



University of Bahrain

College of Arts

Department of English Language and Literature

Linguistic Variation and Change across Different Generations: An Analysis of Bahraini Arabic Lexical Use

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Master's Degree in Applied English Language Studies

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Abstract

This study examines the dynamic nature of Bahraini Arabic, a dialect that has undergone significant changes over the past decades. For the purpose of understanding these changes, it is crucial to identify the factors influencing Bahraini Arabic among its speakers of different age groups. Therefore, a mixed-method approach was employed in this research, including an online Word Familiarity Test shared with 300 Bahraini Arabic speakers, and in-depth interviews that were conducted with 20 of them. By utilizing statistical analysis techniques, the results showed a lexical gap between old and young speakers, with the former exhibiting more familiarity with traditional Bahraini words and a higher usage of Modern Standard Arabic. In contrast, younger generations relied heavily on loanwords and code-switching. It was also found that globalization, education, and technology are key drivers of lexical change, along with gender and individual preferences. Nevertheless, older generations perceived the loss of traditional words as a threat to their cultural identity, while younger speakers saw this lexical change as a natural part of language evolution. This research contributes to our understanding of linguistic variation and change and highlights the importance of preservation efforts within the Bahraini Arabic-speaking community. However, the limited sample size of the study hinders its generalizability to the broader Bahraini Arabic-speaking population. Therefore, further research with a larger sample size is necessary to increase the accuracy and generalizability of the findings.

Dedication



To my friends and family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been instrumental throughout this research journey, this work is dedicated to you with heartfelt gratitude. You have been, and always will be, my guiding light.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Language, the hallmark of human communication, is a dynamic entity that undergoes constant transformation (Jones & Singh, 2005). As new generations are born, pronunciations change, words are borrowed or invented, and meanings drift (Crystal, 2002). These changes can occur at different paces depending on the person, but whether they are fast or slow, they reflect the intricate web of cultural, social, and historical factors at play (Matsumoto, 2019). On a personal level, these changes may not be evident for some people due to their close relationship to their language. In reality, however, the range of words and their connotations used by the members of any speech community in the present time is different from those used in the past, a phenomenon known as lexical change (Mantiri, 2010).

According to Noam Chomsky, “A language is not just words. It’s a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It’s all embodied in a language.” (Chomsky as cited in Stewart, 2016) Therefore, language serves as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge, traditions, and important aspects of a community's history from one generation to another. It carries within the collective wisdom, stories, and shared experiences that shape a community's identity over time. However, as societies progress, their language also evolves, reflecting shifts in values, attitudes, and beliefs (Harris & Vincent, 2015). Essentially, younger generations within the community embrace new linguistic features or discard older ones to differentiate themselves from their elders and establish their own identities. One dialect that exemplifies this transformation is Bahraini Arabic,

which has been a testament to the diverse linguistic tapestry of the region. As the world becomes more interconnected, language contact and exposure to various socio-economic influences have increased, leading to significant linguistic transformations. This, combined with advancements in technology and education, has altered the lexical repertoire of different generations of Bahraini Arabic speakers. Moreover, the prevalence of multilingualism adds another layer of complexity to the observed linguistic variations in the country, which further emphasizes the importance of understanding the patterns of lexical change in Bahraini Arabic across generations.

This study aims to investigate the evolution of vocabulary usage in Bahraini Arabic among different age groups. It analyzes how these groups identify traditional Bahraini words to detect variations in lexical usage, uncover the reasons behind these differences, and predict potential developments in the vocabulary of this unique dialect in the future. By doing so, the research seeks to provide insights into the linguistic changes occurring in Bahraini Arabic and contribute to our understanding of language evolution.

1.2. Statement of Problem

While many studies have explored the rich linguistic diversity of Bahrain, including the distinctive characteristics of the major dialects and the diglossic relationship between Modern Standard Arabic and Bahraini Arabic, there remains an important gap in our understanding of current Bahraini dialect trends and their implications on future dialect use in Bahrain. In particular, research is needed to investigate potential challenges of dialect change in Bahraini Arabic among the local population. Recent observations indicate a decreasing use of the local dialect and an increasing use of English across various domains in the Bahraini society (Bulaila & Sdiri, 2021). This

seems closely linked to the country's economic diversification and growth of international industries since the discovery of oil in the 1920s (Woodward, 2011). While English serves as a valuable lingua franca, especially in business and education, its expanding use may suggest Bahraini Arabic is losing ground. Therefore, more in-depth empirical research is needed to systematically document patterns of Bahraini dialect use across different demographic groups and social contexts in the Kingdom. Studying factors influencing language attitudes and preferences could help determine whether shifts toward English threaten the intergenerational transmission and maintenance of Bahraini Arabic dialects with its rich historical roots. Resolving this problem is important for linguists seeking to preserve Bahrain's diverse yet endangered linguistic heritage into the future.

1.3. Research Questions

This study aims to answer three research questions as follows:

1. To what extent is there lexical change in the use of Bahraini Arabic among different generations in Bahrain?
2. What social factors influence the lexical change among different generations in Bahrain?
3. What perceptions do speakers of different generations have towards lexical change in Bahraini Arabic?

1.4. Research Significance

While it is natural for languages and dialects to continuously evolve over time, it is crucial to investigate the underlying factors driving these changes. Therefore, the findings of this research can help build a broader

understanding of linguistic variation and the intricate relationship between language, identity and culture. By analyzing why certain lexical features are adopted, transformed or lost, we gain valuable insight into the evolution of language, revealing how it adapts into the ever-changing world around us. This understanding holds potential implications for language policy, education and preservation efforts aimed at safeguarding the future of Bahraini Arabic speakers in the Kingdom.

1.5. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the lexical change across different generations of Bahraini Arabic speakers. By collecting quantitative and qualitative data, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of lexical change in Bahrain over time. Firstly, an online Word Familiarity Test was developed by the researcher which includes 120 traditional Bahraini words. This test was distributed to 300 Bahraini participants evenly divided among four age groups: Gen Z (ages 11-26), Millennials (ages 27-42), Gen X (ages 43-58), and Baby Boomers (ages 59-68), who represent the primary demographic segments in Bahraini society. Participants indicated their familiarity with each word by clicking on the words they recognized out of the list and defining at least one of the selected words. The results from the test were then analyzed using statistical methods such as T-tests and percentage analysis to identify patterns and significant differences in lexical familiarity and usage across cohorts. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of participants from each generational group, audio recorded with consent, and transcribed for analysis. By combining quantitative test results with qualitative interview insights, an

in-depth understanding of generational lexical variation in Bahraini Arabic was established.

1.6. Limitations

The present study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size was constrained due to time and resource limitations, which hindered its ability to fully represent and fully capture the diversity of the Bahraini Arabic-speaking population across generations. Consequently, the generalizability of the findings may be restricted. Another limitation involves the potential presence of dialect bias among participants, particularly during the Word Familiarity Test. This bias could have led participants to provide responses that conform to societal norms or expectations rather than reflecting their authentic language practices, thereby compromising the accuracy and reliability of the collected data. Additionally, the study primarily focuses on the influence of social factors such as globalization, education, technology, and multilingualism while neglecting other potentially influential factors such as social status or urbanization. These unaddressed factors may have had an impact on the word choices or the participants' familiarity of the provided words in the test. To address these limitations, future studies can aim to employ larger and more diverse samples while integrating objective measures such as live language recordings to enhance the accuracy and reliability of data collection. It is also suggested to broaden the scope of the investigation to include additional factors that could influence lexical change. Such approaches would enable a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of lexical usage patterns across generations in Bahrain.

1.7. Layout

This research includes eight chapters. Chapter 1, the Introduction, outlines the research topic, questions, and the significance of studying linguistic variation in Bahraini Arabic across generations. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, critically examines previous scholarly works related to linguistic variation and change, generational differences, and the Bahraini dialect, establishing the theoretical framework that guides the research. Chapter 3, the Methodology, details the research design, data collection procedures, including the Online Word Familiarity Test and interviews, and analysis techniques for both quantitative and qualitative data. Chapter 4, Findings, includes the analysis and interpretation of the collected data, highlighting the patterns of lexical change in Bahraini Arabic by using graphs, tables and descriptions. Chapter 5, the Discussion section, critically analyzes the results, compares them with relevant literature, addresses research questions and discusses implications. The next chapter, Conclusion, summarizes the major findings in the research and suggests avenues for future research. Chapter 7 includes the references written in standardized APA citation style and includes academic articles, books, reports, and other relevant publications. This research concludes with final chapter, the Appendices.

This layout ensures a logical flow of information, facilitating understanding of the research process from the introduction to conclusion, while documenting methodology, findings, and references thoroughly.

1.8. Definition of Terms

In order to maintain clear and precise communication throughout this study, it is crucial to set forth and elucidate essential terms that are fundamental to the research context.

1.8.1. Linguistic Change

Trask (2009) refers to linguistic change as the process in which the structural characteristics of a language undergo modifications over time. Trask (2009) emphasized that all languages, regardless of their present state, display change; in fact, he claims that no documented instance of a natural language remains unchanged over an extended period of time.

Source: "Why Do Languages Change? Cambridge University Press."

1.8.2. Linguistic Variation

Defined by Labov (1971), linguistic variation is the observable difference between language structures and usages within a speech community or across different speech communities, which is used to refer to a group of people who share a common language or dialect and use it as their primary means of communication.

Source: "The study of language in its social context. Advances in the Sociology of Language"

1.8.3. Linguistic Maintenance

Wiley (2016) refers to linguistic maintenance as preserving a language despite competition from a more politically and economically dominant language in any given context or a speech community.

Source: "Language policy and planning in language education: Legacies, consequences, and possibilities. The Modern Language Journal"

1.8.4. Lexical Change

Lexical change across generations refers to how the meanings of words and phrases can shift over time as new generations of speakers and language users encounter and adapt language to their own cultural, social, and historical contexts (Jatowt & Duh, 2014).

Source: "A framework for analyzing semantic change of words across time (pp. 229-238)"

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. Overview

Linguistic change and variation across generations in sociolinguistics is a complex field due to the intertwined relationship between language and society (Adli & Guy, 2022). This complexity is further reinforced by the multi-dimensional social space in which individuals navigate their identities and the emergence of new languages that become popular and ingrained in society (Hamidah, 2019). To form the foundation for the analysis and exploration of this research, it is crucial to review overarching theoretical perspectives that elucidate the concepts of linguistic change and variation and the previous studies on this topic, thus providing insights into the factors influencing lexical change across different generations.

This section will present the previous research on linguistic processes related to linguistic change and variation. This part of the research begins with section 2.1 comparing linguistic change and variation. Subsequently, this section discusses three critical concepts related to linguistic change. Firstly, in Section 2.1.1, the focus is on presenting and discussing different definitions of linguistic change proposed by Trask (2009) and Milroy (2012) and a contrasting definition suggested by Eckert (2002), which is more aligned with the objectives of the present research. The Social Network Theory in section 2.1.2 is also introduced to support the accuracy of Eckert's definition, along with a review on previous studies on linguistic change and identity in section 2.1.3. Furthermore, in Section 2.1.4, the concept of linguistic variation is introduced, with analysis upon a seminal study by Labov (1966), followed by the provision of definitions articulated by Labov (1972) and Trudgill (1974).

These definitions are underpinned by The Sociolinguistic Theory, which is also expounded upon within section 2.1.5. This section is then concluded with a review on previous research on linguistic variation. After that, Section 2.2 of the study explores generational differences in vocabulary usage, citing examples from various researchers, including Buchstaller (2001) and Chashire (2005). The concept of generational shifts in language use is explained according to Harris and Vincent (2015). Section 2.4 focuses on Language Maintenance and discusses key strategies proposed by researchers such as Fishman (1991), Romain (2006), and Spolsky (2009) to ensure the preservation and continuity of a language across different generational timelines. The final section of this chapter focuses on language variation in Bahrain, section 2.5, by presenting studies from distinguished researchers such as Holes (1981, 1984, 2011), Alalawi (2022), and Abdulrahim et al., LREC (2022). It starts with the effect of oil discovery on the linguistic situation in the Kingdom, moving on to the two religious sectors in society and the rich ethnic backgrounds, and concludes with previous research by AlSadeqi (2010) on the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing and code-switching, especially among younger Bahrainis citizens.

In conclusion, this section aims to shed light on the factors influencing language change, the intricacies of linguistic variation in Bahrain, the impact of generational differences on vocabulary usage, and the strategies employed for language maintenance. These insights are academically significant and have practical implications for language preservation and continuity in the society.

