LANGUAGE VARIATION, STYLE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF MICRO-CELEBRITY PERSONAS

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

GRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM
IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION & TEACHING

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2020

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

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Acknowledgments

I can never fully express my gratitude to all the people who have showered me with inspiration, support, and love throughout this Ph.D. journey. First and foremost, the greatest thanks go to Allah for blessing me and granting me the patience and will to finish this dissertation. I also owe a great debt to the Saudi government and Qassim University for awarding me this scholarship and funding my studies in the US.

I am incredibly lucky to have had such an amazing committee of strong, successful female professors. First, my deep and sincere gratitude goes to my co-advisors—Dr. Qing Zhang, in the School of Anthropology, and Dr. Linda Waugh, Professor Emerita of SLAT and French—whose unwavering patience, faith, and support guided me through this work. I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Zhang for all the time she devoted to meeting me weekly, reading multiple drafts of my chapters, and providing invaluable feedback, suggestions, and inspiring ideas. And I will always be thankful to Dr. Waugh for standing with me and supporting me throughout the many ups and downs of my studies. I am deeply grateful and will never forget your numerous contributions to my growth as a researcher and an academic.

I am likewise grateful to Dr. Ana Carvalho, in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, for her continuous help and motivation, for the countless meetings and thought-provoking discussions we had, and for teaching me how to do regression analysis in Rbrul. I am truly honored to have had you on my committee.

To Dr. Sonia Shiri, in the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies. Thank you for always being a supporting force from home. Having such an experienced Arab scholar on my committee was of great help in so many ways.

To Kelley Merriam Castro, SLAT coordinator, for her continuous support in official and personal matters. Kelley, you rock.

Special thanks go to my participant, Shreen, for letting me use her Instagram data and for the time she gave to answer my questions over chat and in the interview.

I owe the greatest debt to my mother and father, who taught me how to strive and learn. Your love, prayers, and emotional support kept me going during this long journey abroad. I am also lucky to have the best sisters in the world, who were always willing to help with whatever they could and spent long hours transcribing my interviews. I would also like to thank my brothers and the rest of my family for praying and cheering for me along the way. My deep thanks are also due to my ex-husband, who encouraged me to start this journey and was a friend, confidant, and helper who lightened the burden of homesickness in the first years of my journey. For this, I will always be indebted to him.

Thank you to all the people I met who made my studies more enjoyable. I am lucky to have met and learned from so many friends in academia. To Asma Alsahail, I will always be grateful for all the discussions, including gossip, we had about our classes. To the amazing scholar, Adriana Picora Scheideggerl, who helped me learn R and Rbrul. Thanks also go to Essa Albatal, for helping whenever I had a question about statistics, and to Adnan Alobaid, for his encouragement, support, and translation of several texts. To Jason and his magic ways that helped me get back on my feet and break my writer's block, thanks to the moon and back. And thanks to Karen Barto for letting me learn from her experience in dissertation writing and all the emotional support she showered me with. I am also grateful to Nathanael for taking some of the weight off my shoulders by editing and formatting the dissertation. Of course, I cannot forget Mike from CAPS. I am incredibly thankful for the many hours you spent listening to my doubts

and stress talk and for keeping my spirit high throughout the storms of depression and anxiety. I am beyond grateful for your text messages whenever you felt I was going through something.

Finally, thanks to all the amazing friends who made this journey so exciting and enriching. The list is endless, but a special thanks to Meshael Alahmadi, Modhi Alshammari, Wid-Allahibi, Alaa Shakoori, Ricardo Romero, Fatima Elhamdi, Linda Lemus, Sidsel Rasmussen, Keri Miller, Kristin Helland, Osman Solmaz, and Míriam Rodríguez.

Dedication

To my mother and father, with love.

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Abstract

Traditional variationists have long shown interest in the media as an external factor that could increase linguistic exposure or influence the spread of linguistic innovations, but studies have generally reported no systematic effect of media on language variation and change (Carvalho, 2004; Stuart-Smith, 2017; Taglimonte, 2014). However, with the rise of participatory culture on social media and social phenomena such as micro-celebrities (i.e., ordinary people who have become famous by means of the Internet), studies are needed that address how variation is deployed online to create social meaning and how it can reflect and shape sociolinguistic change (Androutsopoulos, 2017; Coupland, 2017). At the same time, the growing body of sociolinguistic research on Saudi dialects has shown an ongoing shift from local to supralocal variants and predicted the emergence of a supralocal Saudi dialect (Alammar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2015; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 2009). However, no previous research has examined how these socially salient supralocal features, among other linguistic resources, are used in stylistic practices to construct social meaning.

Viewing variation as a social practice and a resource for the construction of social meaning (Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2000, 2008, 2016; Zhang, 2012, 2018) and social media as participating in this process of meaning making (Androutsopoulos, 2017; Coupland, 2017; Zhang, 2018), this study examines variation in regional dialect, language choice, and orthographic bilingualism on social media. More specifically, it studies variation in local and supralocal Najdi Arabic and English, and the combining of these resources with other linguistic and semiotic resources in the performance of a Saudi micro-celebrity's persona as it changes over time. Adopting an online ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis (Androutsopoulos, 2008), the study employs longitudinal observations of online practices, direct

contact with the participant through chatting and an interview, and a corpus of produced social media texts. The analyses include quantitative and qualitative methods.

Multivariate analyses using Rbrul showed a significant shift from local to supralocal Najdi variants across time as the micro-celebrity's interest in fame and popularity changed; however, this finding depended on the social saliency of the given linguistic feature. In contrast, topic had no apparent effect on style variation. The qualitative analysis revealed how the micro-celebrity's style varied through the use of different combinations of linguistic and semiotic resources as her identity and interest in fame changed over time. Local dialect features and avoidance of English were used to create authenticity, humor, and intimate relationships with the audience, while the supralocal variants combined with English produced a more modern and less traditional persona. This study contributes to research on style by examining stylistic variation in a rarely discussed context (social media) by a relatively new type of subject (a micro-celebrity) in a kind of performed language on a large public platform. Additionally, it contributes to research on Arabic language variation by examining the social meaning of an emerging supralocal style.

Chapter 1: Introduction

والله مالومك ماتفرقين بينهم .. كلهم مركبات رموش فوق بعض ومخلصين علبة ماسكرا كامله ومسوين خيوط عيون وخيوط حنك ويتكلمون عربي مكس انقلش وحياتهم عباره عن هدايا تجيهم، واذا جو يسولفون قالوا حكونا كيف رمضان معكم كيف العيد معكم كيف الوباء معكم .. ابتذال!

I don't blame you if you can't distinguish between them, they all have fake lashes, wear an entire bottle of mascara, have done eyebrow-raising and jaw-dropping cosmetic procedures, and they speak Arabic mixed with English! (Yaser Alfaisal, a media and celebrity critic, commenting on Arab social media fashionistas)

انا اتابعك صار لي فترة تقريبا شهرين اول ماجذبني بسنابك التصوير للطبيعه اماكن حلوه لقطات جميله عجبني ان مافي كلام وزهق ولما عرفت انتي ليه بالغربه حبيتك وحبيت تجربتك وتفوقك ونجاحك حبيت رحلاتك وكيف تاخذينا معاك بالذات مثلي كثير الي مانعرف ولارحنا ولاسافرنا من بيتنا لبيت اهلنا ماطلعنا برى المملكه ..... 😘💖😍

I have been following you for about two months. The first thing that attracted me to your account was pictures of nature, and when I learned why you are living abroad, I loved your hard work, success, and distinction. I also love your trips and how you take us to different places with you, especially for people like me and many Saudis who have never left the kingdom 😘💖😍 (a follower's message to Arwadhl, a Saudi expatriate social media celebrity)

مرا مرا احبك انتي وخواتك واللي مرا اعجبني فيكم وحبيته كثير انكم رغم عايشين الحين بامريكا ودارسين هناك الا ان كل فلوقاتك وتويترك تتكلمين عربي عكس الباقيين وهذا شيء مرا حلو .. احببببكم💖

I love you and your sisters so so much. The thing I like about you and I love a lot is that although you and your entire family live in the US and study there, you speak Arabic in your vlogs and tweets, which is different from other expats.....I lovvvvvve you 💖 (a follower's message to Dania Alsaleh, a Saudi expatriate YouTuber)

1.1 Introduction

Sociolinguistic research examines language variation and change in the media from different perspectives. Traditional variationist research has focused on the effect of the media as an external factor on language change and the diffusion of linguistic innovations (Carvalho, 2004; Sayers, 2014; Stuart-Smith, 2017; Tagliamonte, 2014) or the transferability of linguistic and social constraints of variation between writing and speaking modalities (Eisenstein, 2015). Research in this area has generally found no direct systemic effect from the media on language change (for a review, see Androutsopoulos, 2014, 2017; Stuart-Smith, 2017). On the other hand,

viewing variation as a social practice and a resource to construct social meaning (e.g., stances and personas), a growing body of research examines stylistic variation in the media as a meaning-making resource (Coupland, 2014; Podesva et al., 2012; Strand, 2012; Zhang, 2008, 2018). An advantage of such research lies in situating the analysis of style within the complex social, political, and economic contexts of its use as it is being mediated on digital platforms. However, a great deal of this research examines style-shifting merely as alternation in the use of standard and nonstandard dialect features or the use of regional dialects (Podesva et al., 2012; Soukup, 2012; Strand, 2012) rather than looking at style as a fluid, flexible practice involving multiple co-occurring semiotic and linguistic features. In addition, there is still a lack of research on language variation as stylistic practices on the relatively new platform of social media (Androutsopoulos, 2017; Coupland, 2017). The need for research in this area has only increased as innovative ways of using social media emerge. Studies are needed that address how variations—whether in the use of linguistic innovations, socially salient variables, or any other linguistic resources—are deployed online to create social meaning as well as how mediated variation can reflect and participate in linguistic and sociolinguistic change.

At the same time, an emerging body of research has documented dialect leveling and emerging supralocal dialects in Saudi Arabia (Alammar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2015; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 2009). In his review of the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia, Ingham (2009) predicted the emergence of two Saudi standards: a central one based on Najdi Arabic and a western one based on Hijazi Arabic. Other studies have examined sociolinguistic change as a result of contact between dialects when people from minority regions move to major cities. Such studies have confirmed a convergence to major city variants, especially among younger speaker (Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013). For example, Al-Ghamdi

(2013) found that Ghamdi migrants from Baha to Mecca used the Hijazi variants more than the traditional Ghamdi variants (e.g., they favored the urban Hijazi monophthongs over the traditional Ghamdi diphthongs /aw/ and /aj/). Studies of regional dialect leveling have shown similar tendencies to adopt supralocal features. For instance, in his study of affrication in Qassimi Arabic, Al-Rojaie (2013) found that young and middle-aged educated speakers favored the supralocal variants /k/ and /g/ over the traditional affricated variants /ts/ and /dz/ of Najdi Arabic.

Meanwhile, with the growing consumption of social media in Saudi Arabia, the popularity, demands, and impact of social media influencers, or micro-celebrities has become enormous. These are ordinary people who have gained fame within a certain group in a certain culture by means of the Internet (Abidin, 2018; Marwick & boyd, 2011). According to Talkwalker (n.d.), the word for influencer both in its English and Arabic equivalents (e.g., انفلونسر , مؤثر) was mentioned more than 85,100 times in online conversations in Saudi Arabia in the first four months of 2020, with an engagement rate of 173,600 (e.g., shares and likes). Because of their access to and influence over large audiences, social media celebrities have had an enormous impact on Saudi society socially, culturally, and economically. Furthermore, such celebrities strongly influence the formation and reformation of Saudi public opinion and shape social trends in numerous arenas, such as lifestyle, fashion, and manners. In addition, they are often known for one specialty, such as food celebrities, fashionistas, tech and gaming influencers, and meme and comedy celebrities. Most importantly, they have been widely used for marketing purposes, which in itself has influenced consumption culture, practices, and the formation of social class in Saudi Arabia.

One group of social media influencers that has gained popularity in Saudi society are expatriate celebrities. They are ordinary expats who film their day-to-day life abroad in countries like the US and the UK to acquire followers, fame, and consequent economic and social profit. Social media have helped those expats stay connected with people back home, illuminate the attractive aspects of their lives abroad, and distinguish themselves from other Saudi citizens. Local people (who live in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries) follow fellow citizen expatriates on social media as their accounts provide access to an imaginary life their followers aspire to and offer the opportunity to live vicariously and see the outside world through these expatriates. This is especially appealing if followers have never traveled abroad, as indicated by comments observed on expatriates' social media accounts and elsewhere (see the example quotations above). As a result, some Saudi expatriates have garnered fame nationwide and profited economically from their fame (e.g., Malak Alhussini and Arwadhl).

The study of *performed language* (Bauman, 1996; Coupland, 2007) on social media, especially the large output of Internet celebrities, provides rich resources to understand stylistic variation, style, and persona (Androutsopoulos, 2017; Coupland, 2017). This research contributes to our understanding of the constantly evolving relationships between language, media, and social meaning. Research in this area can show how the digital medium itself participates in the process of meaning making. Additionally, performed language (language in social media is a case in point) has been shown to mimic the vernacular and to have the advantage of increasing reflexivity and bringing up stereotypical dialect features (Schilling, 1998; Strand, 2012; Trester, 2008), thus, offering a possible ground for the study of language variation and change. On another level, the study of language in the media can highlight the use

and circulation of linguistic innovations and emerging styles and how the media contributes to these sociolinguistic processes (e.g., Squires, 2014; Zhang, 2012, 2018).

One way the study of performed language on the Internet can be fruitful is in the analysis of social media celebrities' language. This can help with understanding what and how linguistic resources are combined and reused in the construction of fame-worthy personas. The study of these emerging styles and the (new) social meanings created would be beneficial to work on sociolinguistic change. That is, trendy cultural figures with wide appeal and social power are expected to play a huge role in accelerating the diffusion of linguistic innovations and spreading awareness about sociolinguistic styles or changes in language ideologies and attitudes (Coupland, 2017). Despite the growing importance of social media influencers, few studies have examined their language (e.g., Bell, 2011; Coupland, 2017; Jansen & Westphal, 2017; Kytölä & Westinen, 2015; Page, 2012; Valentinesson, 2018). Furthermore, most of this work has analyzed celebrities of mainstream mass media (Bell, 2011; Coupland, 2017; Jansen & Westphal, 2017; Valentinesson, 2018) or considered topics related to authenticity (e.g., Valentinesson, 2018), multilingualism (e.g., Coupland, 2017), stances and persona construction (e.g., Coupland, 2017; Valentinesson, 2018), or discourse style (Page, 2012). Thus, there is a gap in the research related to micro-celebrity language use, especially in relation to stylistic practices and persona construction. This gap is critical in a society like that of Saudi Arabia, where micro-celebrities are playing a huge role in rapid cultural and social change.

