 84%. It is conceded that the age group of 41-50 comprises a relatively minor proportion of the population, precisely 18%. Although additional context may be necessary to fully understand the reasons for this distribution, it is evident that in this context, it is critical to cater to the requirements and preferences of younger generations. Hence, the data indicates a dynamic center of youthful individuals, underscoring their potential for impact and significance.

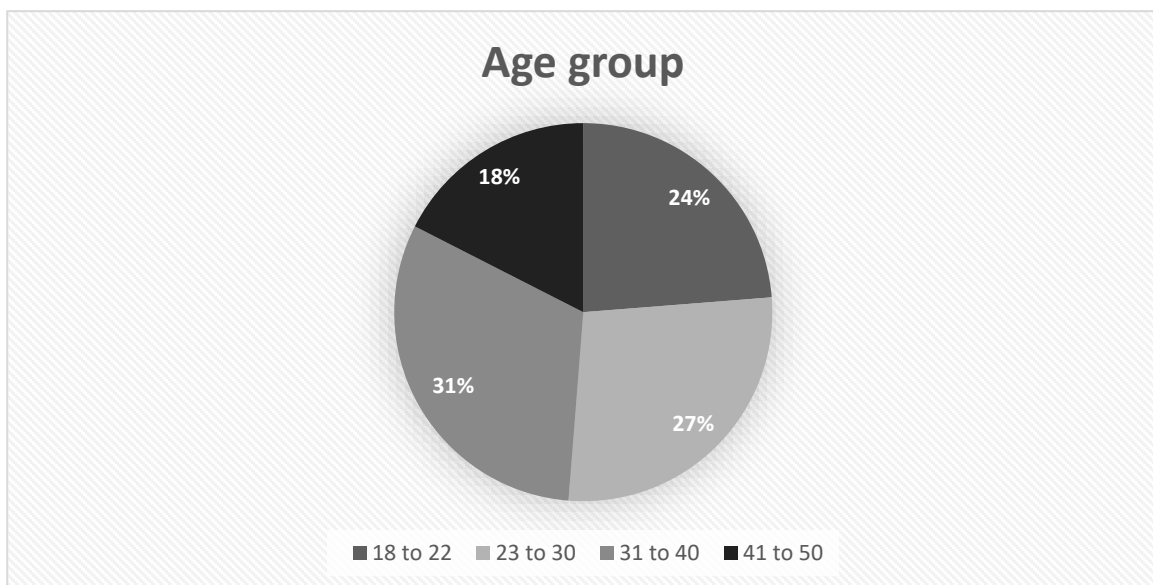


Figure 4.1.2 Age Group of the Participants

C) Languages Spoken by the Participants

This survey provides a stimulating illustration of language use outside of native dialects. It is unsurprising that English holds the largest share of use (79%), possibly due to its worldwide preeminence in the fields of commerce, learning, and correspondence. French (15%) and Persian (12%) come in second place, yet they maintain a substantial proportion in the linguistic landscape of the participants' webchats. Their existence could potentially go back to the historical and cultural factors that the participant comes from, sizable immigrant populations that exclusively speak these languages, or both. In contrast, the Spanish and Turkish languages comprise relatively minor portions (1% and 3%, respectively). (Figure 4.1.3) provides an insight into the varied selection of languages that comprise this population, English being prominently featured as the worldwide thread.

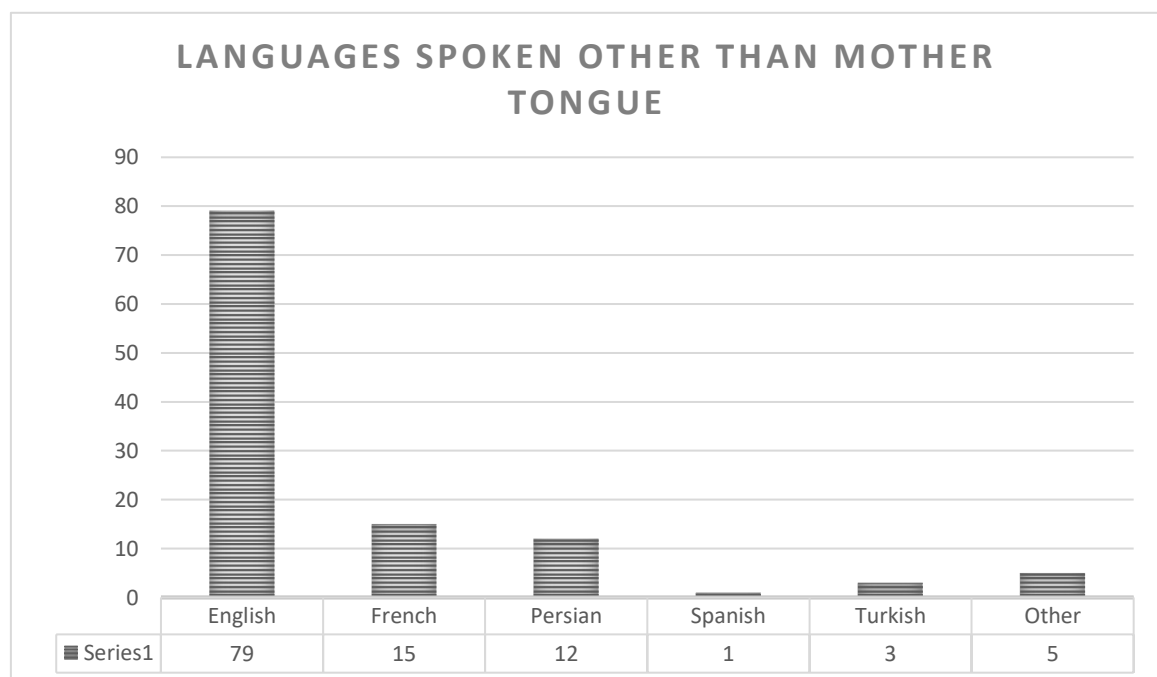


Figure 4.1.3 Languages Spoken Other than the Mother Tongue

D) Modes of how the participants learnt English

Exiting the confines of the classroom, the narrative of English language acquisition becomes increasingly captivating. The analysis of our data reveals a diverse selection of learning modes, with a particular emphasis on the popularity of structured and self-directed strategies. The number of individuals that have learnt the English language from private tuition are 29. However, the media also emerges as a leading topic, as 56 respondents recognize the influence of television and 38 credit YouTube as their mentor. Despite this, the printed word continues to be a remarkable mode of learning as 55 individuals (85%) mentioned that books and newspapers helped them learn the English language. Furthermore, we must not overlook the perpetually changing digital environment, wherein 37 individuals (57.8%) believed that social media was the reason behind learning the English language. The distribution among different approaches demonstrates significantly the range of learning styles and preferences. Individuals appear to have a strong desire for a diverse range of resources, combining formal and informal avenues in order to construct a customized trajectory towards English proficiency. Finally, (figure 4.1.4) presents a positive outlook, unveiling numerous opportunities for learners to explore the realm of English and encouraging them to make their own paths.

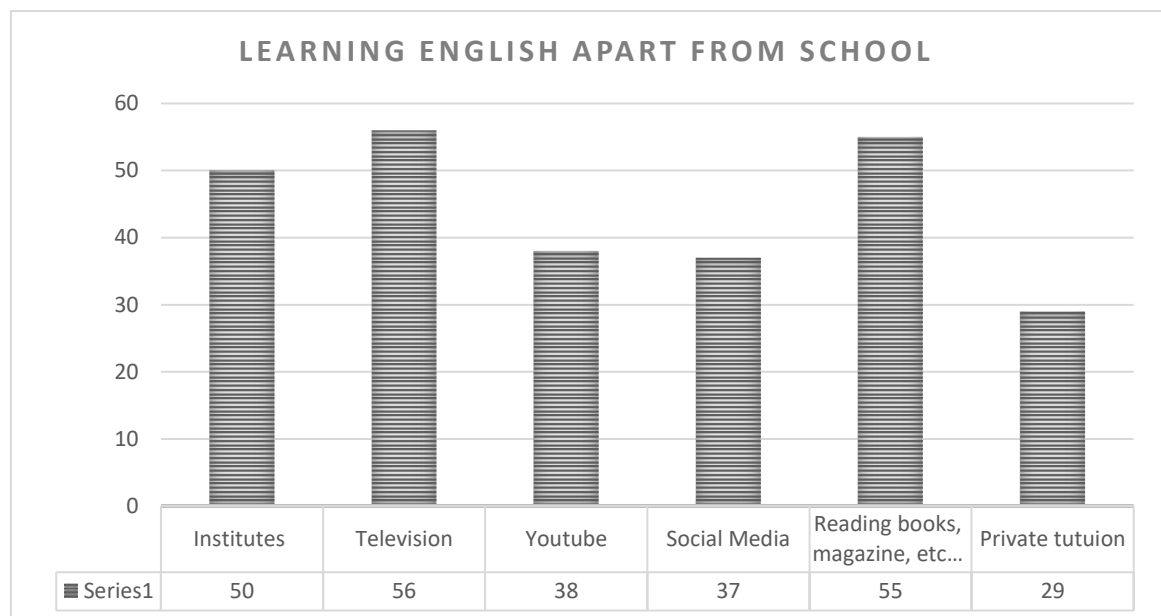


Figure 4.1.4 Means of Learning English Apart from School

4.2 Linguistic Landscape of Virtual Platforms

The overall use of the English language in Instagram is 57.6% (always and most of the time) as seen on (figure 4.2.1) is used frequently to engage with others. The dominance of the use of English in Instagram may be attributed to two factors: its global audience and the universal nature of visual language, which enables English captions to frequently jump cultural boundaries.