2.2. Linguistic Change Vs Linguistic Variation

Linguistic variation and linguistic change are terms used interchangeably, however, they are defined distinctly to refer to different processes (Hazen, 2010). Linguistic change refers to the evolution of a language over time, resulting in changes to its grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This can occur due to various factors such as language contact, language shift, or linguistic diffusion (Matras & Sakel, 2007). Linguistic variation, on the other hand, refers to the differences in language use within a speech community, which can be attributed to factors such as age, gender, social class, or geographical location (Buchstaller, 2001). This section will discuss the difference between linguistic change and linguistic variation with a review of the literature on both topics.

2.2.1. Linguistic Change

As mentioned earlier in section 1.8, Trask (2009) defined linguistic change as the process in which the structural characteristics of a language undergo modifications over time. Trask (2009) emphasizes that all languages, regardless of their present state, display change; in fact, he claims that no documented instance of a natural language remains unchanged over an extended period of time. Milroy (2012) expands upon this definition by asserting that language change arises due to internal and external influences, including alterations in social dynamics, cultural shifts, and technological advancements. He argues that change can come from external influences imposed on a community and internal, grassroots changes emerging within the community.

The definition of Eckert (2000), however, is slightly different from that of Trask (2009) and Milroy (2012). In particular, she challenges Milroy's conception of linguistic change arising from distinct, separable sources of external imposition and internal development. On the contrary, Eckert (2000) emphasizes that change occurs as people deliberately establish and navigate socially significant styles and positions within their interpersonal relationships. She believes that individuals frequently move between communities, causing linguistic influences to flow both in and out of these communities and within them. Thus, while Milroy (2012) believes that linguistic change emanates from a duality of sources, according to Eckert's definition, change occurs through complex social interactions, where individuals express their styles within networks of relationships without differentiating between outer language influences or those originating from the community. This definition better serves the purpose of this research; therefore, it will be in this research with its framing of the interactional complexity involved in such processes, and this approach aligns well with the social network theory, which provides a comprehensive framework to examine how the social connections influence both individuals and groups in society which will be explained in the following section.

2.2.2. Social Network Theory

A *social network* is a concept used to refer to a community of language users interlinked through diverse types of relationships ranging from friendships, kinships, and organizational positions, to name a few (Scott, 2012). Eckert's (2000) research in linguistic change aligns with the social network theory by emphasizing the crucial role of social networks in shaping linguistic behavior, language variation, and language change among

adolescents. This theory further explores the complex network of connections among individuals and the consequences that arise from these relationships (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

In the field of social network analysis, the focus is on examining concepts and processes such as network structure, ties or connections, and centrality. Network structure involves analyzing the overarching patterns that govern how individuals are interconnected, including the presence of tightly-knit clusters as well as linking different groups (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Ties, on the other hand, denote the links, relationships, or interactions that exist between members of a given network. These ties may manifest in various forms, such as engaging in friendships, seeking advice, or performing financial transactions (Marsden & Lin, 1982). This practical approach to social network analysis makes it a valuable tool in understanding linguistic change.

Overall, the social network theory provides a valuable framework that explains underlying social structures and relationships that influence language use and linguistic change by looking into the language used by individuals within the society rather than focusing solely on individual speakers' use of language.

2.2.3. A Review of Previous Studies on Linguistic Change And Identity

According to Buckingham (2008), the concept of identity is intricate and inherently includes paradoxes. The term's root is "idem," which means "the same." However, the term suggests both similarities and differences. On one hand, identity is assumed to be unique and consistent over time. On the

other hand, identity also suggests a relationship with a larger social group. For instance, national identity, cultural identity, or gender identity implies that what we share with others is part of our identity.

Language, as a powerful tool for communication, is intrinsically linked to social identity in multiple ways (Rabiah, 2012). King and Mackey (2008) argue that language is not just a tool for communication but also a crucial component of individual and group identity. Throughout one's life, there is a correlation between language and identity that can be observed through many aspects, and many studies such as Aitchison (2013), AlMoaily (2012), and AlEnzi (2017) that explain these aspects and showcase the relationship between the two are discussed in this section.

Over the years, researchers have explored the relationship between linguistic change and social identity. Aitchison (2013) argues that language evolution inherently involves lexical changes, with various social factors like race, gender, and ethnicity playing a significant role. This implies a link between identities and one's lexical shifts. Meyerhoff (2019) also examines the lexical change-identity connection in New Zealand English. She found that linguistic shifts can signal new identity formation, especially in post-colonial societies. Aitchison (2013) and Meyerhoff (2019) show the fluid nature of linguistic landscapes, often reflecting identity transformations.

In more recent studies in the Gulf region, researchers such as AlMoaily (2012) found that social identity played an important role in language variation between age groups. In her study of generational differences in Saudi Arabia, AlMoaily (2012) observed that younger Saudi participants were found to engage in code-switching between Arabic and English, depending on the social context and their intended audience. This code-switching signaled

various facets of their social identity, such as modernity, globalization, and youth culture. Conversely, older participants were found to adhere more closely to traditional Arabic language forms, which reflected their more robust identification with long-held Saudi cultural values rather than global influences. Al-Moaily's (2012) research thus highlights how language choices can serve as a means for different generations to express their affiliation with specific social identities and distance themselves from others. These findings were also mirrored in Al-Enzi's (2017) study of language variation across age groups in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, by analyzing code-switching and language choice patterns between Modern Standard Arabic, Riyadh Arabic dialect, and English of 40 Saudi participants aged 14-15. According to Al-Enzi's (2017) study, younger Saudis in Riyadh use more English resources to create modern and globalized social identities. This contrasts with older citizens who prefer Arabic-dominant language use, which helps them retain their traditional identity expressions.

In summary, language's continual evolution does more than reflect identity; it dynamically shapes identity across different generations, which highlights the reciprocal relationship between linguistic change and identity.

2.2.4. Linguistic Variation

Linguistic change is used in research to refer to the diachronic process of language evolution and transformation over time. Linguistic variation, on the other hand, as defined by Labov (1971), is the observable difference between language structures and usages within a speech community or across different speech communities, which is used to refer to a group of people who share a common language or dialect and use it as their primary means of communication. Specifically, it examines how languages change

synchronously. In his early study of the Social Stratification of New York City, Labov (1966) highlights that linguistic variation is not random. However, instead, it correlates with social factors such as class, gender, and age in shaping how individuals speak. For example, sociolinguistic research conducted through extensive surveys and language analysis consistently demonstrates that women, across diverse social contexts, tend to use more prestigious or standard linguistic forms than men, a phenomenon known as gender differentiation (Eckert, 2000; James, 2014). Similarly, Linguistic research in 1970 found that speakers from the working class background often use more vernacular or non-standard forms compared to middle-class speakers (Labov, 1972; Guy 1988). This finding was further supported in recent, contemporary research conducted by Snell (2014) and Dodsworth (2011).

The studies discussed in this section focus on early sociolinguistic research, highlighting the foundational work conducted in the field. Labov (1972) proposed that the social significance of a specific linguistic variable is established by its position on a markedness scale in comparison to other variations of that characteristic. For example, In certain varieties, such as General American English, the Rhotic "r" sound is typically pronounced consistently at the end of words like "car" or "bar." This pronunciation is considered unmarked or socially neutral because it aligns with the standard form of English. However, in some regional dialects, such as the one found in Boston English, the "r" sound is often dropped or altered at the end of words, so "car" might be pronounced as "cah." This pronunciation is marked or socially salient because it deviates from the standard norm. Therefore, Labov's (1972) hypothesis suggests that a variant may be considered prestigious if it is used more frequently by higher social classes and stigmatized variants are

used more by lower classes. This definition of linguistic variation is also mirrored by Trudgil (1974) in his study of regional dialects of Norwich, England. He explains that pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are subject to significant variation depending on where a person lives and their social class. Similarly, according to Bourdieu (1991), social class determines access to the language deemed legitimate by the dominant class. Trudgil's (1974) research indicates that speakers of higher social classes typically use more prestigious variants of English, including non-local accents, standard grammar forms, and a broader vocabulary. However, those from lower social classes were found to have linguistic characteristics related to local accents, non-standard grammar, and a smaller vocabulary (Freeman, 2004).

To summarize, both geographical location and socioeconomic status significantly impact the linguistic varieties we acquire and adopt. Regional dialectal differences emerge, and language also reflects distinctions based on social class (Chambers, 2003). This concept falls within the sociolinguistics theory, which posits that social factors drive linguistic variation, with language use being shaped by variables such as age, gender, social class, ethnicity, and geographical location. Moreover, the theory underscores the significance of social norms and attitudes in both language variation and change. As the subject matter of this research is related to linguistic variation in Bahraini society, it falls within the realm of sociolinguistic theory. In the next section, we will delve deeper into this theory and its relevance to the current research topic.

2.2.5. The Sociolinguistic Theory of Linguistic Variation

The Sociolinguistic Theory of Linguistic Variation, as posited by Labov (1966), concerns the study of the relationship between linguistic

variation and social factors. Specifically, it focuses on correlating linguistic variables, which has been instrumental in understanding how social stratification shapes language use and the patterns of stable sociolinguistic variables (Le et al., 1985). Linguists have widely applied this theory to analyze stylistic variation, which is supported by studies that provide evidence indicating that the level of attention a speaker pays to their speech influences the selection of language variants they use (Bailey, 1973; Cheshire, 1987; Eckert, 2018).

Research studies (e.g., Trudgill, 1974; Fishman, 1972) exploring how language varies between social groups have revealed systematic patterns of linguistic variation that can be linked to various social factors. For instance, Trudgill (1974) found that a particular language variety/linguistic variant spoken by speakers living in isolated geographical locations experiences migration patterns. Fishman (1972) highlighted how social network pressures within communities can shape linguistic norms over time. Additionally, linguistic styles can be associated with concepts of femininity and masculinity (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992), and social meaning can be attached to linguistic features based on social stratification (Milroy, 1978). These findings have significantly impacted sociolinguistic research into variation and helped elucidate the complex relationship between language and society.

The Sociolinguistics theory underscores the profound role of language in shaping and reflecting social identity. Individuals use features and employ various linguistic features or language styles to convey their membership in specific social groups (Goffman, 1981). This is exemplified by members of a speech community who may choose to adopt distinct dialects or accents. Their use of language can also be a tool to challenge or subvert social norms and

power structures, as seen in different dialects, regional accents, informal speech patterns, and expressions that may be associated with specific social groups or contexts (Katz & Rydell, 2013). Sociolinguists view variation not as random deviations from a linguistic norm but as structured heterogeneity that reflects a range of social meanings and stances (Eckert, 2012).

In conclusion, linguistic change and variation are pivotal concepts in sociolinguistics, and they align with the purpose of the present study. Our research aims to identify linguistic variation and change across different generations of Bahraini Arabic speakers, revealing patterns and trends that may not be immediately apparent from a single generation. In light of the Sociolinguistic Theory of Linguistic Variation, our study carries out a comparative analysis to examine how language use has changed across generations and how these changes relate to social and cultural factors.

2.3. Language and Generational Differences

Languages are in a constant state of change and evolution (Peirce, 1995). Consequently, a noticeable trend has emerged wherein many lexical items that were once commonly used are now seldom or never used, being replaced by newer alternatives (McMahon, 1994). This linguistic change becomes apparent when comparing the vocabulary employed by different generations. Such differences in word usage may result in communication challenges between older and younger individuals, which is known as generational differences. In this regard, Nagy (2011) proposed that linguistic change can often be detected by examining differences in language use across different age groups.

Regarding the concept of "generational change," as proposed by Harris and Vincent (2015), it is worth noting that language use and linguistic features

change over time and that these changes are driven by shifts in societal values, attitudes, and beliefs. This is due to the changing psychological and social needs the speakers encounter at different ages, which in turn molds their personalities and actions (Baltes, 1987). For example, younger generations may adopt new linguistic features or reject older ones as a way of distinguishing themselves from their elders and establishing their own identities. Cheshire (2005) demonstrates this by giving examples of how, in the 1980s in the United Kingdom, teenagers were known to utilize the term 'wicked' as a substitute for 'good'; however, this trend appears to diminish as they grow older and abandon such colloquial language. As a result, this word became an age-specific feature, only applicable to people in their teenage years. This example demonstrates that people often adapt to such age-related expectations and embrace the linguistic choices that society deems fitting for their age group.