1.2 Research Questions

Given the lack of research on stylistic variation in social media, the current study has sought to understand how variation in local and emerging supralocal Najdi dialects and English have been used to construct social meaning online. Particularly, this study examines variation in

local/supralocal Arabic dialect features and English in the language of Shreen,[1] a Saudi expat Instagram celebrity, and how these and other linguistic and semiotic features are deployed as stylistic resources in the performance of her personas. To put it differently, the study examined the What and How regarding the variation in Shreen's linguistic styles as her identity evolves throughout her journey as an Instagram celebrity. In doing so, I consider all the semiotic and linguistic resources Shreen deployed in constructing her distinctive style, with a particular focus on the use of six dialect features and English, looking at how these resources, loaded with social meanings, were combined with other semiotic and linguistic resources and reused in making new meanings in her interactions. This dissertation addresses the following general research questions:

1. What linguistic and other semiotic resources did Shreen use to construct her Instagram celebrity personas?
2. Are linguistic choices—such as the use of regional dialect, language choice, and the use of scripts—correlated with topic and time of the post?
3. How was variation in regional dialect, language choice, and script used and combined with other linguistic and semiotic resources in Shreen's Instagram posts to construct her personas?

In the first part of the study, I address the first research question using quantitative analyses of Shreen's style variation across four periods of time in relation to three topics. In particular, I examine style variation across time and topics in 1) regional dialect as represented by six linguistic variables with local vs. supralocal variants, 2) language/script choice, and 3) writing English in the Arabic alphabet. The Najdi Arabic features representing dialect variables

[1] Shreen is a pseudonym.

included the first-person singular object suffix [-ni/-an], second-person feminine object suffix [-k/-ts], third-person feminine object suffix [-ha/-eh], negation particle [mu/muhub], future particle [ba-/aba-], and preposition [fii-/bu-]. The language/script choice variable included three variants: Arabic, English, or both/mixed. The third variable, English written in the Arabic alphabet, focused on whether this choice was used or not. The four time periods represent the stages in Shreen's evolving persona: before fame, seeking fame, peak of fame, and declining interest in fame. The following research questions guided the multivariate analysis:

1. How do the supralocal Najdi Arabic variables correlate with time and topic?
2. How does code choice (i.e., the use of English, Arabic, and Arabic-English mixing) correlate with time and topic?
3. How does writing English in the Arabic alphabet correlate with time and topic?

The second part of the study addresses the second research question. Employing qualitative analysis, this part looks at specific moments of language use (i.e., posts) to examines how Shreen combines these features with other culturally salient resources in the performance of her expatriate celebrity personas and how her stylistic practices changed as her persona and interest in fame changed. In doing so, the analysis examines the social meaning produced by combining and recombining linguistic and semiotic resources in specific moments of interaction and the persona constructed through that interaction.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Social Media Celebrity

In the context of the Internet's turn toward participatory culture and the growing use of social networking sites, a recent trend has emerged where people with large online followings are variously called Internet celebrities, micro-celebrity, social media celebrities, or most

recently, influencers (Abidin, 2018). These are ordinary people who have gained fame within a certain group in a certain culture by means of the Internet. Marwick and boyd (2011) define this emerging form of media celebrity as the self-presentation techniques through which Internet users see themselves as public figures to be consumed by other people, viewing their audience as fans rather than family or friends. Marwick (2013, 2015) argues that this kind of Internet fame is a practice; it is gained as a result of what a person does rather than who they are. Similarly, Senft (2008) called this kind of fame "micro-celebrity," defined as "a new style of online performance in which people employ webcams, video, audio, blogs, and social networking sites to 'amp up' their popularity among readers, viewers, and those to whom they are linked online" (p. 20).

Micro-celebrities carefully construct and perform personas to attract attention using various self-branding techniques (Marwick, 2013, 2015; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Senft, 2008). First of all, they view themselves as products to be consumed by audiences and thus present themselves as a "brand." In doing so, micro-celebrities create a persona that highlights positive eye-catching features of themselves and their lives. They are aspirational in that people admire and aspire to the celebrities' lifestyle activities. Micro-celebrities also form intimate bonds with audiences. Among the strategies employed to create this intimacy is being authentic. Authenticity, in this case, can be created through direct interaction with audiences and msicro-celebrities revealing personal information about themselves. Marwick (2015) maintains that these self-presentation/self-promotion strategies are largely shaped by the technological platform the micro-celebrity is using and the social context they are part of.

Marwick (2015) has examined Instagram micro-celebrities, what she calls Instafame, to understand what common criteria can make a person popular and what techniques Instagram affords for fame. Marwick has found that Instagram affords different tools for growing fame than

other social networking platforms since it presents micro-celebrities with visual tools for self-presentation and connecting with audiences, which make it easier to win the attention economy than other mainly textual platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. Instafame is also "aspirational"; people follow things they like and aspire to but have little or no access to, be it wealth, travels, nature, trendy lifestyles, or inspiring professions. Marwick suggests that Instagram mainly "reinforces an existing hierarchy of fame, in which the iconography of glamour, luxury, wealth, good looks, and connections is reinscribed in a visual digital medium" (p. 141). At the same time, Instagram allows ordinary people to show glamorous pictures of their lives, post perfectly edited selfies, and connect with the public, opening the door for ordinary people to gain "instafame."

1.3.2 The Community

1.3.2.1 Saudi Expatriates

In the past decade, an increasing number of Saudis have left their home country to temporarily live abroad for work or study. This trend follows the Saudi government's plan to enrich the workforce by sending Saudis abroad for education and professional or practical training as part of annually organized programs, such as the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. However, this opportunity is not available to everyone as there are several requirements to be awarded funding. In addition, people have been sent to live abroad as part of their jobs in embassies, councils, and other political and diplomatic occupations, while others have worked abroad as part of research teams in universities and hospitals. Most of the countries people are sent to are English speaking, although a small number live in countries such as Italy and Germany. Overall, the US constitutes one of the most desirable destinations for Saudis because of its political and economic power and prestigious status. As a result, studying and

living abroad has become something Saudis aspire to and work hard to achieve, and those who live abroad are viewed as “blessed” and “lucky.” This is even more the case for expatriates in the US.

As their numbers have grown, so too have stereotypes about expatriates, especially those in English-speaking countries. An image of the expatriate has been enregistered (Agha, 2003), through circulations in the media and discourse, as a braggart who speaks a lot and in every situation about their experiences in the host country, praising and loving it. At the same time, the expatriate is seen as being critical of their own home country and cultural customs. Linguistically, this bragging is done through excessive code switching, use of English words every now and then, and pretending to have forgotten the Arabic equivalent of words. This image has circulated widely in the media in sarcastic, jocular, or dramatic representations of expatriates in TV, memes, and other venues. For example, the following excerpt from a popular comedy TV show, *Tash ma Tash*,[2] depicts a conversation between an expat who just returned from the US and an old neighbor (Mister Laughed, 2016).

Figure 1.1. Conversation between expat from the US and an old neighbor.

[2] The name of the series *Tash Ma Tash* consists of nonsense words, so no English translation is provided.

Expat: Hey, what's your name? وش اسمك ؟
Neighbor: ألله ألله ألله ألله ! هاهاهاهاااااا والله ألله ألله يابريه والله وتغيرت علينا يابرييييه
(Oh, oh, you've changed, little Ibrahim!)
Expat: My house? Excuse me, where is my house?
Neighbor: واوو واوو اووو اووو
[waa waa waa]
Expat: No no no wa wa where is my house?
Neighbor: اقوول
(come on!)
Expat: Where is my house?
Neighbor [hitting him]: اقول اعقل عاد اقول اعقل
(Okay, come on, behave)
Expat: اووه
[Ohh]
Neighbor: اعقل اعقل
(behave…behave)
Expat: Do not touch, do not touch…excuse me, do not touch.
Neighbor: ايييه اعقل ترا اللي انت آآ بازاً الحين بعمرك ! ترا اللي رحت ثلاث اسنتين رايحن لامريكا تغيرت علينا يابوي ألله ألله القاع القاع القاع يابريه القاع هاهاهاه
(yessss…behave. You lived three years in the US, and you changed and became arrogant. It's just three years, little Ibrahim, hahahah)
Expat: Okay okay okay okay وين بِتنا ؟
Neighbor: انت مضيع بيتكم !
(You don't know the location of your own house!)
Expat: Yes, where is بيتنا

In this extract, the expat is shown wearing a Western-style suit rather than the traditional Saudi *thobe* and is shown sarcastically as having difficulties remembering the directions to his own house, his neighbor's name, and the equivalent Arabic names for things. This exaggeration reflects the stereotypes of expats as being Westernized. This is directly stated in the conversation with the expat's old friend, who disapproves of his use of English and lack of fluency in Arabic by saying the expat is showing off and being arrogant because he only stayed in the US for two years. Overall, this metadiscursive representation of the expat shows the enregisterment (Agha, 2003) of the expat as a type of person who is Westernized, arrogant, uses too much English with Arabic-speaking locals, and lacks fluency in Arabic.

1.3.2.2 Instagram: A Virtual Site of Language Use

This study examines how emerging supralocal and other linguistic and semiotic resources are deployed to construct personas on Instagram. Instagram is a photo-sharing social networking site that was launched in 2010 and rapidly gained popularity, having 100 million users by 2012 (Instagram, 2013). It received considerable attention from Saudis, particularly young people, in its first years and has had a great impact on Saudi culture in terms of class and prestige constructions. It represents and reinforces the social and economic hierarchies which exist subtly in offline contexts. Although its use has started to decline recently with the emergence of other photo-sharing sites, such as Snapchat, there were still 14,194,000 Instagram users in Saudi Arabia as of June 2020, representing 40% of the populace (NapoleonCat, n.d.).

As a photo-based social media platform, Instagram offers more effective and attractive affordances for identity construction (Marwick, 2015). Technically speaking, users of Instagram, or *Instagrammers*, can create public or private profiles where they upload photos and videos that appear in chronological order in their accounts. Each user has a network of followers and people they follow. Recently, Instagram has added the *story* feature, like in Snapchat, which allows users to share moments from their daily life that only last 24 hours. The Instagram interface supports many languages, including English and Arabic, with no official language. There are a number of spaces for language use on Instagram associated with different activities, including a mini profile bio; photo captions, location, and description; and comment section.

1.4 Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 has presented the background of the study, highlighting the research gap and importance of studying style on the Internet, particularly social media. Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical framework that guides the study, summarizing sociolinguistic and anthropological

approaches to the study of style. Chapter 3 explains the methodology, including research design, data collection, data coding and analysis, and background on the case study of the micro-celebrity. It also discusses in detail the sociolinguistic situation in Saudi Arabia, including the languages and regional dialects spoken in the country, the linguistic variables studied, and the status of Arabic online. Chapter 4 presents the results of the multivariate analyses that examine the first research question, regarding the correlation between regional dialect variables, English use, and orthographic bilingualism with time and topic. Chapter 5 answers the second research question and presents the qualitative analysis of the data illustrating how the micro-celebrity combined linguistic and semiotic resources in the construction of her Instagram style and persona. Chapter 6 concludes the study with a discussion of the findings, limitations, and suggested directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

This study examines the style variation and persona construction of a social media micro-celebrity. The analysis is grounded in approaches to style that view variation as social practice and focus on the use/recontextualization of variation to make local meaning in interaction. These range from the subfield of third-wave variationist sociolinguistics (Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2008; Zhang, 2005, 2018) to linguistic anthropological approaches, such as dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), bricolage (Hebdige, 1984), and enregisterment (Agha, 2003). This chapter presents a review of the theoretical framework for the analysis of the participant's style variation and persona, including third-wave sociolinguistic variation, variation-based and linguistic anthropological approaches to intra-speaker variation (style), and the small body of research on celebrities and language use. It concludes with a short section connecting the theoretical framework to the study.

2.1 Variationist Sociolinguistics

The study of social meaning in variationist research has developed in three overlapping phases or waves (Eckert, 2005, 2012). Throughout this development, the analytical focus has shifted. Theoretically, there has been a shift from a view of variation as being structured by socioeconomic categories (e.g., age, sex, class) to a focus on ethnographically determined social groups and finally to a focus on the social meaning of variation. Methodologically, the study of variation has moved from large-scale quantitative surveys to combining quantitative analysis with ethnographic and qualitative methods. The first wave, or Labovian Paradigm (Gordon, 2013), has aimed to survey systematically the sociolinguistic structures of speech communities. Using sociolinguistic interviews, large-scale surveys, and quantification methods, the studies correlate particular linguistic variables with predetermined macro socioeconomic categories. The

second wave studies employ ethnography to explore locally defined social groups, examining variation with social networks and/or community of practice (Cheshire, 1982; Eckert, 1989; Milroy, 1980, as cited in Milroy, 2012; Rickford 1986). The meaning of variants in these two traditions is viewed as an identity marker related to the group who use them the most (Eckert, 2012).

Triggered by the results and shortfalls of the first and second waves and continuing in the ethnographic tradition, the third wave emerges with different views of language, variation, and social meaning, and thus with a different analytical focus. Finding in her 1989 study that phonological change did not correlate neatly with local categories alone but rather more with those social groups' attributes, beliefs, and ideologies, Eckert (2000) proposed a pathbreaking approach to the study of variation. This approach views variation as part and parcel of the performative aspect of language (Eckert, 2012) and as participating in the system of social meaning broadly. Thus, it focuses on "the indexical nature" of variation and views variables and styles as "indexical signs" (Eckert, 2016, p. 1). As such, it views linguistic change as not only resulting from social change but also as contributing to social change itself.

Third-wave variationism focuses on the social meaning of variables and how they are used to construct styles. Thus, it takes a stylistic approach to variation. Since it views social meaning as connected to styles (i.e., the co-occurrence and combination of multiple variables), it focuses on styles rather than dialects. In so doing, rather than studying individual variables, the third-wave approach examines the way variables constitute styles and how styles affect social change. It also considers all sorts of linguistic variables and practices that serve a social purpose, as opposed to the first and second waves that care more about variables undergoing change (Eckert, 2012). Moreover, since this approach views social meaning as socially constructed

rather than predetermined by merely belonging to social categories, it focuses on speaker agency or the way social agents construct social meaning through stylistic practices (Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2012).