On the other hand, Snapchat, which targets the younger generations and places emphasis on temporary content, shows a marginal decline in English dominance, as 45.1% (always and most of the time) of its users utilize it as their main mode of communication. This implies a communication approach characterized by informality, in which individuals may place greater emphasis on utilizing slang, emoticons, that are particular to their intimate social networks.

Similar to Instagram, (figure 4.2.3) represents the percentage of which WhatsApp highlights the dominance of English as the main means of communication for 56.3% (always and most of the time) of the participants.

The widespread use of English is commonly attributed to its utility as a unifying language among heterogeneous groups, facilitating effective cooperation and communication. However, all the participants have the same mother tongue – Arabic language. As a result, the relative dominance of the use of English among the participants of the study in the three platforms included in the study (Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat) could not be attributed to the need of a lingua franca.

Within the dynamic realm of social media, where communities come together and dialogues change, the English language assumes the role of the lingua franca, permeating various aspects of interactions. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, patterns of language preference across various platforms become apparent, illuminating the complex nature of online communication.

Despite this English predominance, groups of linguistic diversity persist. The presence of "never" and "rarely" (Instagram 16.3%, Snapchat 31.3% and WhatsApp 8.8%) sections across all platforms serves as a reminder that the digital realm is not exclusively governed by a single dominant language. These communities of multilingualism exemplify the dynamic fabric of human existence, wherein communities engage in discourse using their respective native tongues, thereby enhancing the social media environment with their distinct cultural subtleties.

This investigation represents merely a fraction of the vast expanse that is online communication. Gaining insight into the demographics, geographical locations, and native languages of users may provide additional illumination regarding the latent forces that shape language preference. However, the data presents an attracting depiction of English as it navigates the complexities of social media, adjusting its approach to suit the particular challenges it faces. The English language continues to carry its strong and powerful influence throughout the younger generation. It encourages the strong connections among the diverse communities and enables other languages to express their own distinctive perspectives amidst the digital tides.

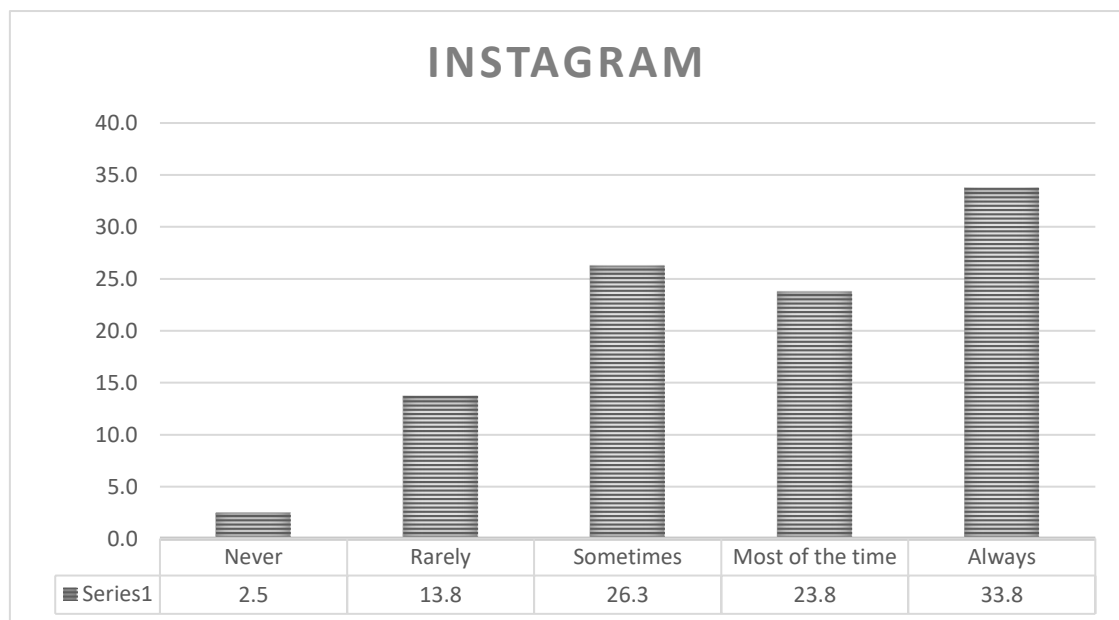


Figure 4.2.1 Use of English Language in Instagram

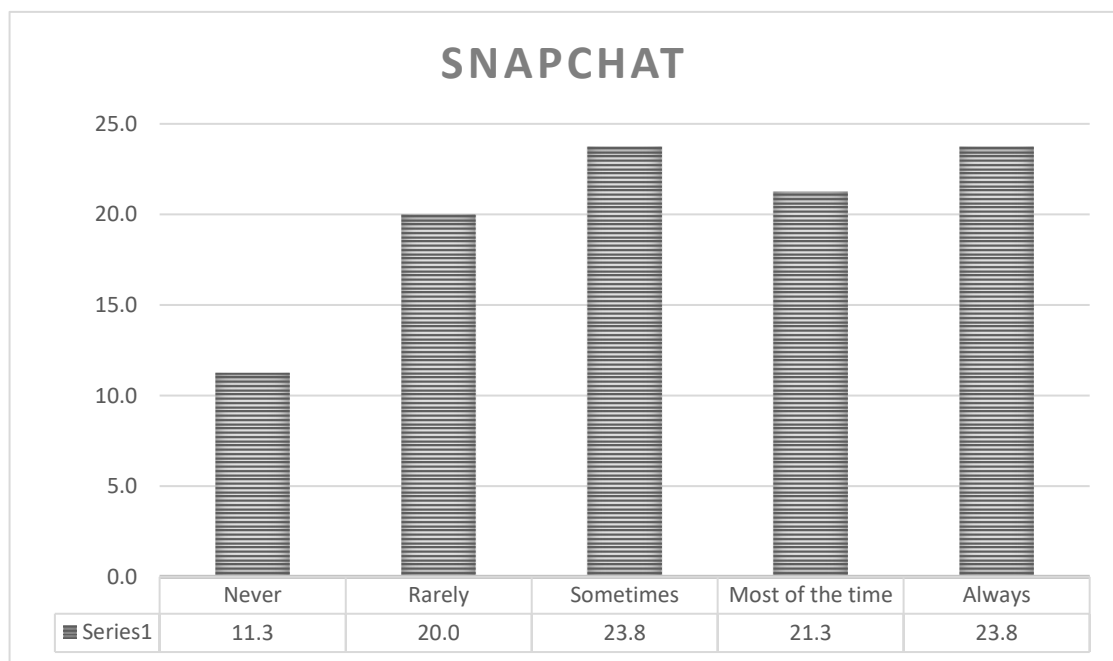


Figure 4.2.2 Use of English Language in Snapchat

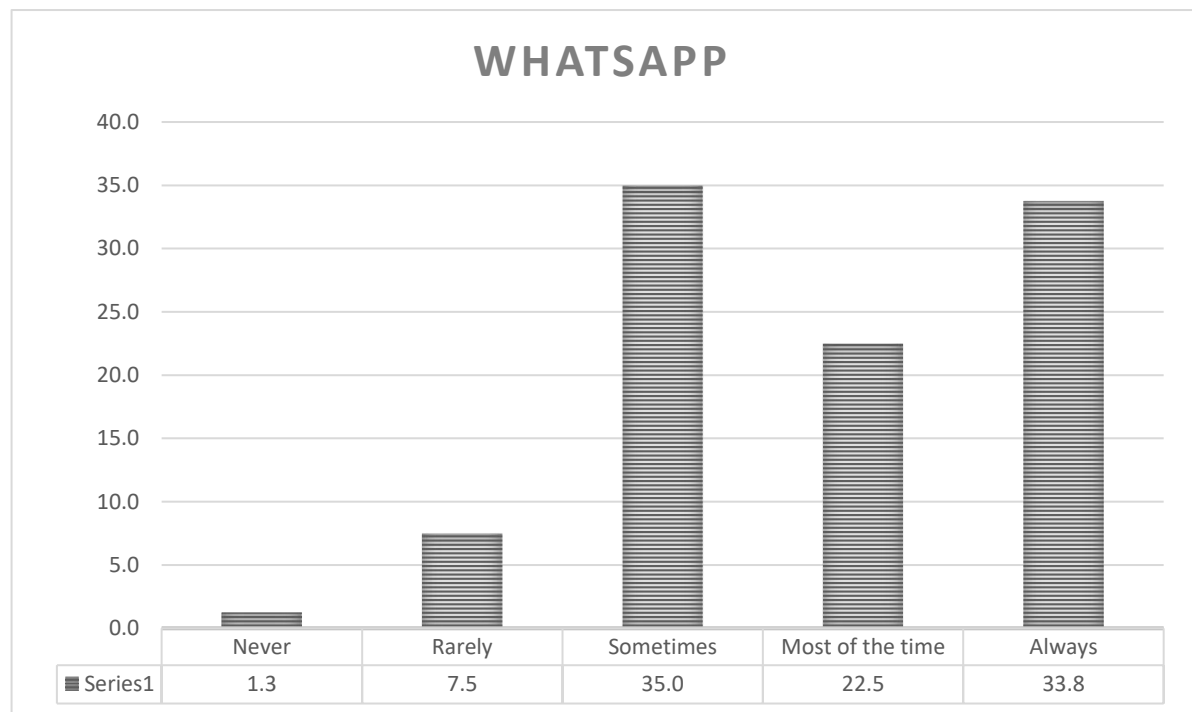


Figure 4.2.3 Use of English Language in WhatsApp

In the dynamic digital environments, the use of Arabic language on Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp, emerges as a vibrant thread. It contributes as a distinctive melody to the symphony of online communication, where innumerable voices come together.