Generational differences in language use can create notable barriers to effective communication between speakers of different age groups. Younger generations may employ newer slang terms or linguistic varieties that older generations are unfamiliar with, potentially leading to misunderstandings (Buchstaller, 2001). In contrast, the latter might utilize a more formal lexicon that younger people need help comprehending (Coupland, 2007). One of the main reasons for this misunderstanding is the rise of digital communication via technology, which has introduced further complications for intergenerational interaction (Tuten & Solomon, 2015). This is because digital communication platforms, such as social media, text messaging, and email, among others, have fundamentally changed how people communicate, whereby younger generations highly prefer electronically-based expressions

or abbreviations that older generations lack familiarity with (Katz & Rydell, 2013).

Overall, disparities in language preferences between generations, whether concerning new slang, formal language, or digital communication, can substantially hinder mutual understanding. However, Howe and Strauss (1991) confirm that there are significant sociocultural changes experienced during adolescence and young adulthood that profoundly shape each generation's language and identity, distinguishing them from the generations before and after them. The next section will preview various studies done on the lexical change across generations, which ultimately can guide us in the present research study that compares the familiarity of Arabic Bahraini across different generations.

2.4. A Review of Previous Studies on Lexical Change Across Generations

Lexical change across generations refers to how the meanings of words and phrases can shift over time as new generations of speakers and language users encounter and adapt language to their own cultural, social, and historical contexts (Jatowt & Duh, 2014). At the same time, lexical change in dialects relates to technological advancements, societal transformations, and cultural shifts (Aitchison, 2013). Fromkin et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of generational influence in this process, where the younger generation often adopts and disseminates new terms, which leads to lexical changes.

Building on *The Sociolinguistics Theory* discussed in section 2.2.5, Dubois and Horvath's research (1999) illustrates how language change interconnects with a community's sociocultural history. Their study was conducted in the context of a multilingual community in Quebec, Canada.

Dubois and Horvath (1999) investigated how language use reflects and shapes social identity in a multilingual community. They were particularly interested in examining how language use serves as a means of asserting and negotiating identities. They analyzed phonological features across three generations of speakers and explored the ongoing language shift from French to English within a stable, closed community. Alongside English, participants in this study use Cajun French, a unique blend of French, Spanish, and Native American languages, with its distinct grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Ryon, 2002). In their findings, Dubois and Horvath (1999) demonstrate that language changes across generations directly correlate to external historical events impacting the community. For the oldest generation, English was a second language learned in compulsory education, while social meanings were still expressed mainly in French. The way they spoke English had an impact on the changes within their community that would happen in the future. However, these changes followed a different pattern. The middle generation navigated industrialization and urbanization using English while following external standards or guidelines. However, the younger generation experienced a Cajun cultural rebirth, during which the French became the sole vehicle for signaling their Cajun identity. (Dubois & Horvath, 1999).

Building on Dubois and Horvath's (1999) research, Chambers' (2003) study provides a nuanced analysis of how different factors influence language use within a specific community. According to Chambers (2003), younger generations are more likely to introduce new lexical items due to increased exposure to diverse influences and less rigid language habits. Additionally, he notes that language changes often become evident when older generations are not familiar with the vocabulary of younger generations. This can also be due

to the influence of popular culture, technology, and global communication; the internet, in particular, has accelerated lexical change by providing a worldwide platform for the rapid dissemination of new words and phrases (Agliamonte & D'Arcy, 2009). Additionally, it is worth considering how these factors impact language maintenance and identity over time, which will be discussed in the next section. This can help us better understand linguistic communities' complex and dynamic nature and the various factors contributing to their evolution.

2.5. Language Maintenance and Policy

Language maintenance refers to preserving a language despite competition from a more politically and economically dominant language in any given context or a speech community (Wiley, 2016). As societies become more diverse and globalized, there is often a shift towards dominant languages, which can threaten the survival of minority languages. This is because minority languages may not be as widely spoken or supported and may not have the same institutional or governmental support as dominant languages. As a result, they are often at risk of becoming endangered or extinct (Cenoz, 2017). Minority communities actively fight to preserve their native languages, believing language to be a fundamental part of their identity and heritage (Fishman, 1991). However, Crystal (2002) recognized that reversing a language shift is extremely difficult because dominant languages confer considerable social and economic advantages.

Over the years, several key strategies have been identified for ensuring the perseverance of a language. Romaine (2006) notes that promotion and language planning are essential to raising the profile of minorities' languages. She argues that language rights legislation is needed to support linguistic

diversity. In Spolsky's (2009) research, he emphasizes the role of language policies in maintaining languages. In his view, effective language policies can help promote minority languages and counter the dominance of majority languages. As an example of successful language revitalization, or in other words, reverse language shift, he discusses New Zealand's Māori language revitalization. The Māori language in New Zealand was adversely affected by colonization, as policies enforced during the 19th and 20th centuries actively discouraged the use of Māori in educational and public settings. Consequently, this led to a significant decrease in its usage by the late 20th century. However, many community-based language revitalization initiatives have been established, including language nests, festivals, and immersion programs (May & Hill, 2018). Other strategies for maintaining language include establishing schools to teach the minority language, promoting intergenerational transmission of the language at home, and increasing its presence in the public sphere through media (Hinton, 2001; Romaine, 2007).

In their study, Grenoble and Whaley (1998) argue that successful language maintenance requires community participation, institutional support, and positive community attitudes toward the language. Effective language policies can help preserve and promote minority languages, especially in multilingual societies where the dominant language may threaten the survival of more minor languages. Similarly, studying linguistic variation and change in Bahraini Arabic provides insights into how languages evolve and how they are influenced by social factors such as gender, age, and education. By understanding these dynamics, policymakers can make informed decisions about language policies that support linguistic diversity and help communities preserve their cultural heritage. A review of previous research on Language Maintenance will be presented next.

2.5.1. A Review of Previous Studies on Language Maintenance

In many societies worldwide, minority language communities often face pressure to shift to using the dominant language, thus necessitating language maintenance efforts to counteract language shift (Fishman, 1991). Recent studies have explored various factors that support minority language maintenance, including family language policies and transmissions, ethnolinguistic vitality, and domains of language use, which will be explained next.

In recent times, several studies have investigated language maintenance among immigrants and indigenous communities. According to Leeman and Modan (2018), there has been a trend in Spanish language retention across generations of Latino immigrants in the United States. As English became the dominant language of the third generation, the Spanish language transfer from immigrant parents to their children declined sharply. Similarly, a study of U.S. Latino families found that families with more robust family language policies and deliberate efforts to use Spanish at home had children with higher Spanish proficiency (Carreon et al., 2005). Therefore, factors such as Spanish-speaking parents, visits to Spanish-speaking regions, and school language training can support maintenance efforts (Lee & Wright, 2014). A similar research study by Zhang & Slaughter-Defoe (2009) on Chinese immigrant families in the U.S. revealed that families with clear strategies for using Chinese at home and exposing children to Chinese culture were more successful in maintaining their heritage language than families without explicit policies.

While recent studies have examined the role of globalization and the spread of English in immigrant communities, others have explored the

challenges of maintaining Arabic as a vital language in the Arab region. Bleakly (2010) argues that many immigrants need to learn English quickly to integrate effectively and, more specifically, economically in their new home. The prevalence of English in Arab countries has also led to a shift from using Arabic, which is often seen now as a secondary language. However, some still recognize the value of preserving one's native language, as it plays an essential role in preserving cultural identities and maintaining connections to one's heritage. AlSahafi (2018) examined the diglossic nature of Arabic-influenced language maintenance patterns among Arab immigrant families in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Using interviews and surveys, AlSahafi (2018) found that most participants used spoken Egyptian or Levantine Arabic at home while reserving Modern Standard Arabic for formal writing and literacy activities. He argues that this pluricentricity of Arabic varieties gave parents more flexibility in language transfer efforts, as they focused on spoken vernaculars that carried ethnic identity. At the same time, children often learned literary Arabic via community schools. One significant finding in this study is that heritage language maintenance significantly influenced the participants' language use and attitudes. AlSahafi (2018) also notes that many participants reported that they sought to maintain their Arabic language skills for cultural and identity reasons. However, they faced challenges due to the dominance of English in their daily lives.

In conclusion, language maintenance efforts in multilingual societies are essential to counteract language shifts and promote minority language use. Family language policies, ethnolinguistic vitality, and domains of language use are all critical factors in supporting minority language maintenance, and their implementation can help ensure the continued use and preservation of

minority languages. Moreover, Bahrain is the context of the present study, where language maintenance is an important issue due to the prevalence of Arabic as the official language and the increasing use of English as a second language, particularly in business, education, and government (Hopkins, Tariq 2022). The next section discusses an extensive description of Bahrain's linguistic variation.

2.6. Language Variation in Bahrain

Bahrain, a small island in the Gulf, is home to a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity. Like many other countries in the Middle East, this country exhibits a diglossic situation where Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used in formal and official contexts. In contrast, Bahraini Arabic, a variant of Gulf Arabic, is used in informal and everyday communication (Word Atlas Website, 2019). In fact, according to Alharbi (2018), the English language is considered the *Lingua franca* in the Gulf region (Alharbi, 2018). This is closely tied to the advent of oil in 1927, which marked the first significant oil discovery in the Arabian Gulf region (Woodward, 2011). This discovery led to a great influx of wealth that transformed Bahrain from a small desert island into a modern, more developed Kingdom. The discovery of oil also attracted many American and British workers to the area, as well as an increasing amount of imported labor. As a result, the influx of oil revenues allowed Bahrain to diversify its economy, leading to the growth of manufacturing and financial services industries, with many international businesses and educational institutions utilizing English as the primary language for professional communication (Hopkins & Tariq, 2022).

Regarding the use of Arabic on the island, there are two main dialects spoken in Bahrain, as documented by Holes in his seminal work based on his

fieldwork throughout the 1970s and 1980s. He noted that urban areas in Bahrain are largely inhabited by two distinct groups (Holes, 1983). The first dialect is commonly referred to as "Gulf Arabic" and is associated with sub-varieties or accents specific to certain regions or cities in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar (Abdulrahim et al., 2022). Speakers of this dialect can distinguish individuals from different parts of Bahrain, such as Muharraq and Manama, while the second dialect is known as "Bahrani Arabic". This variety also has sub-varieties or accents specific to certain parts or villages in the country (Prochazka, 1981). For example, individuals from Sitra may have a distinct accent compared to Bah'rani Arabic speakers living in Manama. The sectarian differences frequently observed in contemporary Bahraini society are often shaped by social class (Alalwai, 2022).

Due to the multiple ethnic backgrounds in the Bahraini speech community, multilingualism has flourished rapidly in the Kingdom. Thus, sub-varieties or accents of Bahraini Arabic exist within each main variety. Over the years, studies have noted differences in phonology, morphology, and lexicon between the different dialects (Holes, 1981, 1983). This is mainly due to the GCC's diverse population, where many other languages are spoken within different communities. Moreover, since language change is often driven by the diffusion of linguistic features or innovations across social groups, increased interaction and communication between these social groups facilitate language change processes (Milroy, 1985). Thus, social networks spanning diverse linguistic communities such as Arabic, English, and Persian contribute to language contact and adopting new linguistic features, such as borrowing, code-switching, and so much more (Smart, 1990).

One of the recent studies is by AlSadeqi (2010), who researched 725 students at the University of Bahrain to investigate the linguistic phenomenon of borrowing and code-switching. He describes borrowing in Arabic as adding borrowed English words to the language by monolinguals or L1 users. Holes (2011) defines this linguistic phenomenon as a process where speakers seamlessly transition between languages, such as Arabic and English, often interchanging words within the same sentence. AlSadeqi's (2010) research findings show that students can utilize significant morphological changes on borrowed words, such as adding definite articles or pluralization. Influential individuals or groups who act as linguistic innovators or adopters can be identified by studying social networks in Bahraini society, thereby contributing to disseminating new linguistic forms or patterns (Milroy, 1980). In sum, Bahrain's dialects offer a fascinating glimpse into the island's cultural and historical dynamics between members of a given network (Abdulrahim et al., LREC 2022).