Studies in this tradition have investigated the use and appropriation of indexical resources in the making of social differentiation that in turn lead to the creation of new social meanings and categories (Eckert, 2012, 2016). I discuss the concept of indexicality in more detail and how it is adopted by third-wave variationists with the linguistic anthropological approaches in Section 2.2.2.1. Zhang (2005, 2018) has examined how the "yuppies" in Beijing distinguished themselves from local business professionals through creating a cosmopolitan style that is a bricolage of local and superregional linguistic resources. Zhang's research shows that, through these stylistic practices, the yuppies have contributed to social and linguistic change in China by participating in "undoing commonness." Stylistic practices have also contributed to social change in shorter-term social shifts. The popular teen girls, whose persona shifted to a "townie" in Moore's (2004) ethnographic study, used more nonstandard variants than the popular girls who remained the same (45% vs. 25% nonstandard, respectively). That is, as part of the shift in the girls' persona from "populars" to "townies," their linguistic practices also shifted.

Third-wave research views social meaning as unfolding in interaction through stance-taking (Bucholtz, 2009; Kiesling, 1998, 2009; Moore & Podesva, 2009). Kiesling (2005) postulated that "styles [can] emerge from repeatedly taking stances" (as cited in Eckert, 2012, p. 96). In addition, the meaning of variables is specified in interaction (Eckert, 2016). Kiesling's (1998) ethnographic study of fraternity men's identity construction and variation in the use of the final "-ing" variable showed that fraternity men used the apical variant to align with different powerful roles. Qualitative discourse analysis has shown that some men used the vernacular

variant of "-ing" to gain power through indexing "working-class cultural models and confrontational stances" through association with "physical rather than structural power" (p. 1). Thus, while the variant has several social meanings, its use in interaction to express stances is what shows its special identity. This accumulation of stances taken in interaction helped construct their masculine personas.

In summary, the three waves of variationist research differ in their object of study, analytic focus, methodology, and views of language and variation. The first wave provides a broad analysis of the correlation between variation and macrosocial categories, while the second wave uses ethnography to study the relationship between locally salient categories and linguistic variables. Both approaches focus on linguistic change as part of social identities and categories, looking at variation as passively inherited in social structure. On the other hand, the third wave of variationists has adopted different views of language and variation that have been influenced by anthropological perspectives. Viewing language variation as part of the semiotic system of social differentiation, it has focused on the indexical nature of variables and stylistic practices and agency. However, having different analytical foci and objects of study, any comparison between the three approaches that favors one approach over another would be unfair. The current study is influenced by the third-wave approach in theory and methodology as it best serves the purposes of this research examining stylistic practices.

Three approaches to stylistic practices (i.e., style or intra-speaker variation) emerge from these different approaches to variation. The following section reviews these approaches to style and provides a sketch of anthropological approaches to style.

2.2 Style

2.2.1 Style and Linguistic Variation

The study of style, i.e., intra-speaker variation or variation in the speech of the individual (Schilling, 2013), has moved from being a tool to elicit the vernacular (Labov, 1972) to the central focus of variationists in more recent studies. Schilling (2013) notes that the study of intra-speaker variation has included a number of foci, such as how variants pattern in different contexts, how variables co-occur to constitute distinctive styles, and how identity unfolds in interaction with style variation. The development in the study of style can be traced to the three aforementioned waves of variationist traditions. In what follows, I briefly introduce each of the three major approaches to style in variation sociolinguistics and reserve anthropological approaches for the next section.

2.2.1.1 Labov's Attention to Speech

Early variationists came to focus on style as a means to elicit the most natural speech that is central to the linguistic investigation (Labov, 1966, 1972, 1984; Trudgill; 1974). According to Schilling (2013), an individual's style variation was considered to represent the group's variation. Style was believed to be conditioned by the formality of the situation, making it merely reactive in nature (Schilling, 2013; Zhang, 2018). Schilling (2013) notes that despite its success in predicting patterns of stylistic variation, this approach has been criticized by researchers for a number of reasons (see also Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2012; Zhang, 2018). First, it is "unidimensional," i.e., it focuses on one factor that affects style variation and is limited to standard vs. nonstandard variants and socioeconomic class. Second, being part of the first wave tradition, it views style as related to static social groups, and thus to be reflecting social differentiation rather than creating it. In addition, the centrality of the vernacular and

unconscious speech in this approach is problematic because individual repertoires include both self-conscious and non-self-conscious styles. In particular, given technology-mediation and globalization, self-conscious and designed styles are quite often deployed and needed.

2.2.1.2 Bell's Audience Design

Bell's (1984) Audience Design model posits that people shift their styles in response to their audience. Bell's model extends the audience to include not only the addressee but also anyone whose presence in the speaking context might affect stylistic variation, including auditors, overhearers, and eavesdroppers. Schilling (2013) explains that the Audience Design model has raised a number of concerns (see also Coupland, 2007). For example, it is seen as responsive, especially before the referee element is added to the model as part of the referee design model. Another concern was related to not being specific and systematic in defining the characteristics of the audience that influence style.

2.2.1.3 Speaker Design

With the development of variation studies from the first to the third waves (Eckert, 2005, 2012), style has been conceptualized differently, as active, agentive, and multidimensional rather than reactive, preimposed, and unidimensional. In her review of approaches to style, Schilling (2013) classifies any approach that views variation as a tool that speakers use to construct distinct personas, stances, and attitudes as "speaker design" approaches to stylistic variation. Schilling (2013) explains that speaker design approaches line up with third-wave variation, since these approaches emphasize speaker creativity in constructing meaning from available sociolinguistic resources situated in local contexts (Coupland, 2007; Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012). Speaker design approaches posit that the meaning of variation resides in interaction, i.e., in the qualitative use of variables as well as the quantitative patterns. As such,

the analysis in this approach includes any linguistic variables that have an expressive meaning whether it is undergoing change or not (Eckert, 2012; Schilling, 2013). Thus, it exceeds traditionally studied phonological and morphosyntactic features to include lexical, pragmatic, and discourse variables, e.g., Moore and Podesva's (2009) study of tag questions and Podesva's (2007) study of falsetto, a voice quality. Podesva (2007), for example, found that Heath, a gay medical student, used falsetto with different patterns in different interactional settings. Podesva demonstrated that, when talking with friends, Heath used falsetto more frequently and that the falsettos had higher levels and wider ranges of F0 than when talking with family or patients at work. A close qualitative analysis of interactional moments revealed that Heath's different patterns of falsetto were not simply a matter of audience design. Rather, Heath's stylistic variation served an "expressive" stance associated with a diva persona, and thus a gay persona (Podesva, 2007). Podesva concluded that Heath varied his style to achieve different interactional and identity related meanings.

In addition, as with third-wave studies, some of the essential concepts these approaches view as basic to a thorough analysis of style include indexicality, ideologies, and stances. Linguistic variables have both group association and interactional meanings, i.e., meaning that they acquire as a result of being associated with stances and attitudes as well as with character type and personas. These higher indexical order meanings (Silverstein, 2003) are what hold primary interest in speaker design approaches to stylistic variation (Eckert, 2012; Hernández-Campoy & Cutillas-Espinosa, 2012; Schilling, 2013).

In summary, speaker design approaches include any approach that gives speaker agency and creativity a priority in order to analyze how speakers construct social meaning (e.g., stances

and personas) through the use of one or multiple linguistic resources of any kind (i.e., whether stable or undergoing change).

Speaker design approaches to stylistic variation, as in the third-wave tradition, have been influenced to some extent by the linguistic anthropological conceptualization of language. Some of the linguistic anthropological concepts that have foundational effects on the recent sociolinguistic approaches to style include indexicality (Ochs, 1993; Silverstein, 2003), language ideology (Irvine & Gal, 2000; Woolard, 1992), enregisterment (Agha, 2003), and interdiscursivity, i.e., decontextualization and recontextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). In the next section, I review some of these concepts as they pertain to style before delving into the discussion of anthropological approaches to style.

2.2.2 Linguistic Anthropological Influential Concepts and Approaches to Style

Influenced by work in sociology (e.g., Bourduieu, 1984; Hebdige, 1979, as cited in Irvine, 2001) and Peircean and Jakobsonian semiotics (e.g., Jakobson, 1960; Peirce, 1931–35, 1958; Silverstein, 1976), anthropological linguists have paid attention to the meaning of style in everyday life in theorizing linguistic style. Language style is part of semiotic style and is in general seen as "a system of distinctiveness" that is only meaningful within a social framework of evaluation and cultural ideologies (Bucholtz, 2009; Irvine, 2001; Silverstein, 1976, 2003; Woolard, 1992; Zhang, 2018). Irvine (2001) posits a thorough definition of style that takes into consideration ideologies, power, and hegemony as influencing accessibility to social acts, resources of distinctions, social interpretation, and evaluation:

> styles in speaking involve the ways speakers, as agents in social (and sociolinguistic) space, negotiate their positions and goals within a system of distinctions and possibilities. Their acts of speaking are ideologically mediated, since those acts necessarily involve the

> speaker's understandings of salient social groups, activities, and practices, including forms of talk. Such understandings incorporate evaluations and are weighted by the speaker's social position and interest. They are also affected by differences in speakers' access to relevant practices. Social acts, including acts of speaking, are informed by an ideologized system of representations, and no matter how instrumental they may be to some particular social goal, they also participate in the "work of representation." (p. 24)

Style is a sociohistorical process (Coupland, 2007; Zhang, 2018). That is, the saliency of styles and variables is bound to the historical, economic, and political contexts of their use. First, style is constituted of multiple variables that come loaded with the essence of the place and time of their origin. In addition, styles gain their significance from the particular social, political, and economic work they do. For example, Cosmopolitan Mandarin in Zhang (2005, 2018) played a significant role by participating in undoing the Maoist regime. In Wong and Zhang (2001), the elements that the magazine producers borrowed from different resistance discourses carried with them the sense of resistance of a political activism style.

The investigation of style within the historical, political, and social circumstances of its emergence should attempt to deal with related issues (Zhang, 2018). These include how the elements of style (i.e., sociolinguistic resources) gain their social meaning; why a particular style is significant in a particular culture; what social and political work a style is doing; and how sociolinguistic resources are recognized, interpreted, and made available for social work (Agha, 2003, Coupland, 2007, as cited in Zhang, 2018). The conceptual tools that have proven useful for such inquiries include bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966), dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981), and enregisterment (Agha, 2003). This section reviews essential concepts and approaches to the

study of style that have been created or adopted by linguistic anthropologists and later inspired the recent approaches in sociolinguistics.

2.2.2.1 Indexicality

Indexicality originated in the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce (1931–35, 1958) as one of the three ways in which signs relate to their objects (i.e., icon, index, and symbol). It was later adopted by several other fields, among those linguistic anthropology, and then was adopted later by recent approaches to sociolinguistic variation. Silverstein (1976) was the first to introduce the semiotic concept of indexicality to linguistic anthropology. Indexicality refers to "the pervasive context-dependency of natural language utterances" that indexes the relationship between objects and contexts (Hanks, 2000, p. 124). Indexes can be referential, such as demonstratives and personal pronouns, or non-referential, which are linguistic forms that presuppose or entail social meanings, such as stances and social identity (e.g., a certain dialect feature indexes belonging to a particular geographic area – so, 'r-dropping' may indicate working-class status in New York).

Among the models of indexicality that have been employed by linguistic anthropologists and sociolinguists to analyze the relationship between language and social meaning is Ochs (1992), who proposed a model that illustrates the indexical relations between language and gender that can be used to analyze social identity in general. In her model, she proposes that linguistic resources (e.g., morphological, syntactic, lexical, and phonological features) can index identity both directly (e.g., through direct reference words and particles) and indirectly through indexing other social meanings (e.g., stances, acts, and activities) that are "constitutive" of that identity (see Figure 2.1 from Ochs, 1992, p. 5).

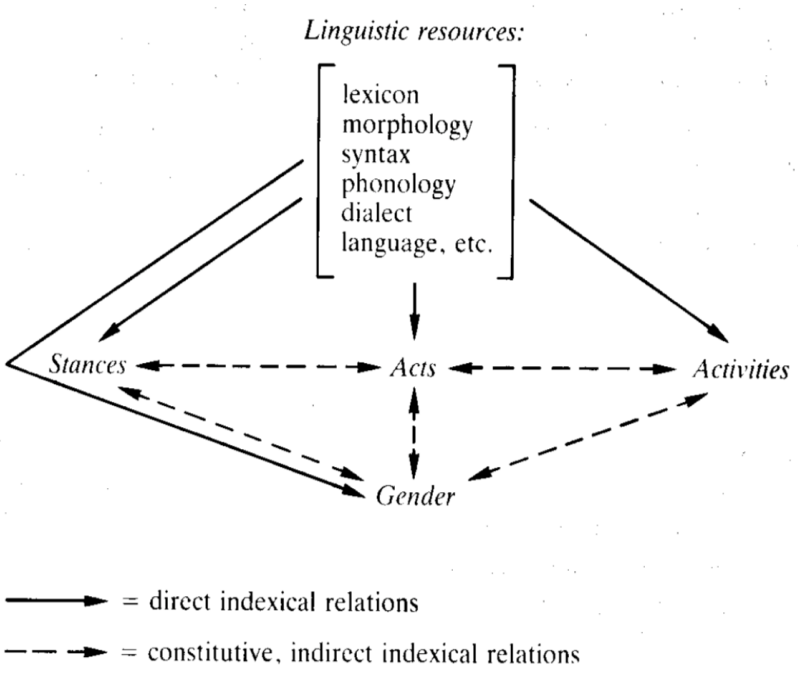

Figure 2.1. Language and gender.

Silverstein's (2003) indexical order model has been particularly foundational in the study of style in linguistic anthropology and third-wave variationists. It suggests that linguistic forms are related to social meaning at certain levels of abstraction or orders of indexicality. According to Silverstein (2003), "any n-th order indexical presupposes that the context in which it is normatively used has a schematization of some particular sort, relative to which we can model the 'appropriateness' of its usage in that context" (p. 193). The concept of indexical order traces the processes by which linguistic forms gain social meaning in such a way that a form can presuppose a social meaning that in itself entails a higher-order meaning that can then presuppose and later entail even higher order meanings, and the process goes on. For example, according to this concept, n-th order signals the connection between a linguistic form and demographic categories or pragmatic functions. When this meaning is noticed by people and starts to be used in social work, it acquires an n-th+1-order meaning. When the form gets circulated widely in public discourse and becomes a subject of metapragmatics, it gets a higher-

order social meaning – and so forth. Silverstein (2003) compared the notion of indexical order to Labov's scheme of the stages of social meaning stabilization: indicator, marker, and stereotypes. The first indexical order is similar to the Labovian indicator where the form is an indicator of socioeconomic class or pragmatic meaning. Second-order meaning is compared to the Labovian marker, i.e., the use of the form is involved in stylistic variation. Third indexical order can be compared to Labov's stereotypes when it becomes a subject of overt metapragmatic comments.