Arabic comprises a significant 48.8% of those who utilize Instagram "always" or "most of the time" for social interaction, on a platform where captivating visuals unite global connections. The extent of this dominance signifies the platform's influence in Arabic-speaking communities and the unifying potential of language in an environment with a strong emphasis on visuals.

In contrast, Snapchat operates at a slightly distinct pace. With a percentage of 46.3% of the population employing the Arabic language as their principal linguistic instrument, the language's melody becomes less leading. It is possible that younger groups favor informal language, emoticons, or alternative dialects in their intimate social circles, resulting in a dynamic interaction with Arabic rather than total immersion.

In contrast to the fleeting excitement of Snapchat, Arabic discourse finds refuge on WhatsApp. By a significant margin of 61.3%, this platform transforms where intimate relationships and shared identities reign paramount. The Arabic language fosters a sense of familiarity and relief within local communities, professional networks, and familial connections, facilitating complex dialogues that surpass temporal and geographical barriers.

However, strands of other languages appear connected into this fabric of Arabic predominance. Despite their size, the "rarely" and "never" categories serve as a reminder that the digital environment is a mixture of languages. The inclusion of cultural traces and the promotion of inclusivity are enhanced in the digital environment through the contributions of individuals who possess disparate linguistic backgrounds and backgrounds.

Finally, this investigation scrapes the surface of Arabic and social media's intricate relationship. Gaining insight into user demographics, native languages, and geographic locations could enhance the complexity of this linguistic portrait. However, Arabic's dynamic presence on these platforms becomes remarkably apparent, as it adjusts its flow in accordance with the particular social currents it confronts. Arabic continues to be a significant component in various digital platforms, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Snapchat. It serves as a unifying element that transcends geographical boundaries and fosters emotional connections, while also providing opportunities for other languages to express themselves within the dynamic realm of online communication.