Although the theoretical inferences discussed in the previous text have focused on Bahraini dialects (Holes, 1983; Alalwai, 2022; Abdulrahim et al., 2022; AlSadeqi, 2010), studies have yet to focus on the linguistic change among different generations in Bahrain. Therefore, this study aimed to bridge this gap by exploring the effects of different social factors on the dialects in Bahrain and the lexical differences between different generations in the Kingdom. The results provide insights into the linguistic changes in Bahraini Arabic and contribute to our understanding of dialect evolution over time. For this reason, the next section will outline the methodology used in the investigation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Overview

This study delves into traditional Bahraini Arabic, exploring how traditional vocabulary use varies across different generations in the Bahraini community. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study utilizes quantitative and qualitative tools to paint a detailed picture of lexical change in action. This section provides a comprehensive description of the methodology used, outlining the purpose and rationale for utilizing quantitative and qualitative instruments and emphasizing the benefits of a mixed-methods approach. Furthermore, it delves into the instruments used for data collection and analysis, including the sampling process, procedure, and instrument design. This section will also address the measures taken to ensure data validity, reliability, and ethical considerations. Lastly, the challenges encountered throughout the research process will be acknowledged and examined, encompassing obstacles related to participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. By explicitly recognizing these challenges, this section reflects on the limitations and potential impact on the research findings.

3.2. Research Methods and Procedures

This research aims to examine the evolving patterns of vocabulary usage in Bahraini Arabic among different age groups. First, a Word Familiarity Test was developed to assess participants' knowledge of words across various age groups. This quantitative data was further supplemented by qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews. The use of these

instruments allows us to answer the primary research questions that revolve around the lexical differences in the use of Bahraini Arabic among various generations, the social factors that could influence lexical change like globalization, gender, education, ethnicity, or multilingualism, and the perceptions of speakers from different generations towards lexical change in Bahraini Arabic, while also providing valuable insights into the usage patterns and attitudes of different generations. This research method was inspired by the frameworks of Hakami (2022), who researched the Lexical gap between old and new generations in a Jizani dialect and analyzed the quantitative data using SPSS software. The following sub-sections will provide a comprehensive discussion of the implementation of qualitative and quantitative instruments, elucidating their methodologies in detail, thereby ensuring the thoroughness and reliability of the research process.

3.3. Quantitative Data Collection:

3.3.1. Instrument: Word Familiarity Test

To assess how well individuals of different age groups in Bahrain can recognize traditional Bahraini words, an online Word familiarity test was designed based on a carefully constructed list of 120 lexical items that have been selected through a comprehensive review of the Bahraini corpus (Abdulrahim et al., LREC 2022) and Mohammed Jamal's Dictionary of Popular Words and Expressions (Jamal, 2015). These resources provided a wealth of linguistic data specific to the Bahraini dialect, without considering the dialect or origins of the words chosen. The aim of this test was to gauge the level of familiarity that Bahrainis have with these traditional expressions, providing valuable insights into the preservation and understanding of Bahraini language heritage among different generations.

Regarding the structure of the test, it was divided into three sections, with 40 words in each section for the participants to select from by simply clicking on the words on the screens of their smartphones. To increase the reliability of the test, the participants were asked to define at least one of the words selected after each section. Participants were given clear instructions on how to do so and had the flexibility to complete the test at their convenience. The online test was used to ensure broad geographic coverage and facilitate the participation of individuals with schedule constraints. Older participants who had difficulty completing an online test were told the words face to face by the researcher, and their answers were recorded promptly.

3.3.2. Procedure

The participants completed the test online on a survey website called Typeform.com, which collects anonymous participants' answers. As mentioned earlier, the test was developed based on a carefully constructed list of 120 lexical items divided into three sections, and it was designed in a simple way to assess the participants' familiarity in the most convenient way possible, requiring them to select or click on words that they recognize. The link was shared through WhatsApp groups with friends and family. As well as social media accounts to reach more Bahraini citizens of different educational backgrounds and ages, ensuring the inclusivity and broad representation of the Bahraini community in the research process.

3.3.3. Sample and Sampling Process

This test sample consisted of 300 Bahraini participants representing four different age groups: 11-26 years, 27-42 years, 43-58 years, and 59-68 years; there was an equal number of participants in each age group (n=75).

The participants were selected based on pre-determined characteristics, such as age, known as quota sampling. However, convenience sampling was also used within subgroups where participants were recruited based on their ethnicity as born and raised Bahraini citizens and their willingness to participate in the study. All participants identified themselves as speakers of their respective dialects, either the Sunni or Shia dialects, and came from various regions within Bahrain. For more details on these areas within Bahrain, reference can be made to Holes (1983) in section 2.5.

- **Age**

As shown in Figure (1) below, the first part of the test revealed that the 300 participants were equally distributed into the four generational groups, with 75 participants in each age group.

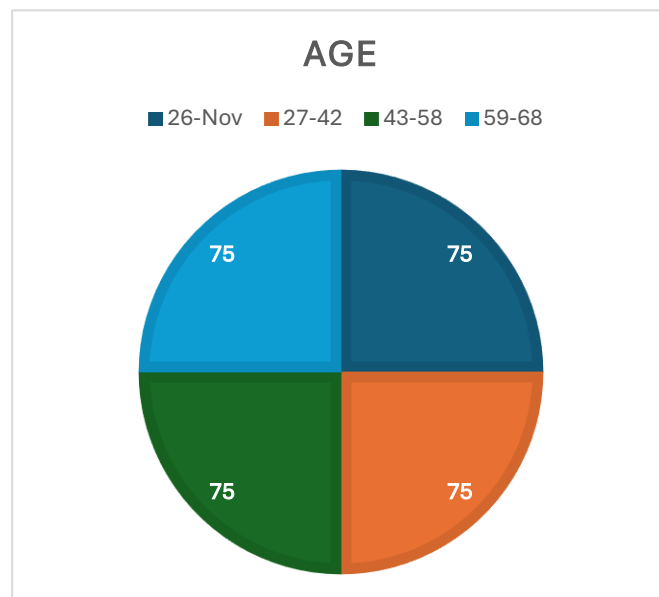


Figure 1: Participants' Age

- **Gender**

Figure (2) below also shows that 155 participants identified as females while the remaining 145 were males.

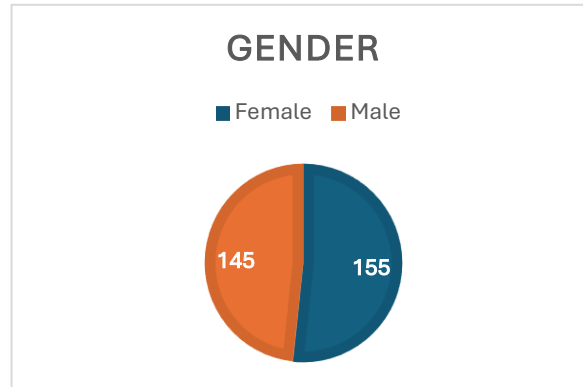


Figure 2: Participants' Gender

- **Education Level**

As for the participants' educational level, Figure (3) reveals that the majority of the participants have a college degree, while the second highest majority have a high school diploma. Only 23 had completed middle school, and only six had an elementary-level education. Additionally, 27 participants obtained a master's degree, and three participants held a Doctorate (PhD) degree, representing individuals with the highest level of academic achievement.

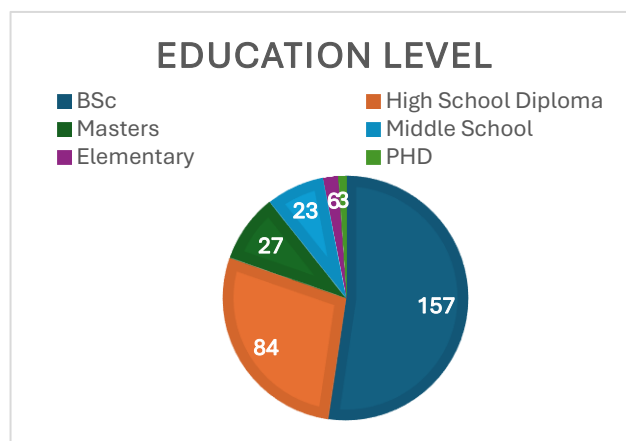


Figure 3: Participants Education Level

- **Languages Spoken**

As shown in Figure (4), the majority of participants are bilinguals, followed by trilingual speakers, and only a few spoke only one language. The diverse range of gender, educational backgrounds and languages spoken among the participants allows for a comprehensive exploration of the effect of social factors on linguistic variation and change across generations in Bahrain. The next section will discuss the qualitative data collection methods in detail.

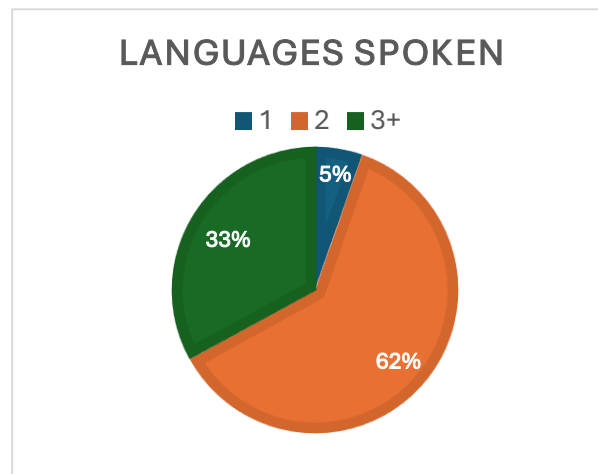


Figure 4: Number of Languages Spoken

3.4. Qualitative Data Collection:

3.4.1. Instrument: Interviews

The qualitative interview questions aimed to answer the third research question of *what perceptions speakers of different generations have of lexical change in Bahraini dialect*. They also gathered insights into participants' attitudes to understand how different age groups perceive and experience language change and how that change reflects different generations' values, beliefs, and attitudes.

3.4.2. Structure

The interview questions consisted of two parts; the first part had five open-ended questions for the participants to answer freely, focusing on their opinions and thoughts on lexical change of Bahraini Arabic, the factors causing these changes, and how these changes affect their sense of identity. The second part of the interview consisted of eight statements about the same topics as the first question, where the participants were asked to either agree or disagree and elaborate on their choice. Refer to interview questions in Appendix (8.3).

3.4.3. Procedure

All 20 participants had to take the test face-to-face and were given the opportunity to expand on their responses and provide qualitative data through open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted individually and recorded to accurately capture participants' responses. Notes were also taken by the researcher during the interviews to document additional details and nuances.

3.4.4. Sample and Sampling Process

A convenience sample of 20 participants was selected for the interview, including the researcher's relatives, co-workers, and friends, with five participants in each of the four age groups. Gender, educational level, and number of languages spoken were not considered. The researcher further monitored and confirmed their dialects and the interviews were conducted through in-person visits to their homes or gatherings with family and friends.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

In this study, participants were ensured of their rights through several key measures. First, participants were provided with comprehensive details regarding the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential benefits on the first page of the Word Familiarity Test, see Appendix (8.1). They were allowed to ask questions and fully understand the study before consenting to participate. Second, the confidentiality of all collected data was rigorously maintained, and the participants' identities were anonymized in all forms of publication or presentation of the research findings, ensuring their privacy and protection. Lastly, voluntary participation was emphasized, ensuring the participants that the data collected would not be used for anything other than academic purposes. These safeguards aimed to uphold the ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation throughout the research process. The following section will explain the data analysis methods for the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

3.6. Methods of Data Analysis:

3.6.1. Quantitative Analysis of the Word Familiarity Test

The quantitative analysis of the Word Familiarity Test involved a systematic approach to assess the lexical choices and familiarity of words among Bahraini Arabic speakers across different generations. The data collected from the participants were compiled using Excel, where the results were subjected to statistical analysis such as mean familiarity scores, percentage analysis, and frequency distributions to quantify the level of familiarity and variations in lexical choices among different generations in regard to different social factors. The quantitative analysis of the Word

Familiarity Test is presented in section 5.2, which presents a comprehensive examination of the significant findings.

3.6.2. Qualitative Analysis of the Interviews

The qualitative analysis of the interviews provides valuable insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics and cultural factors influencing lexical use within the Bahraini Arabic-speaking community across different generations. The qualitative data from all the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which entailed identifying and organizing recurring themes and patterns within the data. This was done by carefully reading and examining transcripts of interviews in order to identify the perceptions Bahrainis have regarding lexical change and how that change reflects the values, beliefs, and attitudes of different generations.

This chapter discussed the methods, outlines, and methods of data analysis. The next chapter will be detailed results and a comprehensive discussion of the test and interview results.

Chapter Four: Findings

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1. Overview

This chapter presents the findings of the present research study, which examines linguistic variation and change across different generations in Bahrain. The description of quantitative data of the Word Familiarity Test results is presented with a focus on the familiarity percentage according to the participant's age groups, gender, education, and languages spoken. Furthermore, this section also provides the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from different generations. The findings are examined to analyze the patterns and trends in lexical choices among various age groups of Bahraini Arabic speakers concerning broader sociolinguistic phenomena, such as language contact, identity, and maintenance efforts, which will be discussed later.