This notion of indexicality has been adopted by recent approaches to the study of style in sociolinguistics. Eckert (2008) built on Silversten's notion of indexical order to call for a view of style as an indexical system, according to which variables index stances and characteristics that in turn make up styles; only then do they become meaningful. That is, when they combine and co-occur in interaction, they attain meaning. While variables have first-order meanings based on group association (e.g., indexing geographical characteristics), they acquire higher-order social meanings as they absorb ideologies when evaluation of the population gets internalized into the form. This fluid, multi-layered nature of indexical meanings is what interests third-wave variationists. Variables, Eckert (2008) postulates, do not have static meanings but rather fluid multiple related indexical meanings that are ideologically linked, what she called an *indexical field*. Indeed, the notion of indexical field can be seen as "an embodiment of ideology in linguistic form" (p. 464). The concepts of indexicality and indexical field have proven useful when analyzing meaning making through style (e.g., Bucholtz, 2011; the reanalysis of variables in Eckert, 2008; Moore & Podesva, 2009).

2.2.2.2 Style and Ideology

Language ideologies are "principles of distinctiveness that link language differences with social meanings" (Irvine, 2001, p. 33). Because of this essence, ideologies are vital to the

construction, interpretation, and analysis of style. First, style is a system of distinctiveness that is only meaningful within a social framework of shared beliefs and evaluative norms. That is, "styles are ideologically mediated" (Irvine, 2001, p. 22; see also Bucholtz, 2009; Zhang, 2018). Moreover, the analysis of an individual style cannot be done in isolation; rather, the distinctiveness of a style is only demonstrated when compared with other styles because the relations between styles are ideologically mediated. Also, style aesthetics, i.e., what makes something distinct for someone, are constituted by cultural values (Irvine, 2001). As the notion of indexical order has shown, variables (i.e., the components of style) acquire higher-order values when ideologies become internalized in the new meaning (Eckert, 2008, 2016; Silverstein, 2003). Because of this, anthropological linguistic and recent sociolinguistic approaches have all foregrounded ideology in the analysis of style (Bucholtz, 2009; Eckert, 2008; Moore & Podesva, 2009; Zhang, 2012, 2018). For example, in her attempt to investigate the indexical relationship between stances and style of Mexican-American youths' use of the slang word "güey," Bucholtz (2009) emphasized the need to analyze both "interactional practices and ideological representations" because "slang gains its semiotic value only within the sociocultural context in which it is used" (p. 16). Bucholtz found that though "güey" expresses similar stances to those found in Kiesling's (2004) study of "dude," "güey" participates in different styles of masculinity based on the cultural ideologies of gendered personas. Interestingly, Bucholtz pointed out that both acts in interaction and metapragmatic stereotypes played a role in the indexical linking of social meaning (i.e., persona) to the use of slang.

2.2.2.3 Dialogism

Bakhtin's (1981) notion of language has drawn attention to the dialogic nature of language that views "language as socially and historically constituted and society as

communicatively constituted through intersubjective discursive practices and the circulation of discourse" (as cited in Bauman, 2005, p. 145). Building on this Bakhtinian notion of language, Kristeva (1967, 1968) coined the term *intertextuality* to shift focus from utterance to text and from dialogue to the relations between texts, i.e., intertextuality (as cited in Bauman, 2005). For Jenny (1982), intertextuality is "a general term for a variety of relations among texts" (as cited in Hanks, 1986, p. 727). Thus, the interpretation of a recontextualized text (the use of informal spoken styles on a public media platform in this study) has to consider the text as a series of texts situated within a larger context rather than as an isolated piece of discourse (Hanks, 1986). Manipulation of the intertextual links between texts, as Briggs and Bauman (1992) explain, has the significant effect of minimizing the ties between the original source and the new one, allowing for reuse for routine ends under ordinary circumstances. It can also maximize the ties between the sources to allow for creativity and "the adaptation of generic framework to emergent circumstances" (as cited in Bauman, 2003, p. 7).

2.2.2.4 Bricolage

In his book, *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss (1966) used the concept of *bricolage* to describe the cultural process through which agents (i.e., bricoleurs) combine and recombine available semiotic and cultural resources to create new structures (as cited in Phillimore et al., 2016; see also Zhang, 2018). Since then, the concept of bricolage has been adopted in several fields. Influenced by the Birmingham School of youth subculture, anthropological linguists and sociolinguists have adopted the term to the study of style (Eckert, 2012, 2016; Zhang, 2005, 2018). In these fields, style is seen as the reuse and recombination of available linguistic and semiotic resources to create distinction. Zhang (2018) points out two important components of the concept of bricolage that make it a good tool for analyzing style: 1) underspecificity and

multifunctionality and 2) semiotic potentials and constraints. Applied to the analysis of style, these components mean that resources are not specific to one context, so the speaker can adapt them to their purpose, and the same resource can be used for a range of different purposes. Zhang (2018) explains that this makes them suitable for the "mutable" nature of variables (see Eckert, 2012) in third-wave variation traditions. Also, these resources come with constraints and potentials that are inherited from their original context, which limit and define their capacity.

The concept of bricolage has proven useful in analyzing linguistic style (Bucholtz, 2002; Eckert, 2000; Gagné, 2008; Hashimi, 2012; Wong & Zhang, 2001; Zhang, 2005). For example, Wong and Zhang (2001) examined how a Chinese gay and lesbian magazine creatively constructed an imagined *Tongzhi* community through the combination and reworking of linguistic resources (i.e., lexical items and discourse strategies) from three discourses (Western gay cultures, Chinese revolutionists, and feminist discourses). The authors illustrated how resources from these communities were reappropriated with social history to create a distinct style of political activism, creatively adding new symbolic meaning to these resources. Interestingly, the concept of bricolage gave the researchers a tool to highlight the agency of the magazine producers.

2.2.2.5 Performance

Any speaking event can be understood as involving a kind of performance, according to Coupland (2007):

> It seems right to talk of speakers performing speech. What we are generally implying is that speakers design their talk in the awareness—at some level of consciousness and with some level of autonomous control—of alternative possibilities and likely outcomes. (p. 146)

Coupland distinguishes between two types of performance: mundane or everyday performance and high performance, which involves higher degrees of intensity and planning. Bauman (1992) identifies a number of factors that mark a speech event as performance in terms of Coupland's concept of high performance (as cited in Coupland 2007; see also Bauman 1996; Bauman & Briggs, 1990). These include being scheduled, organized, planned, coordinated between performer and audience, limited to a time and space, and public. For Coupland (2007), high performance includes a sort of communicative focus that entails a focus on seven dimensions: form, meaning, situation, performer, relationships, achievement, and repertoires (pp. 147–148).

Given these dimensions, the Instagram posts of a micro-celebrity could be seen as a kind of high performance. Micro-celebrities are usually aware they are being watched for entertainment or learning. They plan their posts and are aware of the consequences of what and how they share. Their activity is public and open to criticism by any member of the audience. Thus, their practices on social media, where they gain and maintain fame, could be considered to involve a higher performance than in everyday speech.

In sociolinguistics, studies have shown interest in examining performed language. For example, Barrett (1998) examined African American drag queens' performance and how they crossed between distinct identities through the use of marked and unmarked linguistic choices. Coupland (2001) studied dialect stylization in radio talk, illustrating the way socially indexical dialect features were used by the radio presenters to evoke "cultural stances and practices" and create a sense of authenticity (p. 345). Trester (2008) examined overly performed language and style construction by performers in improvisational theater. On another level, Schilling (1998) studied the performance of stereotypical phonological features of speakers' native dialects in sociolinguistic interviews. These studies have shown that performance is a rich context to

explore the deployment of socially salient linguistic resources in the construction of personas. Additionally, the study of performance increases cultural and linguistic reflexivity, which can be a way to zoom in on linguistic stereotypes and bring in metapragmatic commentary (Bauman, 1996; Coupland, 2007).

2.2.3 Enregisterment

Agha (2003) defines enregisterment, the process through which linguistic forms come to index social meaning, as "the identification of a set of linguistic forms as a linguistic repertoire differentiable within a language as a socially recognized register" that indexes speaker status in relation to specific cultural values (Agha, 2003, p. 231). Agha (2005) brings in Bakhtin's concepts of voice to examine enregisterment as a reflexive process, whereby registers can undergo changes (including expansion, transformation, typification, and revalorization). According to Bakhtin's category of voices, enregistered voices belong to a subclass of social voices linked to registers. When a linguistic form (e.g., dialect, register, sounds, or lexical items) becomes enregistered with cultural types or personas, it obtains stereotypic indexical value and can be decontextualized. When entextualized register tokens are not consistent with the semiotic co-text, the non-congruence of voicing effects creates a tropic use. Speakers create distinctive styles through the entextualization of enregistered voices. When encountering registers, interlocutors establish some footing or alignment with figures performed through register tokens and hence with each other. The concept of enregisterment is important to the analysis in the present study because it allows for an understanding of the sociohistorical trajectories and salient cultural meanings that variables have and obtain upon their reuse and combination with other resources and in different contexts.

2.3 Celebrity and Language Use

The small body of research that is related to celebrity language can be seen as coming from two sources: 1) studies that examine performance and mediated language with public figures or media personalities as the object of study, and 2) studies that examine celebrity language as the main purpose in itself. Studies in the first group examine media personalities such as well-known radio and TV presenters to examine mediated performance, style and personas, or authenticity (e.g., Bell, 2011; Coupland, 2017; Kytölä & Westinen, 2015; Sharma, 2018). For example, Sharma (2018) used the Indian-American media personality, Fareed Zakaria, as a case study to analyze the dynamics of style variation. The author reported that Zakaria's style shifting could be explained by three dynamics: the audiences, cognitive asymmetry (i.e., attention), and taking stances in interaction. Noting how mediated personas can illuminate sociolinguistic change, Coupland (2017) analyzed the popular media persona of Madamrygpy, a comedic rugby interviewer character played by actor Firlys Bellin, to illustrate changing broadcasting norms in Wales. Bassiouney (2017) examined the performance of a famous Egyptian poet in 12 talk shows and illustrated how he distinguished himself from other poets from the region through manipulating linguistic resources in his repertoires. In his interviews and performances, he used local features from his southern stigmatized native dialect, *Saʕidi*, and standard Arabic, purposefully avoiding marked Cairene Arabic features. In doing this, the poet was "renegotiating" the social values of these resources, situating his own dialect "in a powerful position," and legitimizing himself as an Arab.

On the other hand, the other type of research treats celebrities' language as a research goal in itself (Jansen & Westphal, 2017; Kytölä & Westinen, 2015; Page, 2012; Valentinsson, 2018). Kytölä and Westinen (2015) examined the Twitter writing style of a Finnish footballer,

Forssell, in relation to the use of non-standard English and hip-hop references, and its perceived (in)authenticity. Interestingly, the researchers noted that the footballer's Twitter writing, like online writing, reflected his life trajectories and transnational background. The online ethnographic observation showed that Forssell's language in social media could be described as "polylingual," i.e., using multiple languages, and "polygeneric," i.e., using multiple genres. Similarly, Valentinsson (2018) discussed how the American singer Lady Gaga constructed an authentic celebrity persona through stance-taking in two media platforms. Lady Gaga was able to maintain an authentic "ordinary" persona through strategies such as intimate address terms, inclusive plural pronouns, and demonstrating attention to the audience. On the other hand, she adopted "adversarial" or "corrective" stances in her media interviews with journalists.

As can be seen from this review, research on celebrities' language on social media is still lacking despite its importance (see Chapter 1). Most studies have focused on mainstream celebrities (e.g., Bell, 2011; Coupland, 2017; Jansen & Westphal, 2017; Valentinsson, 2018) and considered topics related to authenticity (e.g., Valentinsson, 2018), multilingualism (e.g., Coupland, 2017), stances and persona construction (e.g., Coupland, 2017; Valentinsson, 2018), or discourse style (e.g., Page, 2012). Thus, there is a gap in the research related to micro-celebrity language use, especially in relation to stylistic practices and persona construction. This gap is especially critical in a society like Saudi Arabia, where micro-celebrities are playing a huge role in rapid cultural and social changes.

2.4 Conclusion

This study explores how variation is deployed in the construction of personas and examines stylistic variation in the construction and deconstruction of mediated personas by an Instagram celebrity. A stylistic approach to variation that treats variation as a resource in the

construction of social meaning can best serve the purpose of this research for a number of reasons. It illustrates how dialect variation and the shift to supralocal variants is used to create social meaning, i.e., the construction and shift of the celebrity persona. Additionally, it allows for considering a combination of linguistic resources in the analysis of style. This understanding of variation as social practice allows for a comprehensive analysis of the celebrity's style, including both semiotic and linguistic resources and going beyond the variables examined in the quantitative analysis to include every meaningful linguistic feature or practice. This approach is helpful to the analysis because it also considers the sociohistorical meanings of the resources used and the new meanings that the combination and reuse of these resources produce.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Sociolinguistic Background

This chapter explains the methods of the present study. It first provides the background of the participant examined through an individual case study. This is followed by a description of the methodology and research design, including data collection, sampling, variables, and analysis. Next, I present a detailed sociolinguistic background of Saudi Arabia, including languages and the dialects under examination—Najdi and Qassimi Arabic, research on the emergence of a supralocal Najdi dialect, and the emerging status of Arabic dialects in writing (orthographic representation). The last section describes the regional linguistic variables.

3.1 Participant Background

The data come from an individual case study on Shreen (pseudonym), a Saudi Instagram celebrity who gained fame as a young expatriate in the US. In my interview with her, she reported that she moved to the US at age 12, when her father, an academic, was sent to the US for work-related purposes. After a couple of years, her father returned to his job in Saudi Arabia, but Shreen remained in the US with her mother, brothers, and sisters so they could continue their education there. Shreen studied in US public schools starting in 7th grade and graduated with a bachelor's degree from a US college/university in May 2018. Due to her background, which she explained in my interview with her, Shreen speaks the Qassimi dialect of Najdi Arabic as her native language. She learned Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in school before moving to the US as well as English in the US starting from age 12, attaining a self-reported native-like proficiency.

Shreen reported that she never imagined she would become famous on Instagram. In 2012, when Instagram was rapidly gaining popularity in Saudi Arabia, she created an account to practice photography, mainly posting pictures of nature, children (her siblings and American

neighbors), and children in nature. Shreen reported following a couple of young female Saudi photographers who had gained fame on Instagram, as she admired their work. Meanwhile, Shreen noticed that people were starting to take an interest in her pictures and more people were following her, especially Saudis curious about life in the US.