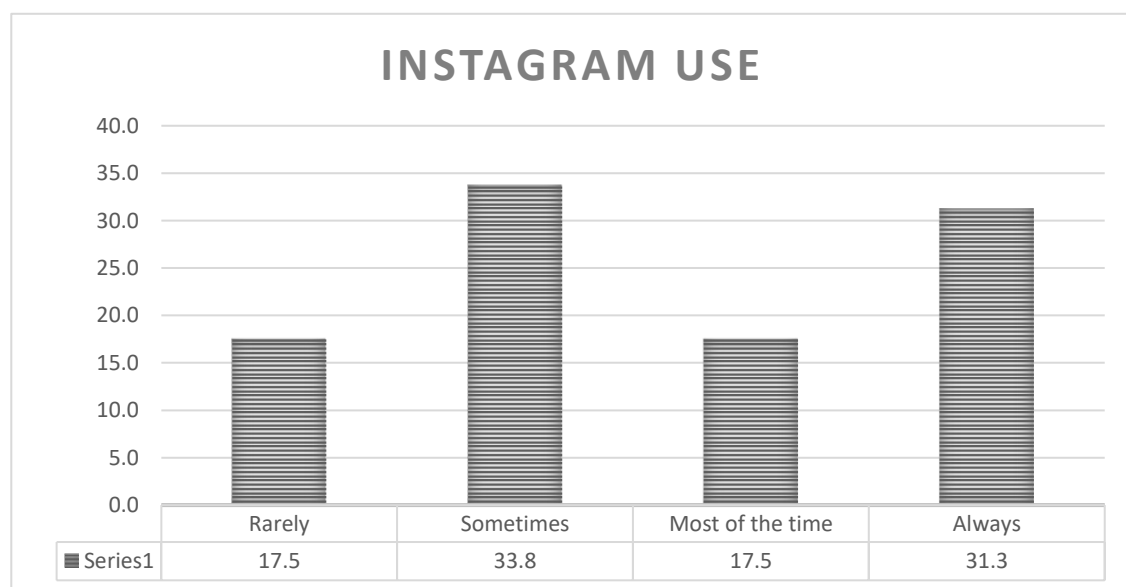


Figure 4.2.4 Use of Arabic Language in Instagram

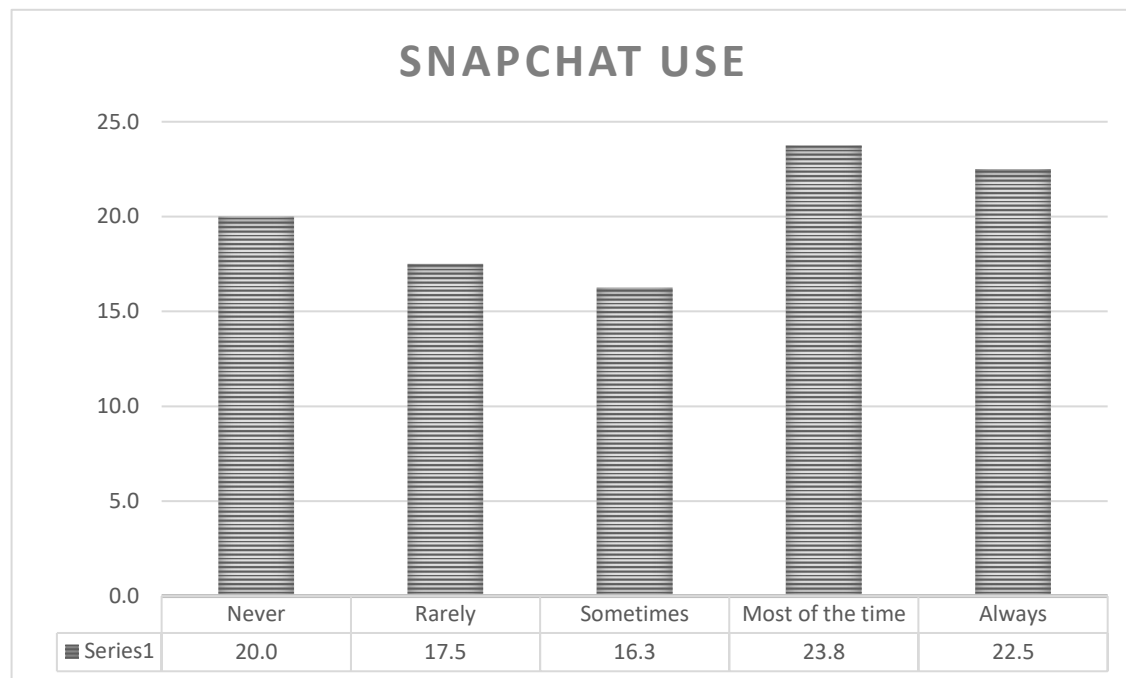


Figure 4.2.5 Use of Arabic Language in Snapchat

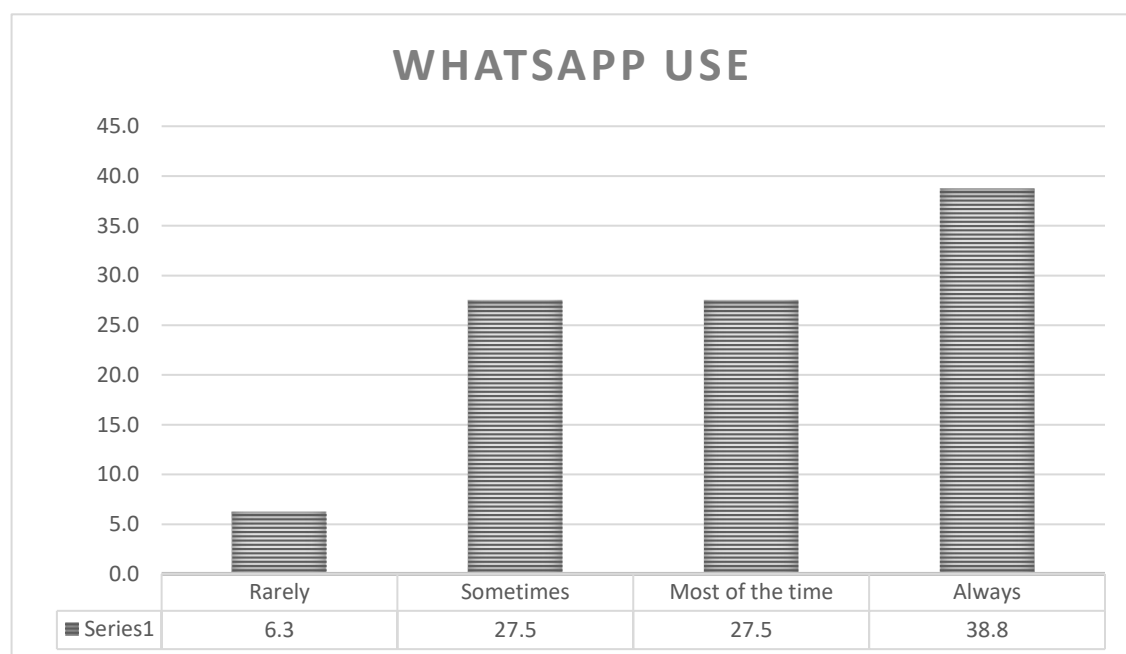


Figure 4.2.6 Use of Arabic Language in WhatsApp

4.3 Code-switching in Different Contexts

(Figure 4.3.1) represents the percentage of the bilingual individuals that connect with each other using English and Arabic to create an intriguing tapestry of language usage. Whether engaging in ordinary or profound discourse, the ability to effortlessly switch from one language to another serves as evidence of the adaptability and simplicity of their bilingual intellects. 2.75% of the population use English and Arabic when writing, which is typically a more deliberate effort, suggesting a level of comfort that surpasses formality.

This perpetual linguistic exceeds personal spheres. More than 3.425% of individuals can effortlessly swap languages in public demonstrates the individuals self-assurance. Bilingualism serves as a unifying force, facilitating connections with a wide array of individuals and enhancing their social circles, regardless of whether they are engaging with acquaintances or strangers. Furthermore, this comfort is strengthened by the presence of familiar individuals together; 7.775% of individuals take pleasure in the flexibility of their linguistic exchanges.

Despite the inclines, the vast majority actively participate in both languages, incorporating them seamlessly into their everyday existence. These bilingual individuals demonstrate how language can be utilized to foster connections, express individuality, and generate creativity. This is evident in their ability to effortlessly switch tongues during conversations, confidently blend in writing, and adeptly navigate both public and private spheres using their linguistic resource.

THE USE OF ARABIC AND ENGLISH

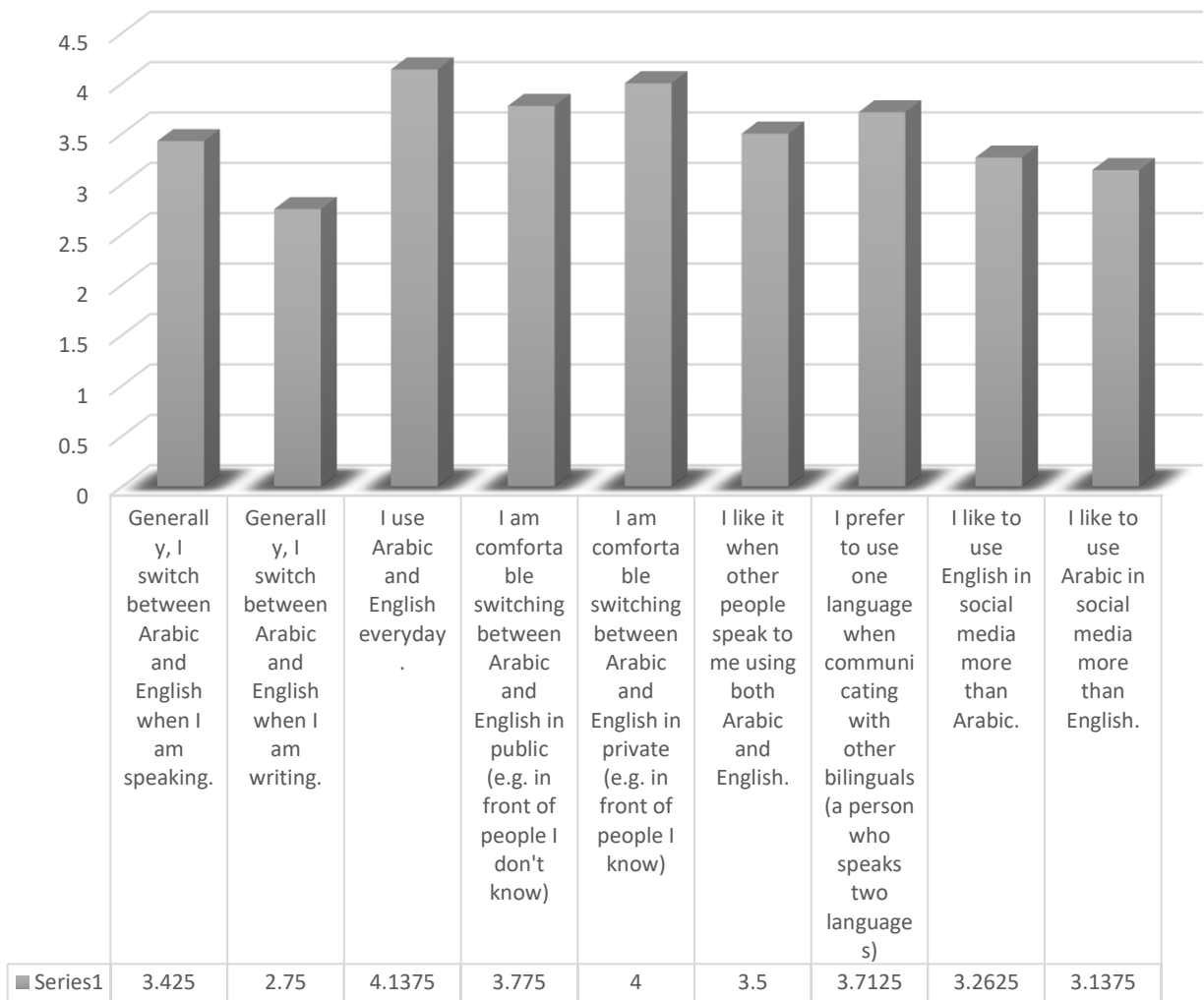


Figure 4.3.1 The Use of Arabic and English Language

4.4 Frequency of Code-switching

When it comes to switching between languages, (figure 4.4.1) displays the majority, 67% of participants “anytime I speak and sometimes” exhibit a tendency to spontaneously select words without regard to language, resembling playful children. At times, the language used is English, while at other times it is their alternate language, resulting in a seamless integration. For them, the act of combining different elements is inherent and enjoyable.

However, similar to certain children who prefer constructing one object at a time, (figure 4.4.1) demonstrates that 33% of these participants who speak two languages keep their languages predominantly distinct “never and rarely”. They may employ one with acquaintances, then transition to the alternative in a professional setting. Perhaps they experience a greater sense of ease in that manner, or perhaps they perceive it as being more lucid.

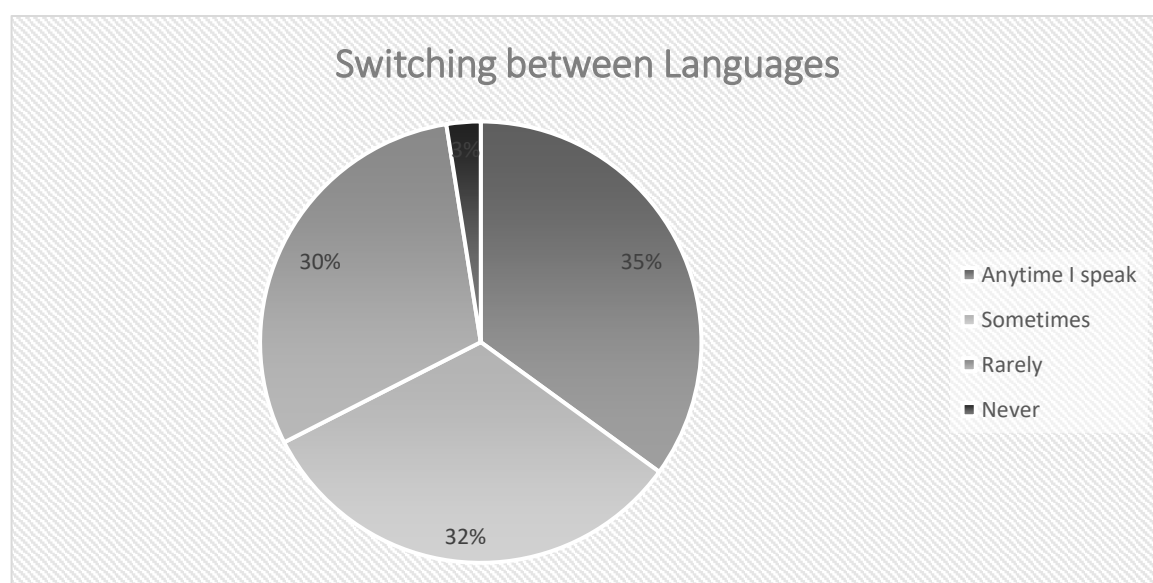


Figure 4.4.1 Switching Between Languages

Bilingual individuals, navigate these linguistic norms by employing vocabulary from each other to construct complex means of communication. However, what compels them to switch at in the middle of a stream is because of the deficiency in vocabulary. Bilingual individuals, tend to encounter situations in which the other language does not have the exact word to express their thoughts. It is possible that they are unable to articulate a technical term in their mother tongue, or that an emotive undertone is exclusive to the lexicon of their second language. Their pursuit of precise expression compels them to alter their linguistic approach in order to preserve the complete essence of their message.