4.2. Part One of The Word Familiarity Test

An online Word familiarity test consisting of 120 traditional Bahraini words was developed to assess Bahraini Arabic speakers familiarity with traditional Bahraini words. This test was shared with 300 Bahraini participants, and the following sections of this chapter will present their familiarity according to different social factors, as well as the highest and lowest identified words by the participants.

4.2.1. Familiarity According to Social Factor – Generations

The main investigation of the research was to identify the lexical change across generations in Bahrain, which was done by comparing familiarity across different age groups as shown in Table (1) below.

Table (1) *Familiarity Percentage by Age Groups*

Age Groups	Familiarity Percentage
11-26	43.8%
27-42	59.9%
43-58	61.5%
59-68	72.7%

The Word Familiarity Test consisted of 120 traditional Bahraini words, where each word identified was counted as a score. As seen in the table above, the youngest generation, aged 11-26, scored the lowest, with an average of 43.8%, implying they had the lowest knowledge of the words, while the oldest generation, aged 59-68, scored almost 29% higher, with an average of 72.7%. This is an expected result that suggests a generational gap in the familiarity with traditional Bahraini words, proving that age is a determinant of understanding and knowledge of traditional Bahraini words—as for the middle two generations, aged 27-42 and 43-58, scored 59.9% and 61.5%, respectively. The similarity in their scores suggests that these generations may have had similar levels of exposure and interest in traditional Bahraini culture. The following sections of this chapter will present their familiarity according to different social factors, as well as the highest and lowest identified words.

4.2.2. Familiarity According to Social Factor - Age

The Oldest generation in this research ($M = 87.3$, $SD = 18.6$) compared to youngest generation ($M = 52.6$, $SD = 29.3$) demonstrated significantly higher familiarity scores, $t = 8.6590$, $p = 0.00$. As Table (2) shows, the P value is less than 0.01, indicating that the difference between the means of the two groups is considered statistically significant, which concludes that the observed difference is not due to chance.

Table (2) *Familiarity Percentage of Youngest and Oldest Generations*

Age groups	N	Mean	T-Test	P-Value
Youngest generation	75	52.6	8.6590	0.00<0.01
Oldest generation	75	87.3		

4.2.3. Familiarity Percentage by Score – Gender

Table (3) shown below presents the results of the Word Familiarity Test that displays the familiarity percentage of the participants who were able to identifying the traditional Bahraini words based on their gender. 145 male participants had an accuracy percentage of 63.59% in identifying the traditional Bahraini words from the list, and the 155 female participants had an accuracy rate of 55.41%. The table below shows that males are more familiar with traditional words than females.

Table (3) *Familiarity Percentage by Gender*

Gender	No. of Participants	Familiarity Percentage
Male	145	63.59%
Female	155	55.41%

4.2.4. Familiarity Percentage by Score – Education

Table (4) shows the accuracy percentage of the participants in identifying traditional Bahraini words based on their educational level.

Table (4) *Familiarity Percentage by Education*

Education Level	No of participants	Familiarity Percentage
Elementary	6	59.36%
Middle School	23	33.51%
High School	83	74.02%
BSc	158	61.39
Masters	27	40.48%
PHD	3	58.61%

Most participants have a college degree, followed by a high school diploma, while the minority have a Ph.D. Only a few, six to be exact, have an elementary education. The familiarity rate varies across the different educational levels, with the highest familiarity observed in the high school category (74.02%) and the lowest in the middle school category (33.51%). This could be justifiable because, in high school, students meet people from different areas in Bahrain and develop their vocabulary within their social circles. However, the table generally suggests no clear correlation between educational level and the ability to identify traditional Bahraini words.

4.2.5. Familiarity Percentage by Score – Languages Spoken

Table (5) shows that bilingual participants had the highest familiarity rate of 61.38%, followed by monolinguals, who had an familiarity rate of 59.33%. Finally, participants who spoke three or more languages had the lowest familiarity rate of 57.36%. The difference in the familiarity rate is not

necessarily significant, especially since most Bahraini speakers are bilinguals, which is the norm. However, it is expected that those who speak only Arabic are more likely to know the words since it is the only language they use. The next section will discuss the percentages of the words' hierarchy.

Table (5) *Familiarity Percentage by Languages Spoken*

Languages Spoken	No of participants	Familiarity Percentage
1	15	59.33%
2	185	61.38%
3+	100	57.36%

4.2.6. Top five Most Identified Words

As can be seen in Table (6) below, there are five words that have a remarkably high familiarity rate among the participants, overall exceeding 80%. This suggests they are deeply embedded in the Bahraini cultural lexicon and widely recognized across different age groups and backgrounds. Starting with the word “Zoleya” which translates to “Carpet,” an ubiquitous household item and a commonly used word by both dialects in Bahrain. Followed by the word “Maqsaf” which means “Canteen” is the second most identified word by all the participants, with a percentage of 86.6%. The third highest word is “Gooti”, which translates to “Can”, was identified by 86% of the participants. This suggests the participants are also familiar with this word and its meaning. The word “Malgoof” which means “Curious” is the fourth in order, with a percentage of 85.6%, and finally, the last word with a high percentage of familiarity is “Kharda”, which means “spare change” with a percentage of 82%. All these identified words are commonly used by the Bahraini community and can be commonly found in the physical environment surrounding the participants.

Table (6) *Top 5 Most Identified Words*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/Zu:'li:ja/ زولية "Carpet"	265	88.3%
/Məqsʌf/ مقصف "Canteen"	260	86.6%
/Gu:ti:/ قوطي "Can"	259	86.3%
/Məlgu:f/ ملقوف "Curious"	257	85.6%
/Khærdə/ خرده "Money Change"	246	82%

4.2.7. Top 5 Most Identified Words By Males

As for the word familiarity among the male participants of this research, Table (7) shows the five most familiarized words by males in this research.

Table (7) *Top 5 Most Identified Words By Males*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/zu:'li:ja/ زولية "Carpet"	137	94.4%
/məqsʌf/ مقصف "Canteen"	124	85.5%
/gu:ti:/ قوطي "Can"	122	84.1%
/gə'tæt/ قطات "Jokes"	118	81.3%
/zərnu:g/ زرنوك "Narrow Road"	118	81.1%

The most common word, "Zuleya", was identified by 94.4% of the participants, followed by "Magsaaf," with a high familiarity rate of 85.5%.

The third word, "Gooti," which translates to "Can," was identified by 88.3%. The fourth word, "Gataat," meaning throwing shots at someone, was familiar to 81.3% of the participants. Lastly, "Zarnoog," which refers to the a narrow road, had a familiarity rate of 81.1%.

4.2.8. Top 5 Most Identified Words By Females

As for females, Table (8) indicates that there is a significant familiarity among the female participants of this research with another set of nouns. It is noteworthy that all of these words are related to household items, more specifically related to food or drinking. Specifically, "Zuleya" was identified by 90% of the participants. Similarly, "Magsaaf" had a high familiarity rate of 89.6%. The third word, "Estakana," that translates to a teacup and is a part of the social practices in Bahrain, was recognized by 88.3% of the female participants. Followed by the fourth word, "Gooti," which was familiar to 87.7% of the participants. Lastly, "Sefreya," which refers to the cooking pot, had a familiarity percentage of 82.5%.

Table (8) *Top 5 Most Identified Words By Females*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/zu:li:ja/ زولية "Carpet"	140	90.3%
/məqsʌf/ مقصف "Canteen"	139	89.6%
/əstkænə/ استكانة "Tea cup"	137	88.3%
/gu:ti:/ قوطي "Can"	136	87.7%
/səfri:ja/ صفرية "Pot"	128	82.5%

4.2.9. Top Identified Words By Age

Table (9) lists the most frequently identified words based on different age groups. The youngest age group (11-26) and the middle-aged group (27-42) have shown the highest familiarity rate for the word "Zuleya." Due to the fact that it is already a frequently identified word in this test. The following age group of 43-58 years have exhibited an 88% identification rate for the word "Malgoof," while the oldest generation (59-68) has demonstrated a remarkable 89.3% identification rate for the word "Mlawes" which is a term from Bahraini culture that refers to an individual who manages to get by with the minimum amount of effort.

Table (9) *Top 5 Most Identified Words By Age*

Age groups	Familiarity Words	No of participants	Percentage
11-26	/zu:li:ja/ زولية “Carpet”	68	90.6%
27-42	/zu:li:ja/ زولية “Carpet”	72	96%
43-58	/mɔlgu:f/ ملقوف “Inquisitive”	66	88%
59-68	/mlaʊs/ ملوص “Slacker”	67	89.3%

4.2.10. The Top 5 Least Identified Words

A tabular representation of the least identified words by all participants and their respective percentages can be seen in Table (10). The first word is "S'hateet" which translates to seed pearls, was identified only by 10.7%, suggesting limited familiarity among the general population in Bahrain . The second-word, "Khamag," which means a bad smell or a stench, was identified with a percentage of 15.7%, the following word is “Heg’hga” which translate

to a clumsy person, was identified by 20% of the overall number of participants. Followed closely by the word “Hatha” and “Haraj” with a rate of 21% and 22% respectively. The low identification percentage suggests that the participants may not have been familiar with these words or may have had difficulty reading them. This could be due to a lack of exposure to these words in their daily lives, as they are considered relatively old and not used frequently in our current time.

Table (10) *Top 5 Least Identified Words*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/s'hateet/ سحاتيت “Seed pearls”	32	10.7%
/k'həmg/ خمگ “Stench”	47	15.7%
/həghgə/ هگهگه “Clumsy”	60	20%
/həðə/ حذا “Sat next to it”	63	21%
/hərj/ حرج “Active”	66	22%

4.2.11. Top 5 Least Identified Words By Males

The composition of the least identified words by males and females shown in table Tables (11) and (12) respectively, analyze the least identified words across the two gender groups. Three words are commonly unidentified by both males and females. Notably, the word "S'hateet" has the lowest familiarity rate among males, at only 15.8%. Similarly, females have a mere 5.8% familiarity rate for this word. "Khmag" is another example of an uncommon word, with a 24% familiarity rate among males and a 7.7%

identification rate among females. Moving on to the word "Haghaga," Only 35.1% of males have identified it, while females have a lower identification rate of 5.8%. It is worth mentioning that these three words were the least identified by all participants but still identified by males more than females. Regarding the remaining uncommon words among males specifically, "Hatha," which translates to sitting next to someone, has been identified by 35.1%, whereas "Barwa," which translates to property deed, has been identified by 35.8%.

Table (11) *Top 5 Least Identified Words By Males*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/s'hati:t/ سحاتيت "Seed pearls"	23	15.8%
/k'həmg/ خمگ "Stench"	35	24.1%
/həghgə/ هگهگه "Clumsy"	51	35.1%
/həðə/ حذا "Sat next to it"	51	35.1%
/bərwa/ بروه "Property deed"	52	35.8%

4.2.12. Top 5 Least Identified Words By Females

Besides the three least familiar words that were common between males and females, Table (12) below shows the remaining least identified words in by females specifically, starting with the word "Haraj," which means an active person, has a 10.9% familiarity rate among females in this test, while "Lahat", which is what they call a person who gobbles food, has a slightly higher rate of 11.6%.

Table (12) *Top 5 Least Identified Words By Females*

Word Identified	No of participants	Percentage
/s'hati:t/ سحاتيت "Seed pearls"	9	5.8%
/həghgə/ هگهگه "Clumsy"	9	5.8%
/k'həmg/ خمگ "Stink"	12	7.7%
/hərj/ حرج "Active"	17	10.9%
/ləht/ لهط "Gobble"	18	11.6%

4.2.13. The Least Identified Words By Age

When examining the least identified words by participants of different age groups, it is observed in Table (13) that the word "Haghaga" has the lowest identification percentage among the youngest group (11-26), standing at 2.6%. In contrast, the least identified word for all the other age groups is "S'hateet." Notably, the oldest group (59-68) has the highest identification rate for this word, at 29.3%. Which could reflect their exposure to the tradition of pearl collecting, a cultural practice that involve the use of this word. The (43-58) age group follows with an identification rate of 5.3%, while the (27-42) generation has an identification rate of 4%.