Inspired by other famous female Saudi Instagrammers and due to people's increased interest, Shreen had the desire, and consciously attempted, to increase her followers, as explained in my interview with her. One of her strategies was posting more of the content that would make her profile stand out and be worth following her for. That is, my profile analysis showed a change in the content, manner of presentation, and language. Specifically, she started posting more pictures reflecting her everyday life in the US and she changed her linguistic style, as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5. Another strategy was asking famous Saudi Instagrammers she knew to recommend her account and thus help spread the word about her profile. Shreen got a recommendation from one of the most famous Saudi expat Instagrammers, Malak Alhusaini. For example, in one post, as shown from the profile analysis, Shreen was excited about her increasing Shree number of followers and thanked Malak for spreading the word about her profile. Shreen confirmed this when I asked her on Instagram chat whether any famous Saudi Instagrammers had helped her.

Shreen amassed a large number of followers and became one of the first Saudi expat Instagram celebrities. She reached 100,000 followers by mid-2014 and 160,000 by early 2015. She reported in the survey discussed below that they were mostly women from Saudi Arabia or other Gulf countries. She had an active Instagram page, posting almost three times a week. As her fame increased, Shreen started to write longer posts that included stories and thoughts about her life in the US, such as incidents that happened to her at school, at home, and with friends and

neighbors. Her pictures mostly portrayed nature, restaurants, places in the city where she lived, sightseeing, food, and cooking.

After around three years of fame, Shreen's activity on Instagram greatly decreased, and she only posted 22 pictures in 2016 (as shown in Table 3.1). She replied to her followers' concerned questions about her absence with excuses about being busy with school and not having enough time for Instagram. In my Interview with her, however, Shreen reported that as she grew up, her personality changed, and she realized she preferred her life to be more private and did not like being watched. Shreen clarified that she had been receiving negative comments and believed those followers did not know her real personality; that is, her Instagram persona might have been giving a different impression of her that led some people to dislike her. Shreen said in the interview, "I did not want people to hate me just because of my presence on Instagram." In the last year of college and after graduation, she returned to Instagram with a clear change in her linguistic and sharing styles. She was not as active, and her number of followers has not increased. In addition, her popularity may have decreased due to the rising number of expat Saudi Instagrammers. In this study, I analyze this Instagram celebrity's style shifting in relation to her changing persona. Figure 3.1 shows her most recent profile picture as of this writing. The caption reads, "I love life with its simple details."

Figure 3.1. Shreen's most recent profile picture (August 2020).

3.2 Methodology and Study Design

3.2.1 Data Collection

This study stemmed from a larger project examining the linguistic practices and identity construction of expatriate Saudis on Instagram. Informed by theories of discourse-centered online ethnography (DCOE) (Androutsopoulos, 2011), the larger project has involved longitudinal ethnographic observation, direct contact with participants (through interviews and social media chatting), and discourse analysis of screen data. From January 2014 to December 2016, I was involved with Saudi expatriate Instagrammers, following friends, friends of friends, and public expatriate accounts both ordinary and popular. I recruited the participants by posting a call for participation on the Instagram public group SaudiinUSA. Later, 25 ordinary and popular Saudi expatriate Instagrammers were selected to participate in the study. As part of the ethnographic observation, I have engaged actively with the participants. I followed all the accounts using my personal Instagram account, and some followed me back. I participated by liking and commenting on posts, chatting with some participants through a shared texting application, such as WhatsApp, Instagram chats, or iMessage. Among the participants, there

were a couple of famous Instagram expatriates who I knew and was following before the study, and others I followed later for the purpose of the study. During observation, I found the linguistic practices by those more popular people to be interesting and worthy of study. Because of the growing phenomenon of Internet fame, I focused my research on famous Saudi expatriate Instagrammers.

Shreen was one of the Instagram celebrities observed in the larger project. I decided to study her style variation because I noticed an interesting shift in it. I followed her Instagram account and the development of her celebrity persona for a number of years, before and during the study. I started following her out of personal interest in late 2013. I contacted her and obtained her consent to participate in the study in June 2015, after which I conducted systematic participant observation from June 2015 to December 2016. The observation included taking field notes of her sharing activities, posts, and her communication with followers at least three times a week. Screenshots were collected regularly during the real-time participant observation. After this period was over,[3] I continued following and checking her account periodically. Both during the systemic observation period and after, I sometimes interacted with her by liking and/or commenting on her posts. I have also followed her on Snapchat, another popular social media platform. I continued to take screenshots of her posts whenever I saw something interesting even after the systemic observation period was over. I stopped collecting data from her profile at the time of writing this dissertation.

I also interacted directly with Shreen through direct messaging and an interview. I occasionally chatted with her via Instagram chat and WhatsApp. In these conversations, I sent her private comments on posts to understand her intentions behind them and asked questions

[3] The consent granted me access to her Instagram activities and the use of any data she shared from the beginning of her profile until the end.

about her background or things she mentioned in her posts. When the official observation ended, I interviewed her in Arabic on the phone for 45 minutes. The interview had three parts. In the first part, Shreen filled out a demographic questionnaire. Next, we discussed a number of open-ended questions. These questions were related to her Instagram popularity and the reasons her activity decreased, her thoughts about other people's use of English and MSA on social media, the type of languages people should use, the kind of language she herself used, and her feelings and preferences about being seen as Saudi or American. In the last part of the interview, I showed Shreen a couple of posts taken from her profile and asked her to reflect on her language use. The interview was recorded using an iPhone and was transcribed verbatim.

Additionally, I examined her Instagram page from beginning to end (late 2012 to mid-2019) to identify topics and time periods. After identifying the four times periods of the development of her popularity (see description in Section 3.2.2.1.1), I selected sample posts, taking screenshots of the ones that met the criteria for post selection (as explained in Section 3.2.3) or adding them to predesigned bookmarks on Instagram.

3.2.2 Description of Variables

The quantitative part of the study asked whether there was variation in the participant's linguistic style in terms of three linguistic variables across time and topic. Thus, the statistical analysis included two independent variables, i.e., time period and topic, and three dependent variables, namely, dialect, code choice, and English written in an Arabic script.

3.2.2.1 Independent Variables

The study examined two independent variables for their effect on the participant's style: time period and topic (see Table 3.1). These terms are defined below.

Table 3.1: Independent Variables

Independent Variable	Value
Time Period	1, 2, 3, 4
Topic	Life in the US, Saudi identity, other

3.2.2.1.1 Time Period

The periods of time analyzed (see Table 3.2) ranged from the beginning of the participant's Instagram use in late 2012 to mid-2019, as I continued to follow her and had consent to collect data from the entire profile both before and after the participant observation period. Based on the ethnographic observation and the interview, four distinct phases in her Instagram career were identified: before fame, rising fame, peak of fame, and decline in activity. These phases were delineated by changes in her popularity, which was determined according to the following factors:

1. Audience size. This was determined by the increase in the number of followers tracked, from fewer than 1,000 all the way to 160,000.
2. Number of posts. During her rise to fame, there were noticeable changes in Shreen's frequency of posting, the kinds of photos posted, captions, language use, and interaction with followers.
3. Her comments about her language use, fame, goals, and online persona all contributed to defining these phases. For instance, in the interview, Shreen indicated that as she grew older, she became more private, fearing strangers would dislike her despite not really knowing her. This sentiment was considered an indicator of a change in her persona and was thus used as a guideline in defining the phases of her time using Instagram.

Table 3.2: Time Periods/Phases of Instagram Use

Time Period / Phase	Time Range	Posts	Approximate Followers
1 Before fame	September 2012 to July 2013	47	Less than 1,000
2 Rising fame	Mid-2013 to mid-2014	116	3,000-65,000
3 Peak of fame	August 2014 to July 2015	141	100,000-160,000
4 Decline in activity	After August 2015- mid-2019	88	154,000
Total Number		391	

Four periods were identified, as shown in Table 3.2. The first period (September 2012 to July 2013, "before fame") was when Shreen started using Instagram, with no aim of being famous. During this time, she had fewer than 1,000 followers, who were mostly family and friends from home and the US. She was not very active, with as few as one post every two to three weeks. The photo posts were mainly of children (her sister and neighbors). Nature was visible in the background of most pictures but was never highlighted. She replied to every comment as if they were part of family conversations.

The second period (mid-2013 to mid-2014, "rising fame") was when she tried to attract more followers and become famous, as she stated in the interview. This period saw a gradual increase in followers from 1,000 to 10,000, 15,000, 30,000, 43,000, 55,000, and 60,000, as shown by her milestone celebration posts. During this time, she posted frequently, sometimes up to two photos a day, with varying content and longer captions. The topics of her posts also changed, with more posts giving snapshots of her life in the US. At the same time, she posted about home-related topics. The captions accompanying photos changed greatly during this period as well, becoming longer and sometimes narrating stories of her daily life. Interaction with followers in terms of replying to comments decreased. However, she started to address them more on the main captions, greeting them or asking them questions about themselves.

The third period (August 2014 to July 2015, "peak of fame") was when she became famous after August 2014. Fame in this study was determined by two factors: 1) reaching

100,000 followers and eventually reaching the peak of approximately 160,000 followers and 2) self-identifying as being famous, as seen in some of her posts. During this period, she continued to be very active, posting almost every day, being very engaged with her audience, and writing long descriptions that were not necessarily related to the photos. In this phase, she acted like an Internet celebrity, as indicated by explicit references and practices, such as jokingly asking followers to give her presents or flowers and calling herself "*shareenalmashhorata*" ("famous Shreen").

The fourth period (After August 2015 to mid-2019, "decline in activity") was when Shreen lost interest in Instagram fame and her activity declined after August 2015. By this time, her followers decreased to around 154,000 because she went back and forth between being more active and less active. In the interview, Shreen described changes in her interests and feelings about being famous. She also said that she wanted to focus on school because Instagram was distracting her. During this period, even the type and content of posts changed, with fewer pictures or references to her family and less emphasis on ways the US compared to her home country.

3.2.2.1.2 Topic of Posts

Another independent variable, the topic of posts, was selected to examine whether the topic participated in style shifting. It was also used as a tool for systematic sample selection (i.e., to narrow down the number of posts for quantitative analysis). Ethnographic observation, profile analysis, and the interview were used to determine the topics Shreen most frequently shared in photos or captions. Children's photos were frequent in her first two years on Instagram, but overall, the most frequent two topics were related to Shreen's daily life in the US, including nature, school, food, travel, weather, cultural and social differences between host and home

countries, and her national identity as a Saudi. These topics were the most salient aspects of Shreen's expatriate persona for which she gained fame.

I classified Shreen's Instagram posts into three topics. The first topic, life in the US, included any photos or captions that explicitly or implicitly discussed the US, such as cultural events, snow, food, and stories involving American friends or neighbors (e.g., Figure 3.2). The second topic, her Saudi identity, contained all posts where her Saudi identity was brought up explicitly or implicitly (e.g., Figure 3.3). These included contrasting her home country and the US, capturing home-related products with an American background (e.g., a picture of traditional food placed outside in nature), mentioning culturally or religiously salient places or beliefs, talking about herself as a foreigner in the US, directly bringing up her religious or national identity, and the rare occasions of posts exclusively focusing on her home country (e.g., photos from when she visited Saudi Arabia during summer breaks that have no US elements). Because the number of posts in the first period was small, all the posts were included in the analysis even those with no identified topic. Posts having no specific topic were labeled "other." The topic of each post was determined using both the photo and its caption.

Figure 3.2. Example of Topic 1: Life in the US.

In the post in Figure 3.2, Shreen was discussing Halloween, a US holiday not commonly celebrated in her home country. The post has a picture that Shreen took of her sister and their neighbor wearing Halloween costumes. She captioned it with “a girl couldn’t become Elsa on Halloween, so she died; the first one is my sister. She is wearing Anna’s costume but saying she is dressed as Elsa. Frozen made those girls lose their minds.”

The post in Figure 3.3 shows a traditional Saudi dish with a view of nature in the background. This post embedded a cultural product representing her home country in the US. Photographing traditional Saudi food and products against nature was a frequent practice of Shreen and other expat celebrities. As this type of post was how Shreen usually brought up her Saudi identity—by embedding traditional objects in her current location away from home—such posts were considered to be representing the “Saudi identity” topic.

Figure 3.3. Example of Topic 2: Saudi identity.

3.2.2.2 Dependent Variables

The quantitative study examined how the independent variables influenced the participant’s style variation, i.e., how her linguistic style changed across time and topic. Style variation was measured by the fluctuation in three linguistic variables: regional dialect, code

choice, and writing English in an Arabic script, which I refer to as orthographic bilingualism (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Value
Regional dialect	Local, supralocal
Code choice	English, Arabic, mixed
Orthographic bilingualism	Occurred, did not occur

3.2.2.2.1 Regional Dialect

The variable *dialect* was composed of six Najdi dialect features, each with two variants: local (Qassimi Arabic, a local dialect of Najdi) and supralocal (an emerging supralocal variety based on Najdi Arabic). This variable was created because the number of tokens for each dialect feature was too small to analyze statistically the changes over time for each one. Therefore, individual dialect features were combined to make one dependent variable, *dialect.* The individual features comprising this variable are outlined in Table 3.4. More details on these two varieties and the six linguistic features are given in Sections 3.3 and 3.4.

Table 3.4: Linguistic Features Included in the Dialect Variable

Feature	Name	Form	Variants	Code
1	Negation marker	mu/mub-muhub	supralocal/local	supra/local
2	Future particle	bi-(b-)/aba-(jabi)	supralocal/local	supra/local
3	First person singular object pronoun	-ni/-an	supralocal/local	supra/local
4	2nd person singular feminine object/possessive suffix	-(i)k/-(i)ts	supralocal/local	supra/local
5	3rd person singular feminine object/possessive suffix	-ha/-eh	supralocal/local	supra/local
6	Preposition	fii/bu	supralocal/local	supra/local

After adding up all the variables, a multivariate analysis using Rbrul (Johnson, 2019) was performed with dialect as a dependent variable and feature as an independent variable. This Rbrul run looks at the role of each linguistic variable in the formation of the ‘supralocal dialect’

to inform us about the importance of each of them in creating a non-local dialect. It shows how Shreen manipulates these variables when she wants to sound less local, i.e., which of the six variables are really important for her. The results are presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Linguistic Features in the Construction of the Supralocal Dialect

Feature	*N*	%	Factor Weight
2	118	89.8	0.838
1	215	75.8	0.647
4	157	72.6	0.608
3	450	52.4	0.392
6	600	46.8	0.34
5	81	25.9	0.17

Note. Total number = 1,621, df = 6, Input probability = 0.631, r^2 = 0.146, p = 2.35E-35.