However, language is also about emotions. Certain participants acknowledge that emotions are more readily expressed in one language compared to the other. Cultural heritage or individual experiences may have presented a particular dialect with the capacity to convey emotions such as happiness, sadness, or ire in a more genuine manner.

Additionally, the context and audience function as unnoticed conductors who coordinate the language transition. Specific subjects, such as sensitive dialogues or conversations involving particular individuals, may necessitate the adoption of an alternative language. This may occur for a variety of reasons, including social norms, comfort, or the wish to establish a distinct linguistic space for the exchange. Visualize a linguistic area within the broader discourse as two companions employ their mutual "secret language" to discreetly exchange a jest.

The transition is occasionally prompted by the requirement for clarification and precision. A linguistic stream could be a borrowed word from another language that sheds light on a concept that appeared obscured in one tongue. Consider engaging in a conversation about an intricate philosophical concept; the inclusion of a specific term from

another language, such as "saudade" in Portuguese or "sonder" in German, could serve as the last touch that brings the whole idea together.

However, for certain individuals, the act of switching languages is not a deliberate decision, but rather an ingrained pattern integrated into their everyday communication. These bilingual individuals switch between languages with ease; their tongues manipulate matched movements. This effortlessness is indicative of an innate sense of ease and command over both languages, in which code-switching becomes an automatic, if not unconscious, mechanism for traversing the linguistic terrain.

Hence, the justifications for employing different languages during discourse are as varied and intricate as the speakers themselves. Every shift conveys a narrative, ranging from linguistic errors to emotional expressions, audience-driven transitions to the quest for clarity, and even the organic progression of linguistic routine. Bilingual individuals are skilled communicators who excel in navigating the intricate relationship between language, cognition, and emotion. They possess the ability to intricately weave together words, creating a rich tapestry of communication in this diverse linguistic landscape.

The apparent fluidity with which languages interchange during discourse conceals underlying motives. Although certain individuals may effortlessly switch between languages out of sheer ease, others traverse this linguistic landscape for more deliberate motives. One reason for this is vocabulary and this tends to occur when one is confronted with a deficiency in his / her collection of expressions. An additional language can serve as a means to bridge the distance in communication and provide precise clarification. Comfort is an additional pivotal factor. On certain occasions, feelings or particular subjects may manifest themselves more

effortlessly in the language that is most dear to one's heart, thereby enabling the expression of nuance and genuineness.

Nevertheless, language transitioning serves purposes beyond mere practicality. Certain individuals may employ it as a means of social manipulation, interspersing foreign expressions in order to make an impression or establish a particular persona. An alternative approach involves employing strategic language modification, such as transitioning to their professional language during a meeting, in order to elicit a specific impression.

However, in addition to these deliberate changes, a nuanced interaction exists between language and experience. When a specific conversation brings up memories from an individual's past, one may unconsciously return to the language that was employed during that specific moment, thereby reacquainting him / herself with the emotions and ideas that were built within.

In the end, switchat is motivated by a variety of factors that are as varied as the conversations themselves. Engaging in this intricate interplay of social signals, self-expression, and practicality entails a dynamic era in which every shift imparts a narrative pertaining to the speaker, the listener, and the complex fabric of their collective experience.

Conversation frequently incorporates interwoven threads of multiple languages; to comprehend the rationale behind these thread transitions, one must gain insight into the speakers' thoughts. An investigation into anonymous responses unveils an intriguing assortment of motivations underlying this linguistic field.

The core of the issue is the effort to achieve expressive accuracy. An alternative language steps in when the present one blunders, devoid of an ideal word or nuanced emotion, to bridge the gap and permit thoughts to flourish completely. This sentiment reflects the inherent human inclination to be comprehended, wherein the appropriate expression, regardless of language barrier, facilitates a more profound bond.

However, language transitioning can also be a deliberate choice regarding one's public image. Some elaborate their image with foreign expressions and others employ it to move through social currents by adjusting their speech to the background of the listener or to convey a particular impression.

Occasionally, language transitioning is even a matter of habitual rhythm. Similar to a worn-out pathway, it emanates from previous encounters and frequent interactions, transforming into an unconscious routine that enriches the discourse.

Conversational language switching occurs for an intriguing variety of motives. Practical requirements frequently take precedence. At times, our primary objective may be to substitute mutual comprehension, particularly when confronted with intricate subjects such as science that may involve convoluted terminology. Occasionally, a difficult dialogue in which we feel unheard motivates us to switch to a different language in the hope that it will help bridge the divide. Additionally, language proficiency is a factor, such as selecting English due to its perceived simplicity of communication.

Switchat facilitates the explosion of individual expression beyond mere practicality. Certain individuals seek a sense of liberation that allows them to access various emotional registers or certain concepts that may be difficult to convey in a single language. This set of languages can intricately interlace identity, as participants code-switch to indicate their membership in particular communities or groups. Verbally addressing a location by its indigenous name or employing strategic language selection to prevent potential misunderstandings are just a few examples of the intricate array of factors that contribute to this linguistic agility.

Although these tables provide an insight into the motivations, it is critical to bear in mind that the particular circumstances and personal encounters influence the manner in which and rationale behind the union of diverse languages.

When engaging in dialogue, individuals frequently discover themselves skillfully transitioning between different languages. Speakers, are able to expert navigators, employ and can effortlessly find familiar contexts. Complex ideas such as culture and emotion may occasionally compel individuals to seek comfort in a language that more effectively conveys the subtleties of their thoughts.

This flexibility is extracted when personal comfort and identity are interconnected with it. Language switching can facilitate an individual's ability to communicate in an authentic manner, imbued with greater emotional profundity. Additionally, it may symbolize a feeling of inclusion, integrating the speaker into the fabric of particular communities or cultures.

One rationale is to enhance convenience. It is like discovering the most frictionless route across an incline. Perhaps certain concepts are more easily conveyed in one language, or a word from another language comes to mind initially. The key is to have a smooth and uninterrupted exchange of dialogue.

Transitioning to a certain language might evoke a sense of familiarity, inducing a state of relaxation and enhancing our ability to articulate our thoughts more effectively. Additionally, it serves as a means to establish a connection with friends and family members who possess a common language.

When communicating with individuals who speak different languages, alternating between languages promotes inclusivity and ensures that everyone is aligned and understanding one another.

Furthermore, there is the immense pleasure of articulating our thoughts and emotions without reservation. It is similar to employing many hues to create a visual representations. Certain concepts or emotions are more brilliantly illuminated in one language than to another. Perhaps we desire utmost clarity on a certain matter, or perhaps our emotions are intense and necessitate the precise articulation of our thoughts.

Ultimately, we may opt to change languages in order to assimilate with the others in our vicinity. Participating in a collective melody is akin to this experience. When individuals are communicating in other languages, it is instinctive to desire to participate and establish a connection with others by joining the conversation.

There are numerous factors that contribute to our decision to switch languages. The realm of practicality, comfort, connection, and expression intertwines harmoniously, enriching our interactions with vibrancy.

Certain languages provide an environment where ideas are liberated, where emotions blossom without effort when one is feeling comfortable with that specific language. It facilitates communication with family and friends who share the same linguistic measures.

A transition can provide a clearer path when an idea becomes entangled in the base of one language, enabling thoughts to flow more fluidly and be communicated with greater precision. This is comparable to locating the optimal instrument for a given undertaking, guaranteeing effective and precise communication.

Languages have the capacity to unite cultures and emotions. Engaging in tongue switching can be likened in terms of facilitating the development of rapport and a sense of belonging among individuals who share the same linguistic dialect. It facilitates the celebration of common experiences and fosters a sense of unity through shared comprehension.

Specific emotions and subtleties may elicit a stronger emotional response in particular languages. By engaging in tongue switching, individuals are able to harness the distinct expressive capabilities of each tongue, resulting in a more intricate and vivid fabric of meaning. Selecting the most appropriate instrument to compose a melody is analogous to guaranteeing that the entire spectrum of emotions is expressed.