Table (13) *Least Identified Words By Age*

Age groups	Familiarity Words	No of participants	Percentage
11-26	/həghgə/هگهگه “Clumsy	2	2.6%
27-42	/s’hati:t/سحاتيت “Seed pearls”	3	4%
43-58	/s’hati:t/سحاتيت “Seed pearls”	4	5.3%
59-68	/s’hati:t/سحاتيت “Seed pearls”	22	29.3%

4.3. Part Two of The Word Familiarity Test

To ensure the validity of the answers, participants were asked to provide definitions of the traditional Bahraini words they identified in the test. Since this research is only focused on validating their familiarity, all approaches the participants took to explain the words chosen were accepted as long as they made sense and were close to the meaning. Most of the examples and definitions given by the participants were short and written in Arabic, which will be translated later in this section. The following are the main finding of the second part of the test:

- One of the most prominent observations based on the analysis is that the participants were mostly able to give correct definitions, using examples and explanations in English and Arabic. The younger generations (11-26) precisely tended to provide shorter definitions for the traditional Bahraini words. The older generations (those aged 43 and above) provided longer, more detailed explanations for the traditional Bahraini words. For example, the definition for "Maqsaf"

was "cafeteria for food and drinks" for the (11-26) age group, while the meaning given by the (43-58) age group was "the place that sells sandwiches and drinks, especially in schools."

- The younger generations (11-26) also tended to use more English in their explanations. For example, the definition given for "Daan" was "move or scooch over" and the definition for "Zena't" was "choked" which they wrote in English, while the definition for the same word that was given by those in the (59-68) age group was written in Arabic and translates to "move a bit so I can sit down".
- Noticeably, the older generations (59-68) also tended to use Modern Standard Arabic in their explanations. For example, their definition of "Sefriya" is translated to "a pot which is used in cooking and was called "Sefriya" because Bahrainis in the past used utensils made of copper, which was called AlSafar" while younger generations, such as those aged (27-42) defined it as "a metal thing that is used for cooking food."

These observations suggest that the younger generations may be more comfortable with the English language and find it easier to use in explaining or defining words, while the older generations may be more comfortable using Modern Standard Arabic and use it more frequently in their explanations. The younger generations may have a more casual or informal approach to explaining traditional Bahraini words, especially since they are not that familiar with the traditional words, while the older generations may have a more formal or conventional approach and can easily define the traditional Bahraini words they are familiar with.

4.4. Results of Qualitative Data: Interviews

4.4.1. Overview

For the qualitative part of this research, semi-structured interviews were held with 20 participants who were equally representative of the four age groups. The participants, selected randomly, represented a cross-section of Bahraini citizens of varying ages and educational backgrounds. Their diverse perspectives, which ranged from embracing change to advocating for preservation, offered a rich and comprehensive interpretation and validation of the quantitative data. The interview questions were divided into two parts.

4.4.2. Part One of the Interviews:

The first part had five open-ended questions about lexical changes in Bahrain, including the effects on identity and preserving the dialect (Refer to section 8.3). The following are the major themes found in the participants answers.

4.4.2.1. Lexical Change of The Bahraini Dialect

Firstly, the participants were asked about their views on the linguistic change in Bahrain and, more specifically, the use of traditional Bahraini words. All participants, regardless of age and gender, acknowledged that the Bahraini dialect has changed in recent years, and their comments revealed a nuanced view of this change. The majority agreed that “Moderation” and “Balance of old and new” are needed to adjust to the inevitable dialect change in this fast, fast-paced world we're living in. One 44-year-old male expressed, “The changes can be good and bad. It's natural for a language to evolve, but losing traditional words also risks weakening our culture. As long as newer terms don't completely replace the old favorites, a balance of old and new

enriches our communication.” Others also emphasized that this change is more evident in younger generations, as one 28-year-old female said, “Younger Bahrainis seamlessly mix Arabic, English and internet slang. Traditional expressions are used less frequently.”

4.4.2.2. Factors That Effect Lexical Change Among Different Generations

When asked about the factors that have led to this lexical change among different generations in Bahrain, most participants agreed that age, education, and globalization are the top influencers on dialect change. Many even linked them all together as one contributing factor. One 50-year-old male participant stated, “Younger generations who are more educated and plugged into social media are more exposed to foreign languages and global trends.” Moreover, the term *Code-switching* was repeated a few times as part of the globalization effect on lexical change; participants who belong to the youngest generation (11-26) have even admitted to code-switching regularly, unlike older family members. A 13-year-old female participant argues, “We are constantly exposed to different cultures and languages in school, through social media, and so much more. But grandparents stick to old ways mostly.” A few have also mentioned gender and the role women play in preserving languages as mothers, as stated by a 55-year-old woman, “Women typically preserve heritage speech more because of how much they spend time with kids, and we see that children usually speak like their mothers.”

4.4.2.3. Relationship Between Language Use Of Bahraini Words And Identity

The findings here are varied as the definition and sense of identity varies based on respondents' age and personal experiences. However, it was found that many participants, especially those in the older generations, find a person's sense of identity a “complex matter” that could be easily threatened by a change in the traditional dialect. One 55-year-old female argues, “Significant changes to the dialect could weaken ties to our cultural roots.” Similarly, another 43-year-old male shared that “over-dependence on "foreign terms" could lead to undermining the unique flavor of our dialect.” On the other hand, many younger participants collectively expressed that language is a profoundly personal facet of their identity, which is not easily influenced by external factors. They also felt a strong connection to their ancestors through their shared culture. One 13-year-old female expressed, “Language evolves with us, so it doesn't threaten who I am long-term. I am still linked to my family through history and culture.” Moreover, other participants expressed the importance of balancing language evolution and perseverance. One 26-year-old female said, “I believe that pride comes from balancing progress with preserving uniqueness in speech.”

4.4.2.4. The Need for Preserving The Arabic Bahraini Dialect With Its Traditional Bahraini Words.

For the last question of this part, participants were asked about the importance of preserving the Bahraini dialect and how to do so. The majority agreed that protecting the Bahraini dialect is a shared duty of the Bahrainis, which is essential to maintaining people's sense of identity and its importance

in preserving the country's culture and history. As for the means of preserving it, a few participants mentioned the role schools should play in preserving the dialect, especially for future generations, through language documentation, educational programs, and so on. One 45-year-old male expressed, “The dialect is core to Bahrain's heritage, so we must try to maintain it. Promoting its use in media, schools, and communities encourages younger buy-in.” Another common suggestion among most participants was the dual use of standard Arabic and Bahraini Arabic through different mediums, such as community events, public celebrations, and art. A 21-year-old Bahraini male suggests, “There should be local events for our community where we can engage the youth in documenting our unique words and expressions through Standard Arabic and our mother tongue.” Lastly, many participants in the older generations have expressed the importance of digital archives and developed technology platforms to ensure language survival for future generations, as suggested by a 66-year-old male, “With patience and teamwork, tech helps pass traditions to new generations in relevant and easy ways. We need to utilize the resources we have for our favor.”

4.3. Part Two of the Interviews:

The second part of the interview had eight statements with a Likert scale for 20 Bahraini speakers to agree or disagree with and elaborate on their opinions. The following section presents the findings of this part of the interview.

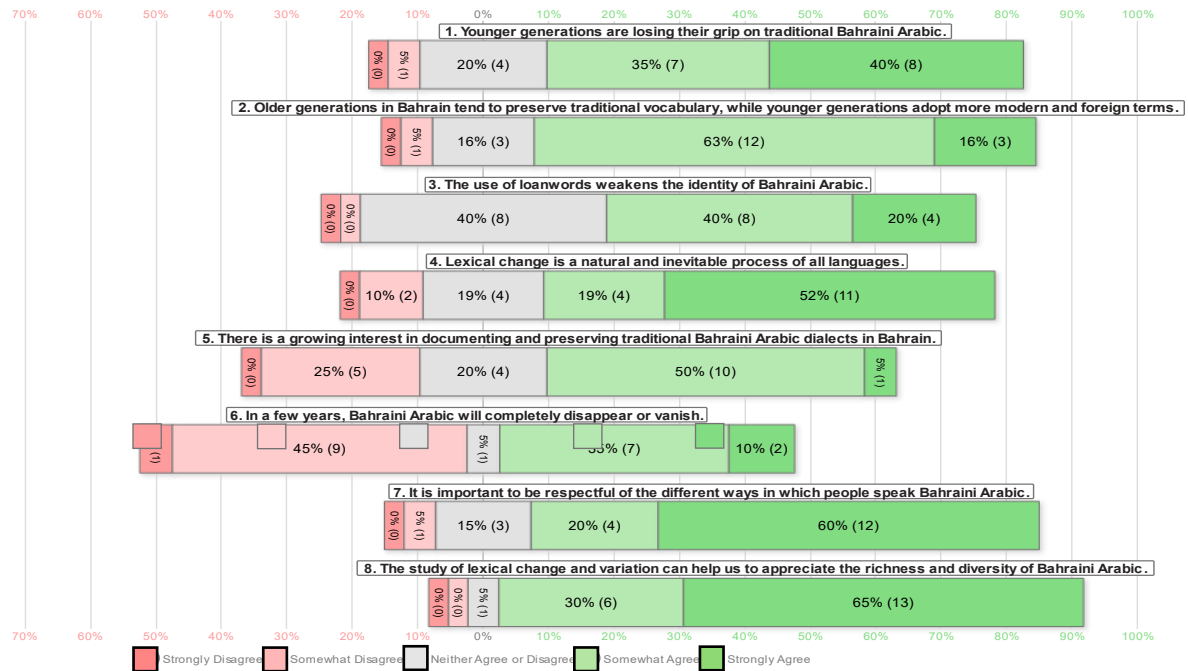


Figure 5: Perceptions of Bahraini speakers

As seen in Figure (5), in statements one, four, and six, respondents were asked about lexical change and the potential loss of traditional Bahraini dialect, especially among younger generations. While some expressed concern about the possible loss of this heritage, others emphasized the naturalness of language change and acknowledged it as an inevitable process. One 40-year-old participant described, “All languages evolve through various social and historical influences; it does not mean the language will disappear for good. We should respect this change and admire it.”

Statements two and three acknowledged the influence of foreign terms and loanwords on Bahraini Arabic, with older participants viewing it as a

negative development when excessively used, as argued by a 55-year-old male participant, “Borrowing has both risks and benefits depending on the extent and context of usage.” It is worth noting that younger participants see borrowing as a natural outcome of globalization and interaction and hardly find any opposing views, as argued by a 26-year-old female, “Definitely, language evolves quickly now with technology and social media, younger people mix Arabic and English seamlessly in casual speech. Sometimes, I find myself unable to think of the right word in Arabic, so I just use an English word instead.”

Statements five and seven underscore the cultural richness and diversity of Bahraini Arabic. Many participants emphasized that Bahrain is widely recognized as a country with a rich tapestry of diverse dialects, where many families of different ethnic backgrounds have coexisted for centuries. This cultural diversity, they argue, is a testament to the strong sense of unity and national identity that they share. One 58-year-old male participant adds, “Our differences reflect our natural ability to coexist in living in a country that has people from different backgrounds.” Another 44-year-old male argues, “Being brought up in a respectful, diverse community, combined with a strong sense of national identity, has fostered a culture of acceptance and appreciation for linguistic diversity among us. We all have the responsibility of preserving our traditional dialect.”

Finally, in statement eight, the participants highlighted the growing interest in documenting and studying Bahraini Arabic dialects, with a majority of participants strongly agreeing to promote future studies and research to understand and appreciate Bahrain's richness and diversity. One 29-year-old female states “Appreciating language variation and change through academic

study is important. It helps communities understand the natural evolution of their mother tongue. It can also inform efforts to document endangered forms before they disappear, as well as raise awareness of the value of linguistic diversity and cultural heritage”. Another 55-year-old male agrees and comments “By studying language change, we can appreciate the complex nature of language transmission through history. This understanding can deepen our appreciation for the linguistic characteristics of our own dialect.”

Overall, the findings aim to shed light on the complex dynamics at play regarding Bahraini Arabic, with participants expressing a range of opinions on lexical change, borrowing, and the importance of preserving traditional dialects. Building upon these findings, the proceeding discussion section will delve into these results' implications, limitations, and broader significance.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1. Overview

This section aims to discuss the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data found in the research, starting with the discussion of the Familiarity test results and the interviews. At the end of the section, we answer the research questions.