As Table 3.5 shows, individual linguistic features played a significant role in the makeup of the supralocal dialect (p = 2.35E-35), with three variables participating the most in this construction. The second-person feminine object suffix strongly favored the supralocal variant [-(i)k] (FW = .838), meaning it occurred mostly in the supralocal variant [-(i)k]. Similarly, the singular object suffix [-ni/-an] and future particle [ba-/aba-] favored the supralocal variants [-ni] (FW = 0.647) and [ba-] (FW = 0.608), respectively. The other three variables disfavored the supralocal variants. First, the third-person feminine object suffix disfavored the supralocal variant [-ha] (FW = .392). Similarly, the proposition disfavored supralocal [-fii] (FW = .34), and the negation particle disfavored supralocal [-mu] (FW = .17). Thus, these variables mostly constituted the local dialect. This shows the different roles each of the linguistic features have in the formation of the local and supralocal variants, which might be attributed to their social saliency and degree of markedness in the community. The distribution of individual variables across the four time periods is presented in Chapter 4.

3.2.2.2.2 Code Choice

The code choice variable refers to the language of the post, whether it was all in Arabic (0), all in English (1), or mixed the two languages (2). Examples of each category are given in Chapter 5.

3.2.2.2.3 English Written in Arabic Script

This variable examined whether there was any script mixing, specifically, whether English was represented in an Arabic script, which I call "orthographic bilingualism." This variable was coded with one of two values: 1 (occurred) if this practice occurred at least once in a post and 0 (not occur) if it did not occur at all (see Table 3.6). English names were not counted when written in Arabic letters. Arabic written in Roman letters was not counted because this rarely occurred in the data, and it is uncommon among Saudis unlike other Arab countries (Alothman, 2012). The example below was taken from an Instagram post Shreen published on October 5, 2018. Here, the English word "multitasking" was written in the Arabic alphabet (for more examples of this practice, see Chapter 5).

عندي مشكلة **بالمالتي تاسكنق**

3andi mushkelah bilmalti tasking

I have a problem with multitasking

Table 3.6: Second and Third Dependent Variables

Variable	Variants	Code
Code choice	Arabic / English / both	Arabic 0 English 1 Both 2
English written in Arabic script	English in Arabic script / none	Occurred 1 None 0

3.2.3 Sampling

Sampling was conducted by identifying time periods and selecting posts within each time period. The first step involved dividing the profile into periods according to Shreen's popularity and activity changes (see Section 3.2.2.1 above). Between each defined period and the next, at least two months were left to ensure discrepancy between periods. Within each period, all posts pertaining to the three topics (life in the US, Saudi identity, and other) were identified to create a large sample. Posts were excluded from this first-round sample if 1) the caption was written in MSA only, as the statistical analysis targeted morphosyntactic and morphophonological features of Najdi Arabic, or 2) the caption was merely composed of emojis and had no language content; or 3) the post was part of an Instagram challenge or campaign or was an ad. This process of selection resulted in a total of 391 posts (see Table 3.2). Because there were fewer posts in the first period, all posts were selected but were still classified and coded into three topics (life in the US, Saudi identity, and other).

3.2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis addresses the second research question regarding the correlation between regional dialect, code choice, and orthographic bilingualism with time period and topic. The quantitative analysis consisted of coding and statistical analysis. For the first dependent variable, r*egional dialect*, 1,162 tokens of the six linguistic features (see Table 3.3) were coded for topic and time period. For the other two dependent variables, code choice and English written in the Arabic alphabet, each of the 391 posts was also coded for time period and topic.

The quantitative analysis began with a distributional analysis that presented frequencies and percentages of the variables to obtain an overall picture of the corpus. After coding and

distributional analysis, multivariate analyses were performed using Rbrul to examine style variation and language choice across time and topic. Several runs were performed to achieve the best model that explains variance in the data. Later, patterns of stylistic variation were identified, described, and interpreted. The qualitative analysis focused on specific examples from the data using discourse analysis. It addresses Research Questions 1 and 3. This analysis included not only the three linguistic variables examined in the quantitative analysis but also other linguistic and semiotic resources the participant deployed in the performance of her persona.

Decisions in the qualitative analysis were informed by observation and the participant interview. Information gained from these resources was used to divide Shreen's Instagram use into periods as explained above. For every period, the kinds of activities, content shared, attitude, and significant moments in Shreen's life were recorded. For example, in the second and third periods, Shreen was more active, focused on presenting distinct aspects of the US, and highlighted her Saudi identity. There were also many milestone moments when she celebrated reaching certain numbers of followers. Those trends were used as a basis for post selections. A post or two were selected to represent every trend. Additionally, language use trends were noted for every period based on observation and the multivariate analysis. Posts were also selected to represent every main trend of language use. While selecting sample posts, I tried to avoid sensitive content.

3.3 The Sociolinguistic Situation in Saudi Arabia

This section presents a detailed sketch of the sociolinguistic situation in Saudi Arabia. In doing so, it starts with an overview of the languages and language varieties spoken in Saudi Arabia in reference to the official language, the standard language used in school and other formal institutes, the varieties of Arabic spoken in Saudi Arabia and their social statuses. The

review also touches on the status of English in Saudi Arabia, which is the foreign language taught in public schools. After this general overview, I introduce Najdi Arabic and Qassim Arabic in more detail as they are the varieties under investigation here. This is followed by a brief section on the emerging supralocal dialect and another section on written Arabic on the Internet.

3.3.1 Languages Spoken in Saudi Arabia: A Sociohistorical Overview

The official language in Saudi Arabia is MSA, which is used in writing and speaking in formal public domains, such as the media, education, sermons, courts, and political councils (Palfreyman & Alkhalil, 2007). Like other Arab countries, Saudi Arabia maintains a diglossic situation (Ferguson, 1959). That is, a low variety, colloquial Arabic, is used for communication in informal settings in everyday speech in addition to the high variety mentioned above. The high variety takes two forms: Classical Arabic, the language of the Quran and classical literature, and MSA, a modernized version of Classical Arabic. These varieties are learned at school and spoken as second languages. The low variety includes a number of spoken regional dialects that do not have established written forms. Ingham (2009), commenting on the diversity of dialects in Saudi Arabia, mentions four main groups of dialects that originated in the Arabian Peninsula:

1. the Southwestern dialects, including Najran and Asir on the Yemeni borders and by the ‘Ijman and Al Murrah bedouin;
2. the urban Hijazi dialects, which have been influenced by contact with immigrants from other Arab countries;
3. the Najdi group, including Central and Northern Najd (Jabal Shammar) and the surrounding bedouin dialects, divided into central and northern Najdi types.
4. the Eastern dialects of al-Hasa. (p. 753)

However, despite this diversity in dialects, as a result of increased mobility and contact through technology, there is a growing tendency to use a standard colloquial dialect based on the Najdi or Hijazi dialects from the two main socioeconomic centers in Saudi Arabia (Alammar, 2017; Ingham, 1994, 2009). Local people refer to such emerging varieties that avoid regional dialect features as *ʔal-lahdʒah al-beːðʕa* "the white dialect' (see a more detailed discussion of this emerging supralocal variety in Section 3.3.4). Moreover, the dialect of the central region of Saudi Arabia, Najdi dialect, has retained considerable prestige due to its Bedouin heritage, its resemblance to Classical Arabic, and its association with a type of folk poetry called *nabatti* that makes it popular in songs and literature (Ingham, 2009). In addition, Najd is the central political and economic region of Saudi Arabia, the starting point from where the royal family established and unified the Saudi government. It hosts the capital of the country, the city of Riyadh. Most importantly, the royal family originated in Najd and speaks Najdi Arabic. Ingham (1994) anticipated that the dialect of Riyadh would become the Saudi standard colloquial dialect, like the Cairo dialect in Egypt. However, Ingham anticipated a loss of most local features that would make the Riyadh dialect less Najdi than other Najdi dialects (see more details on Najdi Arabic below).

Besides Arabic varieties, English has become quite popular in the last few years. Until recently, English was the only foreign language taught in public schools, starting from fifth grade up to the last year of secondary school. In private schools, where the elite send their children, the learning of English starts as soon as children start school. At the university level, English is used as the medium of instruction in some majors such as medicine, engineering, and computer science. Typically, English is not used for daily communication; however, in some institutions and professions, especially those involving foreigners, such as commerce and medical

institutions, both English and Arabic are used as the mediums of communication. In addition, English is used most often by young people, especially in big cities where it is used in restaurants and shops. Its use mostly manifests in the frequent borrowings of English cultural and technology-related vocabulary such as “alwikend” (the weekend), “break,” “mention,” “followers,” “group,” and “chocolate.” In general, English is considered a prestigious language that occupies a higher position than other local Arabic varieties. Aside from its representation in Western culture and media, this position is due to English being seen as a gateway to high-ranking jobs and opportunities and its local association with rich and prestigious lifestyles.

As the variables examined in this study belong to Najdi Arabic generally and Qassimi Arabic in particular, a description of those dialects and their social status paves the way for the analysis in the next chapter.

3.3.2 Najdi Arabic and Its Dialects

Regions in the Arabian Peninsula can be geographically, ethnically, and topographically divided into five regions: Hijaz, Yemen, Oman, Eastern Arabia, and Najd (Ingham, 1994). As shown in Figure 3.4 (from Shawk & Manfred, 2019). Najd is a plateau region located in the center of the Arabian Peninsula. It has long been known for its water-wells that attracted tribes to settle in the region. Traditionally, there were two occupational groups in Najd: the Bedouins, people who move from one place to another throughout the year in search of food and water and make their living on roaming sheep and camels, and the settlers, people who live in townships and work mainly in agriculture or industry. However, those two groups share relatively similar traditions, values, and material culture.

Figure 3.4. Map of Saudi Arabia showing Najd and Qassim.

Within this geographical area, a group of dialects share certain features distinguishing them from other dialects of the Arabian Peninsula and can all be called Najdi dialects (Ingham, 1994). According to Ingham (1994), these dialects include the following:

- The speech of the sedentary people of Central Najd, Qassim, and Jabal Shammar to the north and of Najran and Bisha to the south.
- The speech of the Bedouin tribes of Central Najd, Qassim and, Jabal Shammar (i.e., Anizah, Utaibah, Subai'e, Suhuul, Buguum, Dawasir, Harb, Muṭair, Awazim and Rasheedi in the centre; Shammar and Ḍafir in the north; and Qahtan, AlMurrah and 'Ajman in the south and east).
- The speech of migrant Bedouin tribes of the Syrian desert and Iraq, i.e., 'Aniza and Shammar extractions.'

These dialects can be further classified into four groups (Ingham, 1994):

- Central Najdi: the dialects of the sedentary people and Bedouin tribes of the area (the dialect of Riyadh belongs to this group)
- Northern Najdi: the dialects of Jabal Shammar and the AlShammari tribe
- Mixed central-Northern Najdi: the dialects of Qassim and the Dafir tribe
- Southern Najdi: Najran and the Al-Qahtani tribe

Shreen, the social media celebrity examined in this study, was originally from Qassim, a Najdi region with its own distinctive dialect that belongs to the Mixed Central-Northern group of Najdi Arabic. In the following section, I present a brief overview of the Qassim region and its dialect.

3.3.3 Qassim and Qassimi Arabic

One of the 13 provinces of Saudi Arabia, Qassim is located in the central part of the country and is the seventh most populated province. It is widely recognized for its rich agricultural production, for being the most religiously conservative province, and as the center of the Salafi religious movement where many prominent religious scholars and sheikhs were educated.

Qassimi is a Najdi dialect spoken in Qassim. According to Johnstone's (1967) classification of the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula into North Arabian, Hijazi, South-Western Arabian, and Omani, Qassimi falls in the North Arabian group. In his description of Najdi dialects, Ingham (1994) maintains that Qassimi belongs to the Mixed Northern Najdi dialects. Based on Johnstone's (1967) historical description, Qassimi Arabic was influenced by the Shammari dialects that were spoken by the tribes of Shammar, who raised camels and are shepherds residing near the cities of Buraida, Aaniza, and Arrass in Qassim. Despite this Bedouin descent, like other Najdi dialects, Qassimi is considered a sedentary Najdi dialect. As

such, Qassimi Arabic exhibits mixed linguistic features of sedentary and Bedouin origins. In terms of its consonant inventory, one of the characteristic features Qassimi Arabic inherited from Bedouin dialects is the realization of Classical Arabic /q/ as /g/ and the affrication of /k/ and /g/ as [ts] and [dz], respectively, as discussed in more detail below. Like other Najdi dialects, Qassimi Arabic retains only the pharyngealized fricative /ðˤ/, while the dental pharyngealized /dˤ/ found in Classical Arabic has undergone historical elision (Ingham, 1994). As for its vowels, Qassimi Arabic preserves the three short-vowel traditional scheme of Arabic but has five long vowels—/a:/, /i:/, /e:/, /u:/, and /o:/—and two diphthongs, /aw/ and /aj/ (Johnstone, 1967).

Several stereotypes are associated with the Qassimi people and dialect. As circulated in the media, Qassimi people are often represented as religious, greedy, proud of their origins, and racist. A recent example of this is Saud in the TV show *Maxradʒ ʕsharah* (Exit 7) that aired on MBC in May 2020. This character, always dressed in informal attire, is presented as greedy and judgmental with traditional inflexible views on cultural issues. The character speaks in very strong Qassimi Arabic despite living in Riyadh. Such negative stereotypes are widely spread by the media and in face-to-face interactions.

3.3.4 The Emergence of a Supralocal Dialect

Urbanization and the associated development in socioeconomic situations along with political contexts have been some of the huge factors influencing language variation and change in the Arab world (Abd-El-Jawad, 1987; Miller, 2007). One of the main sociolinguistic processes of change that has happened is ‘koineization’ (Trudgill, 2004). When people who speak different dialects come into contact, they converge towards each other’s dialects. This convergence involves processes such as dialect leveling, simplification, mixing, and reallocation that result in “minority forms, socially marked forms and linguistically marked forms [being] lost” (Trudgill,

2004, p. 23). On the other hand, unmarked and prestigious forms end up surviving. As a result of these processes, the new "supralocal" features become widely used and spread to other geographical areas. According to Al-Wer (2014), the spread of these supralocal features to other regions can create a regional standard (as cited in Alammar, 2017).

In Saudi Arabia, there is no fully established standard Saudi dialect, like Damascus Arabic, Cairene Arabic, or Ammani Arabic. These standard dialects have political, social, and economic status in their respective countries that make them compete with MSA in prestige (Miller, 2007). One reason why Saudi Arabia lacks a standard Saudi dialect is the political situation of the Arabian Peninsula before the unification of Saudi Arabia in 1932. The different regions of the Peninsula were ruled by different regimes; e.g., Hijaz was ruled by the Ottoman Turks. Another important reason could be related to the sociohistorical structure of Saudi Arabia as a largely Bedouin tribal society. In the past, Bedouin tribes spoke their own dialects (see descriptive documentations of the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula, e.g., Johnstone, 1963; Prochazka, 1988). Even though modern Saudi society is not based on the tribal living arrangement of the past, where tribes lived as mobile groups that traveled from one place to another in search of water and food, most tribe-originated people still speak their own tribe's dialect.