Those who are proficient in multiple languages may view code-switching as an enjoyable way to investigate potentialities. This enables individuals to explore various registers, researched into cultural subtleties, and uncover fresh modes of self-expression. This linguistic circle transforms into an elegy to the limitless capabilities of human communication.

Moreover, reverting to a familiar language enables people to communicate more freely and authentically, tapping into the reservoir of ease and fluency associated with their mother tongue. This linguistic reunion offers an environment conducive to uninhibited self-expression and relaxation.

A word may occasionally conceal in a different language. Switching between languages also facilitates precise self-expression, similar to discovering the most recent components for one's thoughts.

When it comes to identity, identity plays an important role when the speaker is able to communicate using more than one language. As seen in (figure 4.4.2), participants were asked a question regarding the reasons behind switching from one language to another. Their answers displayed that identity effected the communication of individuals. For instance, some switch languages because they have a lack of vocabulary. Whereas others try to avoid other peoples intervention of understanding.

13. According to you, what do you think the reasons are behind switching from one language to another in a conversation?

80 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	Forgetting a word or maybe forgetting the meaning of the word
2	anonymous	When you get used to speak in two language daily you may mix it together accidentally or to explain more based on what you are talking about. For example some people prefer to talk about romance in english to express their feelings more clearly.
3	anonymous	They ate from the Chicken nuggets group
4	anonymous	1- Lack of vocab in one of the languages. 2- Emotions are easily expressed using one language more than the other.
5	anonymous	Depends on the topic and the person i'm communicating with
6	anonymous	It depends on the person I'm with. Also, if we are talking about a taboo or sensitive topic I switch to English.
7	anonymous	To clarify the message to the term

48	anonymous	Depends to the situation
49	anonymous	When finding difficult to remember word or stuck in the language
50	anonymous	Feel more comfortable
51	anonymous	Express my thoughts
52	anonymous	Pass a message
53	anonymous	I studied whole my life English language that's why I feel more comfortable to switch to English language
54	anonymous	Try to explain to other person what I want
55	anonymous	Simplification my ideat
56	anonymous	Each language has words that don't exist in any other language
57	anonymous	Easier
58	anonymous	I am surrounded by those who speak another language therefore I am

75	anonymous	Interacting with different group of people at same time need to switch from one language to another language
76	anonymous	make other better understood.
77	anonymous	Sometimes I just want a private conversation I switch to another language .
78	anonymous	When I can't find the needed word in one of the languages to another language
79	anonymous	someone might get stuck in a word
80	anonymous	feeling safe

Figure 4.4.2 Reasons Behind Switching from One Language to Another

4.5 Language Choice and Online Personas Among Bahrainis

Research question related to the data collected

How does language choice contribute to the construction of online personas among Bahrainis?

The data shows a fascinating split in opinion (40% yes, 60% no) on whether switching languages within a conversation enhances self-expression.



Figure 4.5.1 Expressing Yourself by Switching Between Two Languages

A) Arguments for Enhanced Expression

Particular languages demonstrate exceptional proficiency in conveying particular sentiments, comedic elements, or cultural allusions. By enabling access to these distinct registers, switching facilitates a more profound and genuine form of expression.

Certain ideas may be more readily expressed in a specific language on account of its lexicon or grammatical framework. By switching, the required precision and lucidity can be achieved. Occasionally, the ideal expression or idiom can be found in a foreign language. By switching, this linguistic treasure chest can be unlocked, resulting in communication that is more precise and evocative.

The act of switching languages can evoke a sense of liberation in individuals, as it enables them to access and explore into deeper emotional registers and sentiments that may be difficult to articulate in their native tongue.

B) Arguments Against Enhanced Expression

Regularly transitioning between topics can disturb the natural flow of a conversation and result in a sense of disconnection, which negatively impacts the overall sense of coherence and clarity experienced by both the speaker and the observer.

Variations in language comprehension among the audience may result in disorientation and the exclusion of individuals who are not acquainted with the newly introduced language.

Preoccupied with the selection of language may detract from the intended meaning, impeding sincere emotional resonance and the natural progression of thoughts.

Alternating between languages may necessitate deliberate deliberation on the selection of words, resulting in a diminished capacity for spontaneous and genuine expression in comparison to employing a single language instinctively.

The following arguments in favor of the notion that language switching can augment self-expression underscore the subtleties of emotion and context that are inherent in communication:

"One culture is more easily understood through the habit of using one language more" implies that certain languages enable effortless expression by virtue of familiarity with cultural context, vocabulary, and habitual usage.

"Find the meaning of the word or expression that best expresses my emotions; use specific words": This suggests that distinct languages may be capable of conveying particular sentiments, concepts, or cultural allusions with greater exactness and precision than another language.

"Reverts to the mode of communication among friends" implies that particular languages could be inextricably associated with particular relationships or emotional situations, thereby facilitating the expression of emotions in a more profound and genuine manner.

"By employing precise terminology, one can circumvent the need to search for words": This underscores the benefit of language switching in resolving vocabulary constraints or elucidating intricate concepts through the discovery of an ideal word or phrase in a foreign language.

Certain concepts or expressions are non-existent in your target language, comparable to an absent puzzle piece. By using the method of switchat, the individual becomes capable of accessing an additional repertoire of words and expressions, from which he / she may select the ideal word to complete the image and ensure that you are understood.

At times, specific expressions appear to be more manageable in one language than another. One feels more at ease and assured, which facilitates the uninhibited flow of thoughts. This frequently occurs in specific contexts or languages that you employ more frequently, such as in humor or cultural references.

Switching languages with someone who has difficulty understanding you can be comparable to bridging the divide. It demonstrates thoughtfulness and facilitates the transmission of your message with precision, thereby promoting enhanced communication and understanding.

Certain disciplines, such as science and technology, have established terminology in particular languages, such as English. In order to accurately convey complex concepts, it may be necessary to switch languages, particularly if the equivalents in the target language are not comprehensible.

Particular languages have the capacity to convey sentiments or subtleties with greater profundity and significance. Discovering the ideal melody to express one's emotions is similar to discovering a note that simply does not exist in another tongue. By switching, you can access this cultural wealth and engage in more profound communication.

It can happen if you spend a great deal of time in settings or social circles where a particular language predominates, such as the workplace or your social circle. It would then be natural to switch, as if one were continuing along a familiar path when expressing oneself.

There are times when a particular language seems to enable you to convey yourself more vividly and completely. Having access to a broader range of colors allows one to express their thoughts and emotions more effectively, resulting in communication that is more profound and intricate.

When the English language flows effortlessly through you, the act of switching becomes an inherent part of your cognitive process. The experience is akin to donning your native tongue, enabling you to articulate yourself with ease and sincerity.

Communicating in a different language can be likened to discovering an improved pathway, where one's thoughts can flow more effortlessly. This mental tranquility and comfort may facilitate more fruitful and enjoyable communication.

Language switching can become as a natural part of your communication style. It is the manner in which your mind navigates conversations, particularly if English is the language that you use frequently.

Particular words simply have a distinct meaning in various languages. The English language provides the subtlety or expressiveness required to convey your notion precisely and vividly.

Certain concepts or ideas may be more profoundly understood by individuals in a foreign language. By switching, you can communicate your ideas in a manner that is most persuasive and comprehensible to your audience as well as to yourself.

Words that originate in one language may occasionally acquire multiple meanings or even contradictory connotations in another. By switching, one can effectively navigate a forest, thereby preventing potential misinterpretations and guaranteeing that the intended message is conveyed.

Sentence construction in one language may appear more fluid and instinctive in comparison to that of another. It provides a familiar pathway for your thoughts, enabling you to articulate intricate concepts with enhanced proficiency and effectiveness. This can be particularly advantageous in discussions that occur at a rapid pace or when interacting with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Certain individuals hold the belief that they can communicate with greater clarity and efficacy in a particular language, which is frequently their native or most frequently used tongue. Having a more refined instrument to carve your message guarantees that your ideas will be received with accuracy and influence. This can be of the utmost importance when communicating vital information or navigating intricate discussions.

Emotional comfort during communication is critical for achieving effective expression. When an individual is more at ease and acquainted with a specific language, it enables the brain to unwind and concentrate on constructing the message rather than encountering difficulties with vocabulary or grammar. This may result in communication that is more fluent and transparent in the target language.