5.2. Discussion Of The World Familiarity Test Results

Upon close analysis of the data from the familiarity test, the following patterns were observed, which are summarized below as points:

1. As was shown in Table (1) and Table (2) in the findings section, a significant generational gap exists in the familiarity with traditional Bahraini words, particularly between the youngest and oldest participants in this research. Notably, the results indicate that the older generation (59-68) was nearly twice as likely to identify the traditional Bahraini words than the younger generation (11-26). This was further supported by the T-test score that showed that the difference between the means of the two groups is statistically significant, which concludes that the observed difference is not due to chance. While there are many possible explanations for this finding, one possibility is that these words have diminished in usage over time, particularly among younger generations, often referred to as the "Chicken nuggets" generation. Those born in the 1980s and 1990s in Bahrain, have embraced English as their first language and have traditionally existed on the fringes of social and cultural life within their countries (AlHasan, 2013), resulting

- in reduced exposure to traditional Bahraini language and cultural practices compared to their older counterparts. This notion aligns with Milroy's (2012) research, which highlights various external and internal factors influencing language dynamics within a community, including language shift, social dynamics, and technological advancements.
2. One crucial finding drawn from Table (3) revealed that gender analysis within the study indicates a difference in the recognition of traditional Bahraini vocabulary, with males achieving a higher familiarity score than females. This statement is particularly close to what Trudgill (1972) noted, that women lean towards the language of prestige rather than traditions. This parallel suggests that women within the Bahraini community may exhibit a higher degree of status-consciousness, opting for language forms perceived as more prestigious or socially desirable. At the same time, men may have increased motivation and investment in using traditional dialects, possibly presenting a higher chance of passing that dialect to their future children.
 3. Data analysis of Table (4) revealed a notable disparity in the familiarity of traditional Bahraini vocabulary across education levels. Individuals with high school diplomas, potentially representing individuals born between 1956 and 1965, or the younger segment who could also have only diplomas, demonstrated the highest number of identified words. Conversely, individuals with middle school diplomas, potentially indicative of the youngest generation (aged 11-26), were least likely to identify the traditional words in the test. This observed difference may be partially attributable to differences in exposure to the traditional Bahraini language among the older generation, who were highly immersed in a close-knit community where intergenerational

transmission of language was prevalent, especially through their parents and elders in their families. In contrast, the younger generation is immersed in a globalized context marked by diverse educational experiences, linguistic influences through technology, and potentially different approaches to language acquisition within private schools. This is supported by Holes's (2011) compelling argument that the Gulf region has witnessed a significant rise in code-switching, characterized by the frequent alternation between Arabic and English within a single conversation. Notably, he argues that the prevalence of code-switching is particularly evident among young people in the Gulf, who have been affected by media, television, Internet blogs, and discussion forums as well as education, where younger generations have been exposed to a much wider variety of linguistic influences in the form of Arabic dialects and other languages, whether within the Gulf region or outside.

4. A close analysis of Table (5) revealed a non-linear relationship between the number of languages spoken and the ability to identify traditional Bahraini words. The majority of the participants in the study were bilingual, which could justify why they had the highest scores on the test. Another justification could be, as Bialystok (2016) puts it, bilingualism enriches culture and identity by connecting children to their ancestor's family history, suggesting that bilingualism may promote stronger affiliation and interest in native and mother tongue. Conversely, multilingual individuals who speak three or more languages had the lowest familiarity percentage, possibly attributable to a less dominant or dispersed linguistic repertoire that could induce interlinguistic interference.

5. When analyzing the top five most familiar words in the test, Table (6) shows how nearly 80% of the participants identified words that have a typical pattern of being derived from the environment, household items, or daily use. The identified words were a combination of four nouns translated to "rug, canteen, can, money change" and one adjective that translates to "curious." All these words came from various language origins, such as Farsi, Turkish, and Arabic. However, all words are deeply embedded in the Bahraini cultural lexicon and widely recognized across different age groups and backgrounds.
6. Among the traditional Bahraini words investigated in this study, "Zuleya" or in English, carpet, demonstrated a statistically significant peak in identification rate among all age groups compared to all other words. At the same time, "S'hateet," which translates to tiny bits of pearls, displayed the lowest average score. This can be justified because "Zuleya" is still used in current times by both dialects in Bahrain to refer to a carpet, a concrete object people encounter regularly in their daily lives, making it more familiar and easier to recall. "S'hateet" on the other hand, reflects the ancient traditional practice of pearl collecting, where most families in the old days were involved in the pearling industry, whether merchants, divers, or dealers. Therefore, older participants were more able to identify this word as it was part of their childhood memories, unlike younger generations that have limited knowledge of this traditional Bahraini practice.
7. In analyzing the top most identified words for both genders, the top five words males identified had no specific pattern or theme in common, leading to a broader range of familiarity with the traditional words of various domains. Females, on the other hand, had a high familiarity rate

with five specific words related to food or drink items. Traditionally, women in some cultures are more associated with the private sphere of the household and community (Inness, 2001). Moreover, food holds cultural and emotional significance, and women's familiarity with food-related vocabulary might stem from this socialization.

8. When asked about the definitions of the words chosen, section 4.3 revealed a significant association between age group and the style of definitions provided for the identified traditional Bahraini words. Participants within the younger generation (11-26) generally offered shorter definitions and incorporated slang and English into their explanations, where code-switching is a natural part of their communication style. On the other hand, the older cohorts (59-68 years) offered lengthier definitions. They consistently resorted to Modern Standard Arabic when defining the words, where they have been more accustomed to and comfortable using the formal register of Arabic while growing up. This has implications and evidence of the language change the society is undergoing.
9. Analysis of participants' explanations for traditional Bahraini words revealed high similarity within the middle age groups (27-42 and 43-58 years). These generations consistently provided highly comparable definitions of language use, formatting, and length. This can be justified by factors such as similar educational backgrounds, exposure to standard media or cultural practices, and comparable levels of language acquisition during formative years, which might contribute to this remarkable similarity in explanation style. This is supported by Lovely (2012), who argues that generations who grow up around the same time will forever be connected through the music, media, defining moments,

and cultural norms that shape their formative years. Another possibility is that people in these two age groups are likelier to have had similar social networks. Since Bahrain is a tiny country, they might have grown up in the same neighborhoods or attended the same universities, which would expose them to the same cultural influences, even if they did not have many of the same experiences.

5.3. Discussion of Interviews

Drawing on the quantitative analysis of the traditional word familiarity test among 300 Bahrainis, the first phase unearthed critical findings detailed in the earlier discussion. In order to have a better understanding of how people perceive the change and the reasons behind it, qualitative data in the form of interviews with 20 Bahraini citizens was conducted for the second phase of this study. Analyzing and drawing up conclusions and themes from the main findings of the interviews facilitates comparison and integration of these results with the insights derived from the analysis of the quantitative phase.

5.3.1. Varied Perceptions Towards Lexical Change Of The Bahraini Dialect

The question of linguistic change in the Bahraini dialect produced varying responses and sentiments among participants regarding its implications for linguistic diversity and the preservation of Bahraini culture.

The majority of participants view lexical change in Bahrain as negative and positive, where it is a sign of urbanization, progress, and cultural adaptation but could also indicate potential loss of cultural heritage, identity, and traditional practices. The younger generation, to be specific, implied that the lexical changes observed in the traditional Bahraini dialect can be seen as

indicative of urbanization, progress, and integration into the global economy and society, Phillips (1998) suggests that adopting more modern languages and dialects reflects a nation's evolving cultural landscape and can contribute to the growth of tourism and the economy. Additionally, incorporating new words and expressions, often influenced by English, enhances practical communication in education, business, and governmental contexts. Despite the perceived benefits of language change among younger participants in this research, those belonging to older generations showed concerns regarding the potential loss of cultural heritage and identity, specifically seeing the decline in the use of the traditional Bahraini as diminishing of cultural richness and diversity. The dialect holds significant historical and cultural value, making its decline a concern for preserving Bahraini tradition (McIvor et al., 2009). Other participants in the older generation also argued that the shift towards a more modernized dialect risks eroding traditional practices and customs, negatively impacting cultural continuity.

According to Holes (2011), studying the lifestyle of people residing in the Arabian Gulf post the 1970s, the alterations in the linguistic landscape have resulted in some Gulf Arabs experiencing a 'crisis of identity.' The future generation is growing up and losing their association not only with the local dialect but also with the language and culture of the broader Arab world. Despite the changes in the linguistic landscape of the Gulf and the Arab Middle East, Holes (2011) emphasizes that the Arabic language is not technically dying in the region, as it still a sacred part of each individual Arab living in the region. This is evident in this research with the way many younger Bahrainis expressed their pride in the unique words and expressions of the Bahraini Arabic, which is not found in standard Arabic or neighboring GCC

countries. This distinctiveness of the dialect contributes to the dialect's popularity and admiration among Arab and non-Arab individuals.

5.3.2. The Factor That Mostly Effected Lexical Change

Most of the participants in this study indicate that Bahraini Arabic has undergone significant transformation due to globalization. Despite Arabic being the country's official language, English has gained prominence in various contexts, even in those where Arabic was traditionally dominant (Bulaila & Sdiri, 2021). English's prevalence in the Bahraini lexicon can be traced back to the historical period when Bahrain was a British protectorate in the 19th century (AlSadeqi, 2010). Today, as Bahrain integrates into the global landscape, the influence of technology and commerce is increasingly reflected in everyday conversations, resulting in a dynamic Bahraini dialect consisting of loanwords, code-switching, abbreviations, and hybrid formations (Al-Nabi, 2012).

Notably, data analysis revealed that education has emerged as the second most influential factor contributing to lexical change in Bahrain following globalization. Holes (2011) argues that this lexical change had already begun forty years ago when he was investigating the dialects in Bahrain. Still, it has become more pervasive in recent years. Moreover, while exposure to English and Modern Standard Arabic in school enhances students' formal communication skills, there is a potential gradual distancing from traditional Bahraini vocabulary.

5.3.3. Effect Of Bahraini Lexical Change On Identity

The effect of Lexical change on identity, from the point of view of most interviewees, seems to be a complex matter. While older participants in this

research emphasized the significance of preserving linguistic purity as it reinforces the connection between language and identity among Bahraini speakers, especially those who place great importance on their heritage, younger participants expressed that lexical changes reflect a dynamic and adaptable society and does not necessarily have an immediate impact on cultural identity at the current time. While Bucholtz & Hall (2011) argue that language is deeply intertwined with identity, and any alteration to its vocabulary can be seen as a threat to the preservation of cultural heritage, many participants of all ages argue that it might be too soon to worry about an imminent disappearance of identity.

While younger participants lead lexical change, they argue that incorporating borrowed words does not act as a means of erasing one's identity; instead, it reflects the evolving realities of the language. Furthermore, these participants posit that code-switching serves as an indication of linguistic agility rather than a display of disloyalty. Lastly, they assert that abbreviations serve as tools for enhancing efficiency rather than replacements for more profound forms of expression. All participants agreed that fostering awareness and appreciation for the dialect's unique qualities is crucial, celebrating its history while allowing for growth and integration.

5.3.4. Importance Of Preserving The Arabic Bahraini Dialect With Its Traditional Bahraini Words.

It is disclosed through the analysis of the final part of the interview that the most agreed-upon answer among all participants was the importance of preserving the Bahraini Arabic dialect, which reflects the country's unique history and culture. Most participants agreed that the dialect is a marker of their identity and a connector to their ancestors, communities, and shared

cultural experiences. Many participants from older generations have expressed that using and understanding the dialect fosters a sense of belonging and strengthens social bonds within Bahraini society. In the same vein, Crystal (2002) argues that losing a dialect can mean losing the markers of identity and the cultural knowledge embedded within a person and his country.

Those belonging to younger generations, on the other hand, have admitted that despite not using the dialect that often, they also still believe in the importance of preserving the dialect and feel that the very act of comprehending the dialect fosters a profound sense of belonging and forges unbreakable social bonds that transcend generations. As for how to preserve the dialect, all participants agreed that recognizing the dialect's multifaceted significance is a shared community responsibility. Living in a fast-paced world, embracing and promoting the traditional dialect in media, educational institutions, and local communities can pave the way for increased tourism and cultural exchange. Moreover, incorporating the dialect into educational curricula fosters a deeper understanding of the country's unique linguistic features and history for many future generations to come.

5.4. Answering Research Questions

To answer the first question in the research: *What are the lexical differences in the use of Bahraini Arabic among different generations in Bahrain?* Two research methods were employed for 300 Bahraini participants of different age groups. The findings disclosed that Bahrainis born in the oldest generation (aged 58-69) are more familiar with traditional Bahraini words than those in the youngest generation of this study (aged 11-26). As for the middle age groups (aged 27-42 and 43-58 years), they had a very similar familiarity rate as well as nearly identical formats for identifying the

traditional Bahraini words. The youngest generations were found to be more likely to use loanwords or code-switch from English to Arabic and altogether avoid using MSA when identifying the words they were familiar with in the test.