However, the small body of variation studies of Saudi dialects shows evidence of the emergence of one or two standard Saudi dialects (Alammar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2015; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 2009). In his review of the linguistic situation in Saudi Arabia, Ingham (2009) predicted the emergence of two Saudi standards: a central one based on Najdi Arabic and a western one based on Hijazi. Other studies of sociolinguistic change as a result of contact between dialects when people from minority regions move to major cities

have also confirmed convergence to the major city variants, especially by younger speakers (Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013). Al-Ghamdi (2013) found that Ghamdi migrants from Baha to Mecca used the Hijazi features more than the traditional Ghamdi variants. For example, they favored the Urban Hijazi monophthongs over the traditional Ghamdi diphthongs /aw/ and /aj/). Studies of regional dialect leveling have shown similar tendencies to adopt supralocal features. For instance, in his study of affrication in Qassimi Arabic, Al-Rojaie (2013) found that young and middle-aged educated speakers favored the supralocal Najdi variants /k/ and /g/ over the traditional variants /ts/ and /dz/ in stem affrication. Thus, these studies predict a supralocal dialect based on big-city dialects showing no marked regional features, which would be associated with modernity, youth, and urban life. This emerging dialect is likely to compete in prestige with MSA.

Interestingly, some lay people are aware of the emergence of a supralocal variety in Saudi Arabia. In metapragmatic comments, people often refer to /ʔal-lahdʒah al-beːðʕa/ (“the white dialect”), meaning a neutral form of the dialect that has no regional features. The term “white” here refers to purity, and some believe it is a means of communication between people from different regions. It is also becoming widely used in social media and social media culture, as the analysis in this study suggests while tracking the changes in language use of an Instagram celebrity.

3.3.5 Arabic Dialects in Writing

As said above, Arabic represents a classic case of diglossia (Ferguson, 1959) in which MSA and Classical Arabic are the “high varieties” used in formal situations and in writing and the dialects are the “low varieties” used in informal spoken situations. Traditionally, MSA and Classical Arabic have been reserved for writing while colloquial dialects have no official writing

systems. However, a few studies have shown that, triggered by political or social reasons, such as *al-nahdah* (the Arabic Enlightenment) movement in the twentieth century with its resistance to imperialism, the dialects were found in writing a long time before the Internet (Khalil, 2018). Some forms of dialect writing have emerged, especially "middle" or "mixed" Arabic (Khalil, 2018) in which the standard is mixed with a few words from the colloquial dialect. This purposeful use of the colloquial dialect for rhetorical effect has been seen in print in newspapers and novels in some Arabic dialects, especially Egyptian Arabic. In Saudi Arabia, in addition to /al-shaʕer al-nabatʿi/ (popular folklore poetry), Alsanea's novel *banat ArRiyadh* "Girls of Riyadh" from 2005 was one of the first literary works published in a Saudi dialect. In the past decade or so, the Internet has contributed to the widespread use of Arabic dialects in writing, with regional dialects now being used widely in social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. This raises several questions. What kind of Arabic is being used online? What constrains Arabic varieties from mixing when writing online? Is there a kind of spoken standard variety that is being used online? What is the status of rural or stigmatized dialects on the Internet?

Informed by models of levels of Arabic language (e.g., Badawi, 1973; Bassiouney, 2006, as cited in Khalil, 2018), researchers have started to examine the kind of written Arabic in print and on the Internet and social media. Khalil (2018) examined literary works and social media posts across different times to understand writing in Egyptian Arabic. She found that, echoing spoken language, there are different levels of written Arabic, including the standard alone, the dialect alone, and mixed forms. Khalil (2018) proposed a theoretical framework for analyzing Arabic writing that considers the nature of written language mixing in several styles and genres as well as the motivations behind it. Other studies of online written Arabic have examined the

writing of Arabic in Roman script. They found that when writers use Roman letters, they usually write in the dialect rather than the standard variety (Aboelezz, 2009). Commenting on the small body of research on online written Arabic, Khalil (2018) notes that when people write on the Internet, they mainly use the spoken form of Arabic dialects rather than the standard traditionally used for writing. Additionally, this kind of writing has expanded into print as social media texts have been published. This being said, Khalil (2018) predicts a change in the future of written Arabic where "both forms coexist in a harmonious and symbiotic relationship as equal parts of one, unified language" (p. 164). Similarly, in this study, a mixed language with elements from both MSA and a supralocal form of Najdi dialect can be seen to dominate with time, while forms of the local dialect gradually disappear.

3.4 Description of the Dialect Variables

This section presents a detailed description of the linguistic features that are grouped as part of the *regional dialect* variable with its local and supralocal variants. Five features were morphosyntactic, and one was morphophonological, including three personal pronoun suffixes, a negation marker, a future particle, and the existential preposition [fii-/bu-]. For each feature, both the supralocal Najdi and local Qassimi variants are described with examples.

3.4.1 Object and Possessive Pronoun Suffixes in Najdi Arabic

Three of the linguistic features examined are bound object or object/possessive pronouns. Below is a brief description of relevant pronouns in Najdi Arabic to contextualize these features. Najdi Arabic personal pronouns can be free or bound morphemes. A number of bound morphemes can be suffixed to verbs, acting as direct object pronouns, or to nouns, acting as possessive adjectives (Alothman, 2012; Ingham, 1994). Table 3.7 compares the object and possessive suffixes of Central Najdi Arabic and Qassimi Arabic. All the suffixes, except first-

person singular [-ni], can function as an object or possessive pronoun with the same form. Qassimi Arabic shares the same forms for object and possessive pronouns, albeit with a few differences that are in bold in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Object Pronouns in Central Najdi and Qassimi Arabic

Person	Singular		Plural	
	Supralocal / Central Najdi	Local / Qassimi	Supralocal / Central Najdi	Local / Qassimi
1	-ni (me)	**-an**	-na (us)	-na
2	-(i)k (you M) -(i)ts (you F)	-(i)k -(i)ts	-kum (you M) -kin/kum (you F)	-kum **-kin**
3	-(i)h (him) -(i)ha (her)	**-uh** **-eh**	-hum (them M) -hin/hum (them F)	-hum **-hin**

As shown in Table 3.7, Qassimi Arabic has different forms for the first-person singular (-an vs. -ni), third-person singular feminine object (-eh vs. -ha), and third-person singular masculine (-uh vs. -ih). Following are examples of Najdi object suffixes in sentences from Ingham (1994).

šāf-i-ni	‘he saw me’	šāf-ik	‘he saw you’
šāf-ic	‘he saw you f.’	šāf-ih	‘he saw him’
šāf-a-ha	‘he saw her’	šāf-i-na	‘he saw us’
šāf-i-kum	‘he saw you pl’	šāf-i-cin	‘he saw you f.pl’
šāf-i-hum	‘he saw them’	säf-i-hin	‘he saw them f.’

As Ingham (1994) explained, these suffixes can also be attached to the prepositions [-bi] (by) and [li-] (to), which can be attached to verb forms with a direct object, as shown below.

gal.li
said 3SG.M-to-me.1SG
‘He said it to me.’

They can also be attached to verb forms without a direct object:

gal-ih-li

said 3SG.M-it.dir obj-to-me
'He said it to me.'

In this study, I examined variation in the use of three of these pronouns: the first-person singular [-ni/an], the second-person singular feminine [-(i)k/-(i)ts], and the third-person singular feminine [-ha/eh]. I selected these three because their variation can be detected in orthographic representations. A more detailed discussion of the object/possessive suffixes examined in this study follows.

3.4.1.1 First-Person Object Suffix -ni/an

The common first-person object suffix in Najdi Arabic [-ni] has regional variants. The most common one [-ni] is the variant used in most Najdi sedentary and Bedouin dialects, such as the Riyadh dialect (Alothman, 2012). However, in the dialect of Qassim—among other local dialects, such as that of Hail—the final [i] is deleted and categorically realized as [-an], as exemplified below.

Supralocal Najdi variant
kalam-**ni**
'he talked to me'

Local Qassimi variant
kalam-**an**
'he talked to me'

The Qassimi variant -an is socially salient as people usually connect its use to people from the Qassim region, as evident from its use in the media to represent Qassimi people. It is a stigmatized variant that has been witnessing a shift to the supralocal Najdi variant [-ni] among young people (based on the researcher's personal observation). However, to the researcher's knowledge, no sociolinguistic study has documented this shift in use.

3.4.1.2 Second-Person Singular Feminine Object/Possessive Suffix [-(i)k/-(i)ts]

The second-person feminine object/possessive suffix has a prestigious supralocal velar variant [-(i)k] and non-prestigious traditional affricated variant [-(i)ts]. Traditionally, the suffix is affricated (regardless of the preceding or following sounds) in most Najdi dialects (Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 1994; Johnstone, 1963). However, it is now commonly associated with local dialects, such as the Qassimi dialect (Al-Rojaie, 2020), and older generations (Al-Rojaie, 2013). On the other hand, the velar variant [-(i)k] is more common in urban areas, such as Riyadh, and among younger people. In her study, Alothman (2012) noted that [-(i)k] was the only variant reported by the participants she surveyed from Riyadh, whose ages ranged from 20 to 35, as exemplified below.

Supralocal Najdi variant
kalamt-**ik**
'I talked with you' (F.OBJ)

Local Qassimi variant
kalamt-**its**
'I talked with you' (F.OBJ)

3.4.1.3 Third-Person Feminine Object Suffix [-ha/-eh]

The third-person feminine object/possessive suffix has a prestigious supralocal variant [-ha] and a non-prestigious local variant [-eh]. The variant [-ha] is the most commonly used and has been reported in Riyadh and other regions (Alothman, 2012; Ingham, 1994). The variant [-eh], on the other hand, is only heard in a few local regions, such as in Qassimi Arabic, as illustrated below.

Supralocal Najdi variant
kalamta-**ha**
'I talked with her'

Local Qassimi variant
kalamt-**eh**

‘I talked with her’

3.4.2 Negation Particles [mu/muhub]

3.4.2.1 Negation in Najdi Arabic

Like most modern varieties of Arabic, two types of sentential negation have been identified in Najdi Arabic: verbal negation particles and non-verbal predicate negation particles (Binturki, 2015; Holes, 2016). Verbal negation particles negate verbs (e.g., [ma-], [la-], and their variants), while non-verbal predicate negation particles negate other parts of speech in nominal sentences, such as [muhub] and [mu] (Binturki, 2015; Brustad, 2000). The negation particles examined in this study belonged to the latter group. Therefore, I provide a detailed description of negation construction in non-verbal predicate sentences in the following section.

3.4.2.2 Non-Verbal Negation in Najdi Arabic

In Najdi Arabic, as in most Saudi dialects, the negation particle [ma] is generally incorporated with an independent pronoun, forming a lexical item (i.e., [muhu]) used for negation in nominal sentences, i.e., sentences that have no verbal predicate. For example, [mahu] (SG.M) and [mahi] (SG.F) are formed by adding the negation particle [ma] to the pronominal [hu/hi] (he.3.M).

In Najdi Arabic, this negation particle has several forms based on the number and person of the subject. These are [muhu] (SG.M), [mahi] and [mihi] (SG.F), [muhum] (PL.M), and [mahin] (PL.F). The following examples are taken from Binturki (2015, p. 74):

a. **maniib** doktor
   NEG.1SG.M doctor.2SG.M
   ‘I am not a doctor’

b. (Ali) **muhub** fi il-beet
   Ali NEG.3SG.M in the-house
   ‘(Ali) is not in the house’

c. il-moejah **maheeb** baarda
the-water.F NEG.3SG.F cold.F
'the water is not cold'

In the above examples, the negative particle was used to negate a noun in (a), a preposition in (b), and an adjective in (c). In most Najdi dialects, [-b] is added to the end of these constructions for emphasis (Prochazka, 1988), resulting in such forms as [muhub] (SG.M), [mahib] (SG.F), [muhumb] (PL.M), and [mahinb] (PL.F). Holes (1990) listed [muhub] with a number of allomorphs, including [mahu], [muhu], [mub], [mu], and [hub] (as cited in Binturki, 2015). The constructed form [mu] and third-person masculine [mub] are often generalized to all genders and numbers in Gulf and Najdi dialects (Binturki, 2015; Holes, 2016), as illustrated below.

a. al-salatah **mu/mub** halwah
the-salad.SG.F NEG.SG.M delicious
'The salad is not delicious'

b. Mohammed **mu/mub** heena
Mohammed.SG.M NEG.SG.M here
'Mohammed is not here.'

c. Ana **mu/mub** faddjiah
I.1SG.SUBJ NEG.SG.M free
'I am not free.'

d. Antum **mu/mub** jahezeen
you.2PL.SUBj NEG.SG.M ready
'You are not ready.'

e. Al-jal **mu/mub** heena
the-boys.3PL.SUBJ NEG.SG.M here
'The boys are not here.'

In these examples, the singular masculine particle [mub/mu] is used for negation with nouns regardless of the person, number, or gender of the noun.

Negation in Qassimi Arabic follows the same basic structure as most other Najdi Arabic dialects with a few differences in forms. Table 3.8 shows the different forms of the negation

particle used in Qassimi Arabic as reported by Prochazka (1988). Similar to the Riyadh dialect, Qassimi Arabic has the forms [mihib] (3SG.F. SUBJ), [mahumb] (3PL.M.SUBJ), and [mantib] (2SG.SUBJ). However, Qassimi Arabic differs from that of Riyadh in the six remaining forms: [mahub/muhub] (3SG.M), [mahinb/mahumb] (3PL.F), [mantumb/mantb] (2SG.M), [mantinb/mantub] (2PL.F), [manab/manib] (1SG), and [mahinnab/mahinna:b] (1PL).

Table 3.8: Negation Particles in Riyadh and Qassimi Arabic

Dialect	3SG.M	3SG.F	3PL.M	3PL.F	2SG.M	2SG.F	2PL.M	2PL.F	1SG	1PL
Riyadh	muhub	mihib	mahumb	mahumb	mantib	mantib	mantub	mantub	manib	mahinna:b
Qassim	**mahub**	mihib	mahumb	**mahinb**	mantib	mantib	**mantumb**	**mantinb**	**ma:nab/ manab**	**mahinab**

However, this is a descriptive documentation of the forms historically used in these Najdi dialects when travel and contact with other dialects was not as common as today. Recently, most of the forms are commonly used among all Najdi dialects. Further, as explained above, the singular masculine particle [mub] is used for negation with nouns regardless of the person, number, or gender of the noun in Najdi dialects. Additionally, recent studies have reported the frequent use and generalization of the constructed form [mu] for all genders and numbers, particularly in big cities and among younger people in Najdi and other Gulf dialects of Arabic (Alothman, 2012; Binturki, 2015; Holes, 2016).