15. If your answer was yes, please state your reason:

32 Responses

ID ↑	Name	Responses
1	anonymous	It might be easier
2	anonymous	Sometimes people express themselves better in one language more than the other due to the usage of the vocabulary, the habit of using one language more than the other, or when they relate to one culture more than the other.
3	anonymous	.
4	anonymous	I think that the word or expression I used in the other language best suits what I'm feeling or want to say to others
5	anonymous	Goes way back to the way of communication between friends
6	anonymous	clarification
7	anonymous	Because of using specific words.
8	anonymous	Because I find the meaning instead to being miss so much time to search for words

9	anonymous	As said before, sometimes one needs to refer to an idea or a phrase that may have no basis in another language. Thus, in order to express oneself understandably, one may switch to a different language.
10	anonymous	As i said there are some words that are easier
11	anonymous	Because I feel more comfortable saying it in the second language.
12	anonymous	Some people has difficulty to understand therefore I feel more comfortable to switch between languages
13	anonymous	Telecommunication and computer science use english language, so its hard to explain it in Arabic
14	anonymous	Some people feel to understand my language therefore I have to switch
15	anonymous	Some words in other languages express what you trying to say more.
16	anonymous	Life style I am used to speak more in english
17	anonymous	I can express myself more in English language

18	anonymous	i feel more fluent speaking in English language
19	anonymous	i get stuck in few words therefore I feel more relax to switch from one language to another language
20	anonymous	More fluent in English language
21	anonymous	Easier more convenient
22	anonymous	This is how my brains works
23	anonymous	I think because some words are easier to to express in different languages or translated
24	anonymous	Some words are easier, or more expressive, in other languages why not to switch to English language
25	anonymous	In my case I believe it is easier to express certain ideas to another language
26	anonymous	Because it sounds more natural and I don't have to stress or overthink just trying to remember words.

Figure 4.5.2 Reasons Behind Expressing One's Self When Switching From One Language To Another

4.6 Analysis of Samples of Interactions

Research question related to the data collected

What types underlie code-switching and code-mixing in virtual speech communities in terms of inter sentential and intra sentential?

Observations showed that many of the participants who are aged eighteen to thirty years old tend to use the Latin orthography script mixed with English letters and numerals when communicating with each other using the different virtual platforms. For example, number 3 represents the letter ع and number 9 represents the letter ص in Arabic. When participants were asked why they tend to use orthography, all agreed to the fact that it is easier for them to type their conversation instead of switching the keyboard every time from English to Arabic. The figures below are examples of conversations using orthography text:



Figure 4.6.1 Analysis of Interactions Through WhatsApp

Moving on, intralingual and interlingual are two important terms. Intralingual translation is the process of explaining a word's definition by using other words from the same language. Intralingual is code-switching in the same utterance. Whereas interlingual is the concept of shifting from one language to another in the same conversation. When participants were asked for the reason of shifting from one language to another, answers revolved around the society that they are surrounded by and the people they tend to sit with for long periods of time. The images below state interlanguage between participants that were aged eighteen to thirty years old.

Orthography plays an important role in the current generation which consists of computer mediated communication. According to Sebba (2007), those who tend to code – switch are multilingual speakers and they manage to switch from one language to another in the same conversation. Thus, orthography switch is considered similar to code – switching or switchat.



Figure 4.6.2 Analysis of interactions through WhatsApp

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Chapter Five

Conclusion

In the present digital landscape of improvement within the digital platforms, the virtual speech communities have developed social interactions, particularly influencing identity formation in culturally diverse settings like Bahrain. This research examined the complex correlation between language choices and personal identity within virtual speech groups, shedding light on the deliberate strategies individuals employ to shape their digital personas. Through a thorough examination of linguistic preferences and behaviors, this study aimed to uncover the fundamental mechanisms that regulate the complex relationship between language choice and the creation of digital identities.

Language served as more than just a means of communication; it is a dynamic expression of cultural identity. Individuals strategically utilized language to navigate social contexts, cultivate relationships, and convey the complexity of their character. In Bahrain's multicultural environment, multilingualism became a crucial aspect, showcasing individuals' cultural proficiency and adaptability. Code-switching and code-mixing are not merely linguistic competencies but also indicators of cultural adeptness, that allows individuals to navigate between different languages and cultural contexts.

The research problem addressed the significant influence of language choice on identity formation within virtual speech communities among Bahrainis in the evolving digital environment. By exploring research questions concerning the extent of multilingual activities, categories of code-switching and code-mixing, and the role of language

preference in virtual identity formation, this study aimed to provide comprehensive insights into the complex dynamics at play.

Through a mixed-methods approach combining surveys and naturalistic data (screenshots from WhatsApp), this study captured a diverse range of linguistic behaviors and preferences among Bahraini participants. The questionnaire provided quantitative data on participants' attributes and linguistic behaviors, while naturalistic data, comprising screenshots of conversations, offered qualitative insights into language use in online interactions.

The findings underscored the intricate relationship between language and identity within virtual speech communities. Participants exhibited a clear understanding of language's role in shaping their online personas, strategically choosing languages to align with global trends or maintain connections with local communities. The prevalence of code-switching and code-mixing highlighted individuals' adaptability and flexibility in navigating digital spaces, bridging cultural and linguistic divides.

5.1 Answering Research Questions

Moreover, this research contributed to filling a notable gap in scholarly discussions by examining the specific cultural context of Bahrain. By focusing on Bahrain's diverse cultural landscape, this study offered valuable insights into how cultural elements influenced language choices and identity negotiations within virtual speech communities. The findings added to the academic body of knowledge on language and identity in the digital age that helped in enriching our understanding of the complex dynamics at play in online interactions.

Overall, this study provided valuable insights into the intricate relationship between language choice and identity formation within virtual speech communities among Bahrainis. By examining linguistic behaviors and preferences, this research has contributed to advancing our understanding of how individuals actively shape and cultivate their digital identities through language use. Moving forward, further research in this area can continue to explore the evolving dynamics of language and identity in the ever-changing digital landscape, providing valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity in online interactions.

The contemporary digital landscape is continually evolving, presenting new challenges and opportunities for individuals to navigate. With the rise of virtual speech communities, the ways in which people interact and express themselves online have undergone significant transformations. This shift is particularly pronounced in culturally diverse settings like Bahrain, where the convergence of various linguistic and cultural influences shapes the digital experiences of its inhabitants. For instance, some establish themselves by not necessarily using Arabic, but by using another native language such as Persian, Arabic Holi language, etc...

One of the key aspects explored in this research is the intricate correlation between language choices and personal identity within virtual speech groups. Language, beyond its communicative function, serves as a reflection of one's cultural background, beliefs, and values. In Bahrain's multicultural environment, where individuals often speak multiple languages fluently, language becomes a powerful tool for expressing and negotiating identity in online spaces. The phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing, where individuals seamlessly switch between languages

or blend them together in conversation, highlights the dynamic nature of linguistic identity in virtual communities.

By investigating the role of language in shaping digital identities, this study sheds light on the deliberate strategies individuals employ to construct and maintain their online personas. Participants in the study demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of how language choices can influence perceptions of identity within virtual speech communities. Whether it is aligning with global trends by using English or preserving cultural connections through Arabic, participants strategically selected languages to reflect different aspects of their identity.

Moreover, the research highlights the importance of considering the cultural context in understanding language choices and identity negotiations within virtual speech communities. Bahrain's rich cultural landscape, characterized by a blend of Arab, Persian, and Western influences, shapes the linguistic practices of its inhabitants in digital spaces. By examining these cultural elements, the study offers valuable insights into the complex dynamics at play in online interactions, enriching our understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and identity in the digital age.

5.2 Major Findings

The findings of this research represented broader implications for understanding the ways in which individuals actively shape and cultivate their digital identities through language use. Moving forward, further research in this area can continue to explore the evolving dynamics of language and identity in the ever-changing digital landscape. By staying attuned to these developments, researchers can provide valuable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity in online interactions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the human experience in the digital age.

In addition to its qualitative insights, the research offered a valuable quantitative data on participant demographics, preferences, and language dynamics. The statistical analysis enhanced our understanding of the factors influencing language choices and identity formation within virtual speech communities. By examining patterns of language use across different demographic groups, researchers can gain a better understanding of the complex dynamics at play in online interactions, informing future research endeavors in this area.

The comprehensive analysis of language usage, gender distribution, age demographics, and learning methodologies within the context of online communication that offered valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of modern society. Examining gender distribution, the relatively equitable composition with 55% female and 45% male participants on the online platform highlights a balanced representation, though caution is warranted due to voluntary disclosure of gender and potential variations in the broader platform demographics. Similarly, the age distribution revealed a predominantly youthful population, with 84% falling within the 18-40 age range, emphasizes the importance of catering to the

preferences and requirements of younger generations. Regarding language usage, English emerged as the predominant language, reflecting its global dominance, with notable shares for French (15%), Persian (12%), Arabic (48.8% on Instagram, 46.3% on Snapchat, and 61.3% on WhatsApp), Spanish (1%), and Turkish (3%). The patterns of language preference across different social media platforms underscored the complexities of online communication dynamics, where English served as a unifying force while other languages contributed their distinct cultural perspectives. Lastly, the exploration of bilingualism among individuals presented the variability and adaptability of language usage, with a majority seamlessly integrating both languages into their daily interactions. This admiration for bilingualism is evident in the deliberate choices individuals make regarding language selection in various contexts. In essence, each figure contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of communication in contemporary society, highlighted the need for the approaches that consider diverse demographics, preferences, and linguistic backgrounds. This comprehensive analysis served as a foundation for future research endeavors that aimed at fostering inclusive and effective communication strategies in an increasingly interconnected world.