The second question: *What factors (e.g., gender, globalization, education, ethnicity, bi-or multilingualism) influence the Lexical change among different generations in Bahrain?* relates to the first question in hopes of justifying the lexical changes in the use of the Bahraini dialect. The effects of these social factors in Bahrain are multifaceted. Gender dynamics can influence lexical change as societal shifts and women's societal roles change vocabulary and language usage. Globalization, with its exposure to diverse cultures and communication styles, introduces new words and concepts into the lexicon, such as language blending, borrowing, and code-switching, as individuals draw from multiple languages in their communication. Education plays a significant role in shaping language use and vocabulary acquisition, as changes in educational approaches and language policies can result in lexical variation across generations. Bahrain's multicultural society, encompassing various ethnic communities, brings about distinct linguistic practices and language contact situations, which can influence lexical changes within specific groups and beyond. All of these factors work together to shape how language evolves in Bahrain, showing how culture and language are deeply intertwined.

Based on the Word Familiarity test and the interviews, it was found that globalization is the most influencing factor, evident in various linguistic phenomena such as adopting loanwords, code-switching, abbreviations, and hybrid formations, especially among younger generations. The influences of

education and technology follow, with commerce increasingly reflected in everyday conversations by incorporating English words. It was also found that diverse factors like individual preferences, social context, and regional variations shape these lexical differences. The dynamic interplay between all these social factors will continue to influence the evolution of Bahraini Arabic across generations to come.

The final question in the research is: *What perceptions do speakers of different generations have towards lexical change in Bahraini Arabic?* Participants in this research were allowed to elaborate freely on their thoughts regarding identity and lexical change to answer this question. It was revealed that lexical change could threaten the traditional Bahraini dialect and the cultural heritage it represents. Older generations, specifically, felt that the loss of traditional words and expressions signifies a decline in cultural identity and community spirit. On the other hand, while young speakers expressed some concern about losing touch with their cultural roots or not understanding the traditional dialect spoken by older generations, they appeared to be generally more accepting of lexical change when it occurs in moderation, viewing it as a natural process of language evolution.

Chapter Six: Conclusion & Recommendation

Chapter Six

Conclusion & Recommendation

6.1. Overview

This conclusion chapter serves as the culmination of the research journey presented in this thesis. It aims to contribute to the already established knowledge on the topic of linguistics change and variation in Bahrain and concludes by providing valuable recommendations for future research.

6.2. Summary

This research aimed to investigate the evolution of traditional Bahraini Arabic usage and its impact on cultural identity and heritage across different generations in Bahrain. Previous studies have not explored the patterns of Bahraini dialect use among various demographic groups and social contexts in the Kingdom. Additionally, the research aimed to identify the factors that influence dialect change and lexical preferences, which could determine whether the increasing use of English poses a threat to the preservation of Bahraini Arabic dialect use. The study was organized around three research questions presented in section 1.3. These questions are gradually addressed throughout the methodology and findings chapters, leading to a direct discussion of them in the final section of chapter 5.

The study revealed a significant generational gap in familiarity with traditional Bahraini words, particularly between the youngest and oldest participants. Notably, the findings indicate that the older generation (59-68) was nearly twice as likely to identify the traditional Bahraini words than the younger generation (11-26), who were still acquainted with commonly used traditional words in everyday situations. It was also observed that younger

Bahrainis tended to incorporate loanwords or code-switch between English and Arabic, whereas older Bahrainis were more comfortable using Modern Standard Arabic. The research attributed this change in dialect use and familiarity to various social factors, primarily globalization, followed by education, technology, and personal preferences. Furthermore, gender dynamics were found to influence lexical change, as shifts in societal roles and the status of women impacted vocabulary and language usage. The study also discovered that opinions were divided regarding the impact of lexical change on cultural identity and heritage. While older generations expressed concerns about losing their cultural identity, younger speakers viewed linguistic evolution as a natural process, albeit with some reservations.

Despite its complexity, the Bahraini dialect remains a distinctive and significant component of the country's cultural heritage. The study underscores the importance of safeguarding this dialect and passing it on to future generations. By understanding the factors that influence Bahraini dialect usage and the impact of globalization on language, Bahraini speakers can collaborate to ensure the continued vitality of the dialect for years to come.

6.3. Research Recommendations

In conclusion, it is important to initiate programs that document and raise awareness about the rich cultural heritage associated with Bahrain's traditional vocabulary before it is lost completely. Moreover, language education programs targeted at younger generations can play a crucial role in emphasizing the importance of maintaining a connection with the Bahraini dialect and promoting its usage. Lastly, further research should be done on lexical change in Bahrain with a larger sample size to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the lexical dynamics in the Bahraini community and to enhance the reliability of the findings.

Chapter Seven: References

Chapter Seven

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Chapter Eight: Appendices

Chapter Eight

Appendices

8.1. Partipation Consent Message

Welcome to the Word Familiarity Test of Traditional Bahraini Arabic

This test is used as part of an MA research on Linguistic Variation and Change across
Different Generations in Bahrain.

Please note that your responses in this survey are completely confidential and will be
used for research purposes only. Your personal information will be kept secure and
will not be disclosed or used for any other purposes beyond this study.

Start

press Enter ↵

8.2. Word Familiarity Test – Questions

1. What is your age group?

- ☐ 11-26
- ☐ 27-42
- ☐ 43-58
- ☐ 59-68

2. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ Elementary
- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School Diploma
- ☐ BSc
- ☐ Masters
- ☐ PHD

4. How many languages do you speak?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3+

5. PART1: Which of the following words are you familiar with?

Please choose the words you recognise (There are 120 words in total) **Please do not choose words you have never seen before or words you do not know, even if you can read them or have a predictable meaning.**

- | | | |
|-------------|------------|-----------|
| ○ صفريّة | ○ لهط | ○ خرطي |
| ○ الدانوب | ○ حرّة | ○ مرتبشة |
| ○ شهقت | ○ اليواهر | ○ قطّات |
| ○ الحواي | ○ الجراجير | ○ الفير |
| ○ مقصف | ○ الأعور | ○ متلثم |
| ○ سحاتيت | ○ شلقه | ○ استكانة |
| ○ مهندم | ○ تهيدت | ○ استن |
| ○ التيليزون | ○ يللع | ○ تكيّه |
| ○ دريس | ○ الكنبه | ○ تفك |
| ○ منصطر | ○ اليرو | ○ چپليه |
| ○ تكانه | ○ عتيج | ○ خرمس |
| ○ البوانيش | ○ زولية | ○ خش |
| ○ متسودن | ○ مدمغة | |
| ○ هگهگ | ○ قوطي | |

6. PART2: Which of the following words are you familiar with?

Please choose the words you recognise (There are 120 words in total) **Please do not choose words you have never seen before or words you do not know, even if you can read them or have a predictable meaning.**

- | | | |
|---------|---------|--------|
| ○ حذا | ○ زنط | ○ سطل |
| ○ دندل | ○ ساسر | ○ طازه |
| ○ دَن | ○ بروه | ○ نزر |
| ○ دگله | ○ باصج | ○ زتات |
| ○ رزح | ○ شَدان | ○ عبل |
| ○ زرنوك | ○ خمگ | ○ گحص |

- | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| ○ گڏله | ○ ردم | ○ شتري |
| ○ لهدم | ○ مڪعوي | ○ ملقوف |
| ○ ماڃله | ○ مصرقع | ○ ملڪڪ |
| ○ نايبه | ○ جديله | ○ ملوص |
| ○ نش | ○ جلع | ○ منشع |
| ○ نڱز | ○ سيده | ○ دبك |
| ○ يباب | ○ شيله | |
| ○ محتر | ○ شبريه | |

7. PART3: Which of the following words are you familiar with?

Please choose the words you recognise (There are 120 words in total) **Please do not choose words you have never seen before or words you do not know, even if you can read them or have a predictable meaning.**

- | | | |
|----------|----------|---------|
| ○ روشنه | ○ زرنوگ | ○ بربره |
| ○ ريري | ○ شيره | ○ پرده |
| ○ غبگه | ○ عفار | ○ حرجج |
| ○ كلك | ○ فطس | ○ مدلگم |
| ○ لبد | ○ گدوع | ○ دريول |
| ○ لځ | ○ گفشه | ○ پيپ |
| ○ مشاهره | ○ لتج | ○ خرده |
| ○ نوده | ○ لغلاغة | ○ فنيال |
| ○ هبر | ○ يلگ | ○ لويه |
| ○ همچه | ○ لهدم | ○ نمونه |
| ○ زتات | ○ بقه | ○ مخرخش |

- غث
- سمبل
- طرار
- أملط
- طرطنقي
- صخ
- سنطري

8. Use of the Words Chosen

You have identified at least one of these words:

لهمد - نمونه - مخرخش - طرار - طرطنقي- سنطري- سمبل- أملط- صخ- غث

Kindly define or explain the meaning of any word from the words you have selected just like the example given:

كشنة: الرحلة البرية مع افراد العائلة او الاصدقاء

8.3. Interview Questions

- **Part 1:**

1- Have you noticed any lexical changes in the way Bahrainis use language over the past years?

2- Is it positive? Negative? Explain?

3- In your opinion, what are the factors that mostly affect lexical changes among generations.. Have a look at the list of the factors below and talk about the ones that you think are important:

(Age, Gender, Multilingualism, Education, Globalization)

4- To what extent does the change in the use of Bahraini dialect/traditional words affect its users' sense of identity?

5- In your opinion, how important it is to preserve the Arabic Bahraini dialect with its traditional Bahraini words? How can we do that?

- **Part 2:**

I am going to read a few statements, please choose from the scale provided

1: Strongly agree - 2: Somewhat agree - 3: Neither agree nor disagree

4: Somewhat disagree - 5: Strongly disagree

1. Younger generations are losing their grip on traditional Bahraini Arabic.
2. Older generations in Bahrain tend to preserve traditional vocabulary and expressions, while younger generations adopt and incorporate more modern and foreign terms.
3. The use of loanwords weakens the identity of Bahraini Arabic.
4. Lexical change is a natural and inevitable process of all languages.
5. There is a growing interest in documenting and preserving traditional Bahraini Arabic dialects in Bahrain.
6. In a few years, Bahraini Arabic will completely disappear or vanish.

7. It is important to be respectful of the different ways in which people speak Bahraini Arabic.
8. The study of lexical change and variation can help us to appreciate the richness and diversity of Bahraini Arabic.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الطبيعة الديناميكية لهجة البحرينية، وهي لهجة تعرضت لتغيرات كبيرة على مدى العقود الماضية. ولغرض فهم هذه التغيرات، من الضروري تحديد العوامل المؤثرة على اللغة العربية البحرينية بين المتحدثين بها من مختلف الفئات العمرية. ولذلك، تم استخدام نهج مختلط في هذا البحث، بما في ذلك اختبار تألف الكلمات عبر الإنترنت ومقابلات مع ناطقي العربية البحرينية. أظهرت النتائج وجود فجوة لغوية بين المتحدثين الكبار والصغار حيث أصبحت الأجيال الأكبر سناً أكثر معرفة بالكلمات البحرينية التقليدية واستخدام اللغة العربية الفصحى الحديثة بشكل متكرر. بالمقابل، تعتمد الأجيال الشابة بشكل أكبر على الكلمات المستعارة والتبديل بين اللغات. وقد حددت الدراسة العولمة والتعليم والتكنولوجيا كعوامل رئيسية للتغيرات اللغوية، إلى جانب الجنس وتفضيلات الأفراد. وقد اعتبرت الأجيال الأكبر سناً فقدان الكلمات التقليدية كتهديد لهويتهم الثقافية، بينما رأى الناطقون الشباب التغير اللغوي كجزء طبيعي من تطور اللغة. يساهم هذا البحث في فهمنا للتباين اللغوي والتغيير، ويسلط الضوء على أهمية بذل الجهد للحفاظ على اللهجة البحرينية ضمن المجتمع الناطق بها. ومع ذلك، فإن حجم العينة المحدودة للدراسة يعيق قابلية تعميم النتائج للمجتمع الناطق بالعربية البحرينية بشكل أوسع. لذلك، من الضروري إجراء مزيد من الأبحاث باستخدام حجم عينة أكبر لزيادة دقة النتائج وقابلية تعميمها.



جامعة البحرين

كلية الآداب

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها

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