5.3 Future Research

Moving forward, future research in this field could explore the intersection of language, identity, and technology in more depth, considering evolving digital platforms and communication technologies. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the changing dynamics of language use and identity formation in virtual speech communities over time. Additionally, incorporating qualitative methodologies such as interviews or ethnographic observations could offer deeper insights into individuals' experiences within virtual speech communities. Overall, continued research in this area is essential for advancing our understanding of how language shapes online identities and social interactions in multicultural contexts.

References

- Agha, A. (2007). *Language and Social Relations*. Cambridge University Press.
- Al-Harran, A. (2020). Language choice and identity construction in Saudi online communities. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 163, 1-12.
- Al-Najjar, H. (2019). Language use and identity in online multilingual communities: a case study of Bahraini youth on Twitter. *Discourse & Communication*, 13(3), 286-302.
- Al-Thani, H. (2018). Language choice and identity construction among Qatari youth on Twitter. *Arab Media & Society*, 17(2), 183-197.
- Baynham, M. (2013). Playing with identity in online spaces: Constructing and negotiating self in virtual worlds. *Palgrave Macmillan*.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.
- Chen, L. (2020). Multilingual Practices in Social Media: Language Choice and Code-Switching on Sina Weibo. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 1–18.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge University Press.

- El-Said, H., Al-Khatib, L., & Al-Hussainy, S. (2017). Identity construction through language choices among Egyptian youth on Facebook. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 21(2), 204-225.
- Forbes, K., & Rutgers, D. (2021). *Multilingual identity in education* (4th ed., pp. 399-403). The Language Learning Journal.
- Gardner-Chloros, P. (2009). Code-Switching. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books.
- Grosjean, F. (1982). Life with Two Languages: An Introduction to Bilingualism. *Harvard University Press*.
- Gumperz, J. (1982). Discourse Strategies. *Cambridge University Press*.
- Hall, S. (1990). *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Sage Publications.
- Hamam, N. (2021). *LOUD AND CLEAR: Effective Language of Instruction Policies For Learning*. World Bank Group.
- Harush, R. (2018). *Going Global: Developing Management Students' Cultural Intelligence and Global Identity in Culturally Diverse Virtual Teams*. Academy of Management.
- Heller, M. (2011). Paths to Post-Nationalism: A Critical Ethnography of Language and Identity. *Oxford University Press*.
- Hootsuite, & We. 2022 *Digital Trends Report*. Hootsuite.

- Hussain, M. (2019). LANGUAGE SHIFT: JOURNEY OF THIRD GENERATION SINDHI AND GUJARATI SPEAKERS IN KARACHI. *Bahria University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*.
- Ibrahim, F. (2016). *Cultural and Social Justice Counselling*. International and Cultural Psychology.
- Jassim, H. R. (2018). Code-Switching Patterns in Bahraini Online Discourse. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 312-330.
- Jenkis, J. (2016). *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity*. Routledge Handbook.
- Joseph, J. (2004). *Language and Identity*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kachru, B. B. (1986). The Alchemy of English: The Spread, Functions, and Models of Non-Native English. *University of Illinois Press*.
- Kim, H. S. (2019). Language Choices on Social Media: A Comparative Study of Facebook and Instagram. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24(1), 1–19.
- Ling, R., Zhang, H., & Yang, Y. (2020). Language choice and cultural identity in online communities: a case study of Chinese international students in the United States. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 39(3), 288-307.

- Li W. (2008). *Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Li, W. (2017). *Moment Analysis and Translanguaging Space: Discursive Construction of Identities by Multilingual Chinese Youth in Britain*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Li, W. (2017). Multilingualism and identity construction in online spaces: A case study of Chinese students in the UK. *Language in Society*, 46(3), 375-398.
- Mahmood, Z. (2020). Online Identity Construction in Bahrain: A Study of Language Use in Social Media. *Journal of Digital Culture & Communication*, 7(1), 45-62.
- Makoni, S., Smidt, H., & Tietze, S. (2016). *Multilingualism and identity in virtual worlds*. Multilingual Matters.
- Martínez, A. (2017). *An update on the study abroad experience: Language choices and social media abroad* (4th ed.). International Journal of Multilingualism.
- Matsuda, M. (2001). *Cyberbodies: Hacking on life in the new millennium*. Routledge.
- Mizuko Ito, M. (2010). *Journal of Community Psychology*. Stephanie M. Reich.

- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social Motivations for Code-switching: Evidence from Africa*. Clarendon Press.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity, language learning, and social change*. Cambridge University Press.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2010). *Avatar bodies: Online performances and their implications for our real lives*. Oxford University Press.
- Romaine, S. (2000). *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press.
- Smith, A. N. (2015). Language Choice and Identity in a Multilingual Virtual Community. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 504–531.
- Spolsky, B. (2009). *Language Management*. Cambridge University Press.
- Suler, J. (2004). *The digital divide: Wired (and unplugged) children in a networked world*. Yale University Press.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. Simon & Schuster.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*.

Appendices

Language, Choice and Identity

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this online survey that will not take more than five minutes. Be sure that all answers provided by you will be 100% confidential and the data collected will be used to investigate your language identity and how frequent you tend to switchat while communicating with your social community.

Please remember that your participation is not compulsory and you can refuse to answer the questions.

* Required

1. I agree to participate in this research survey: *

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. I agree to have my chats used in the study: *

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. Gender: *



☐ Male

☐ Female

4. Please choose your age group *

☐ 18 to 22

☐ 23 to 30

☐ 31 to 40

☐ 41 to 50

5. What languages do you speak other than your mother tongue? *

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ Persian
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Turkish
- ☐ Other

6. In addition to school, how did you learn the English Language? *

- ☐ Institutes
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Reading books, newspapers, magazines, etc...
- ☐ Private tuition

7. How often do you use English to interact with your social community ? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Instagram	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snapchat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whatsapp	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. How often do you use Arabic to interact with your social community ? *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	Always
Instagram	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Snapchat	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Whatsapp	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. After having read the statements below about your daily use of Arabic and English, kindly choose the rate that best suits each situation. *

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the ti
Generally, I switch between Arabic and English when I am speaking.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generally, I switch between Arabic and English when I am writing.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I use Arabic and English everyday.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am comfortable switching between Arabic and English in public (e.g. in front of people I don't know)	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am comfortable switching between Arabic and English in private (e.g. in front of people I know)	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like it when other people speak to me using both Arabic and English.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I prefer to use one language when communicating with other bilinguals (a person who speaks two languages)	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to use English in social media more than Arabic.	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to use Arabic in social media more than English.	☐	☐	☐	☐

10. When people chat, they sometimes mix languages (e.g. use a word from a language different than the language used at the moment of speaking; i.e. use both English and Arabic). How do you do it? Choose any of the following options as relevant to you. *

- ☐ When I speak using Arabic during the conversation, I change to another language.
- ☐ When I speak other languages during the conversation, I change to Arabic.
- ☐ When I am stuck with a word during the conversation in Arabic, I change to another language.
- ☐ When I am stuck with a word during the conversation in other languages, I change to Arabic.
- ☐ Other

11. In your opinion, you think using more than one language in the same conversation is.... *

- ☐ Deliberate
- ☐ Accidental

12. In a conversation, how often do you switch between languages? *

- ☐ Any time I speak
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

13. According to you, what do you think the reasons are behind switching from one language to another in a conversation? *

14. Do you believe that when you switch from one language to another in the same conversation you can express yourself better? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. If your answer was yes, please state your reason:

ملخص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة التفاعل بين اختيارات اللغة والهوية الشخصية داخل المجتمعات اللغوية الافتراضية، وتستكشف بشكل خاص المشهد الثقافي النابض في البحرين على المنصات الافتراضية وفي العالم الرقمي الحالي أصبحت المجتمعات اللغوية الافتراضية منصات حيوية حيث يقوم الأفراد بنشاط وصياغة التعبير عن أنفسهم من خلال اللغة التي يستخدمونها.

اضافة الى أن هذه الدراسة تلقي الضوء على الاستراتيجيات المعقدة التي يستخدمها الأفراد للتواصل بوسائل التواصل الرقمية المختلفة للتعبير بفعالية عن هوياتهم الفريدة. من خلال استكشاف التفضيلات اللغوية والسلوكيات. كما يقوم البحث بدراسة عملية تكوين الهوية والتعبير عنها في مجتمع البحرين المتنوع. لذلك تم جمع البيانات المدرجة في التحليل من ثمانين مشاركًا باستخدام استبيان وبيانات طبيعية للقطات من المحادثات والتي تشير نتائجها إلى وجود تبديلا للغة في الفئة العمرية الشابة من الثامنة عشرة إلى الأربعين عامًا التي تمثل 84% من المشاركين الذين شاركوا في هذه الدراسة البحثية.

جامعة البحرين

كلية الآداب



قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

اختيار اللغة والهوية: دراسة التواصل داخل المجتمعات الافتراضية

أطروحة مقدمة كجزء من متطلبات الحصول على درجة الماجستير في
الدراسات التطبيقية في اللغة الإنجليزية

إعداد

هالة محمد الخاجة

20136343

إشراف

د. مدني عثمان

أستاذ مشارك

جامعة البحرين

مملكة البحرين

مارس 2023