In sum, the negation particle has two variants: the supralocal [mu] and the local variants [muhub] or [mub]. In this study, I considered all gender and number forms of the local variant [muhub] against the supralocal form [mu].

3.4.3 Future Particle [b(i)-/aba-(jabi)]

The future tense in Najdi Arabic is formed by adding the modal verb [baɣa/jabi] (“want/request”) and/or any one of their constructed forms (e.g., the prefixes [aba-] and [bi-/b-]) to the imperfective form of the predicate. According to Ingham (1994), the longer form [baɣa]

can come in the perfective or imperfective aspect and agrees with the subject of the main predicate in number and gender. The shorter form [jabi] can only occur in the imperfective and does not have to agree with the number of the subject (see Table 3.9).

Table 3.9: Inflections of Bağa and Jabi in Agreement with Subject in Najdi Arabic

Subject	Bağa		Jabi
	Imperfective	Perfective	Imperfective
1SG	abağa	bağayet	abi/aba-
2SG.M	tabağa	bağayet	Tabi
2SG.F	tabağaeen	bağayet	tabeen/tabi
2PL	tabağuun bağaytu		tabuun/tabi
3SG.M	yabğa bağayet		Jabi
3SG.M	tabağa bağayeti		Tabi
3PL.M	yabğuun	bağu	yabuun/yabuun
3PL.F	yabğin/yabğuun bağaan/bağu		jabin/yabuun/jabi

The form [jabi] can be reduced to make the future prefixes [aba-] (1SG.M) and [naba-/nab-] (1PL). Examples from Ingham (1994) are given below.

abi arūh > **aba**rūh ‘I will go’

nabi nrūh> **naba**rrūh ‘we will go’

With other genders and numbers, [jabi] comes in the full form to agree with the subject, as illustrated in the examples below from Ingham (1994).

tabi trūh > **b**itrūh ‘she, you m.s. will go’

jabi yrūh > **bi**yrūh ‘he will go’

jabi yrūhūn > **bi**yrūhūn ‘they m. will go’

tabi trūhīn > **bi**trūhn ‘you f.s. will go’

Furthermore, the prefix [bi-/b-] marks the future and is also formed from the root *bgy*, Ingham (1994) explained that this prefix does not agree with number or gender.

Arabic linguists have suggested [bağa/jabi] and the prefixes [aba-/naba-] and [bi-/b-] are not limited to indicating a future tense (Holes, 2016; Ingham, 1994; Persson, 2008). Along with the intentional future and imminent future, they are also used in conditional statements whether referring to the future or not, as shown in the example below.

eitha	magemt	**bi**ruh	wa	axalik
if	you-NEG-wake up	I-FUT.go	and	leave-you

'If you don't wake up, I'll leave you.'

In her survey of the Najdi Arabic spoken in Riyadh, Alothman (2012) reported the use of the prefixes [rah-] and [bi-] to form the future. The prefix [rah-] was borrowed into Najdi Arabic from other northern Arabic dialects. Alothman provided the following example.

rāḥ	aštrī	sayyāra	bukra
will	buy.I.SG	car	tomorrow

'I will buy a car tomorrow.'

In Qassimi Arabic, [jabi] and its reduced forms [aba-] (1SG.M) and [nab-] (1PL) are heard. However, the prefix [bi-/b-] is spreading, especially among the younger generations. This study considered variation in the use of the supralocal variant [bi-/b-] and the local variants [jabi] and [aba-]. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous sociolinguistic study had examined the distribution of these variants.

3.4.4 The Preposition [fii/bu]

The preposition [fii] in Najdi and other Gulf Arabic dialects and its local Qassimi variant [bu-] have been reported to have a number of functions (Bakir, 2014; Potsdam & Alanazi, 2014). Besides being a special and temporal preposition meaning "in, into, inside," they have been used in existential sentences as an expletive copula (e.g., the verb "to be"). The latter is a case of grammaticalization where the locative [fii/bu] has acquired an existential meaning derived from

its lexical meaning as a preposition. Following are examples for each of these functions (adapted from Bakir, 2014).

1. a. ween Rashid? **fii/bi** l-maktab
where Rashid? in DEF-office
'Where is Rashid? In the office.'

b. safrat-na **fii/bi** l-leel
trip-1Pl in DEF-night
'Our trip is at night.'

2. **fii/bu**-h laʕbah ʔlyoom?
existential match DEF-today?
'Is there a match today?'

In (1a), [fii/bi] is used as a preposition of place, and in (1b), it works as a preposition of time. On the other hand, in (2), [fii/bu] functions as an existential predicate.

In contrast to [fii], which is common in several Arabic dialects, including most Najdi dialects, [bu-] is mostly heard in Qassimi Arabic, especially for its second function. The connection between Qassimi Arabic and [bu-] is popular in Saudi Arabia and laypeople appear to be aware of the special use of this particle in Qassimi Arabic as evident from metapragmatic comments in the media. In contrast to [fii], [bu-] is socially stigmatized and related to the minority dialect of Qassim. Despite this stigma and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no descriptive or sociolinguistic study had examined the distribution of these two variants in Najdi Arabic in general or Qassimi Arabic in particular. In this study, I examined the use of the two variants as a spatial/temporal preposition and as an expletive copula. As a criterion for including instances of [fii/bu-], I included all positions where the two represented different ways of saying the same thing and could be used interchangeably.

Chapter 4: Variation in Najdi Arabic Features and the Use of English

4.1 Introduction

The quantitative analysis in this chapter looks for significant changes in Shreen's linguistic style in Instagram posts, particularly in the use of regional dialect features and English, as her persona and popularity develop over time. Consequently, this chapter examines the effect of time period and topic on style variation. The chapter addresses the second main research question listed in Chapter 1: If variation in the use of regional dialect, code choice, and English written in Arabic Script is related to factors like time and the topic of the posts, what are the patterns of variation?

For this purpose, it also answers the following sub-questions:

1. How do the supralocal Najdi Arabic variants correlate with time and topic?
2. How does code choice, i.e., the use of English, Arabic, and Arabic-English mixing correlate with time and topic?
3. How does writing English in the Arabic alphabet correlate with time and topic?

The regional dialect features examined were combined into one dependent variable, *regional dialect*, with two variants: local (Qassimi Arabic) and supralocal (Central Najdi). A theoretical reason for this is that style is seen in this study as made up of multiple features occurring in different patterns that contribute to persona construction. Thus, the study seeks to examine persona style, rather than individual variables on their own. In addition, the occurrences of each individual variable were too few to be analyzed for statistical significance, a problem solved by combining them to produce a sufficient number of tokens (1,621).

After a distributional analysis, a multivariate analysis was conducted using Rbrul. Later, patterns of stylistic variation were identified, described, and interpreted. For each research

question, I give a detailed description of the distribution of variables in the data overall and for individual factors. This is followed by a statistical analysis that shows the contribution of each factor to style variation.

4.2 Regional Dialect Variable

4.2.1 Distribution of Variants

This section presents the overall and factor-by-factor distribution of regional dialect variants (local and supralocal). It also presents a frequency analysis of the six regional dialect features individually, providing the counts and proportions overall and for each time period.

4.2.1.1 Overall Distribution

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 present the numbers of posts included in the coding (as reproduced from Table 3.2), the number of tokens coded, and the number of variants in each period. The data contained 391 posts: 47 in the first period, 116 in the second, 141 in the third, and 88 in the fourth. Those posts yielded 1,621 tokens: 700 local dialect variants and 921 supralocal variants. Thus, supralocal variants occurred more often than local variants. The next section presents the distribution of variants across time, topic, and linguistic features.

Table 4.1: Number of Posts Overall and by Time Period

Period	Posts	Tokens
1 Before fame	47	35
2 Seeking fame	116	387
3 Peak of fame	141	728
4 Decline in activity	88	471
Total	391	1621

Table 4.2: Overall Distribution of Variants

Variant	*N*	%
Local	700	43.2
Supralocal	921	56.8
Total	1,621	

4.2.1.2 Variant Distributions by Factor

Next, I present the distribution of variants factor by factor, including time periods and topics, in addition to linguistic features. As Table 4.3 illustrates, the local dialect variants were used between 62% and 50% in the first three periods but dropped sharply to 15.5% in Period 4. To describe this in relation to changes in popularity, in the second period, when Shreen was seeking fame, local variants (61.75%) were used the most while supralocal variants were used the least. In the third period, when she reached the peak of her popularity, the frequencies of local and supralocal became very close, i.e., 50.8% vs. 49.2%. The shift was most drastic by the fourth period, where local variants dropped to 15.5% and supralocal variants rose to 84.5%. These numbers show the participant used more supralocal variants as she progressed through different stages of fame. Local variants were used most frequently when Shreen was trying to attract followers in Period 2, but this usage decreased as she became famous and later as her activity declined. Figure 4.1 shows the pattern of change in the dialect variable across time periods.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Local and Supralocal Variants by Time Periods

Period	Local Variants		Supralocal Variants		Total
	N	%	*N*	%	
1	18	51.43	17	48.6	35
2	239 ↑	61.75	148	38.24	387
3	370	50.8	358	49.2	728
4	73 ↓	15.5	398 ↑	84.5	471
Total	700		921		1,621

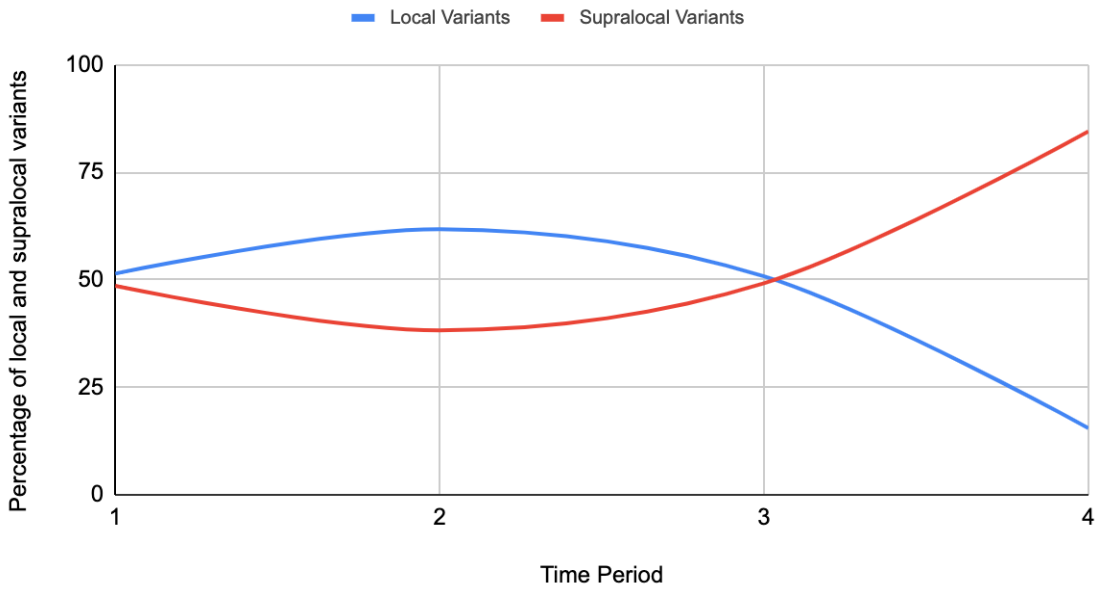

Figure 4.1. Local and supralocal variants across time periods.

The distribution of local and supralocal variants along the three topics coded (Saudi identity, life in the US, and other) is shown in Table 4.4. For life in the US, Shreen used local variants 53.9% of the time and supralocal variants 46.1%. For Saudi identity, 50.9% of variants were local features while 49.1% were supralocal. For "other," when the topic was not identified, 69.5% had supralocal, and 30.5% had local, variants. These numbers showed little to no difference between Saudi identity and life in the US. That is, topic did not appear to make a difference in the choice between variants.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Local and Supralocal Variants by Topic

Topic	Local Variants		Supralocal Variants		Total
	N	%	*N*	%	
Life in the US	433	53.9	371	46.1	804
Saudi Identity	367	50.9	355	49.1	722
Other	29	30.5	66	69.5	95

4.2.2 Multivariate Analysis Results

To examine the effects of time and topic on changes in linguistic style on Instagram, a multivariate analysis was performed using Rbrul (Johnson, 2019). The 1,621 tokens were coded in Excel and converted into a CSV format that Rbrul could read (e.g., dependent variable, period, topic, feature). The supralocal variant was set as the reference value; thus, the results are presented in terms of this value. Below, I discuss the model obtained with the three factor groups, showing the numbers (*N*), proportions (%), factor weights (FW), and *p* values for each factor group (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Multivariate Analysis of the Supralocal Variant with Time and Topic

Variable	*p*	*N*	%	FW
Period	3.97E-50			
4		471	84.5	0.811
3		728	49.2	0.429
1		35	48.6	0.387
2		387	38.2	0.329
Topic	0.406			
Other		95	69.5	0.537
Saudi identity		722	54.8	0.497
Life in the US		804	57.1	0.466

Note. N = 1,621, r^2 = 0.189, Deviance = 1976.862, Input Probability = 0.577.

With an r^2 of .189, the model explained and predicted a little less than a quarter of the variation in dialect use. The analysis showed time period (p = 3.97E-50) to be a significant factor, while topic was not significant (p = 0.406). Thus, time period explained .189 of the variation in dialect use in the data. The percentage of the supralocal variants used across periods was 56.8%. Thus, Shreen used a greater overall number of supralocal variants compared to only .43.2% of the local variants.

The only significant factor group was time period (p = 3.97E-50). The data showed a shift from preferring local to preferring supralocal variants with time. While the first (FW =

.387) and second (FW= .329) periods greatly disfavored supralocal variants, the third disfavored those variants less intensively (FW = .429). However, this trend reversed in the fourth period, when Shreen lost interest in being a celebrity and strongly favored the supralocal variant (FW = .811). The analysis showed changes in the participant's linguistic style as her persona changed over time. A question remained to be answered is whether all features of the regional dialect changed in similar patterns across time or behaved differently. This is discussed in detail in the next section with reference to individual variable frequencies in each time period.

Topic was not significant in explaining variation in regional dialect (p = .40), with the factor weights of the three topics quite close. That is, the topic of the post did not have a significant influence on the participant's shifting style; whether she was referencing her homeland or the US made no difference on her dialect choices. This finding was interesting because it suggests style shifting was a strategic performance of changing personas, rather than being a reaction to changes in the topic. In the qualitative analysis of her posts in the next chapter, I show how stylistic variation was used as a performance of her changing personas.

A second run was performed where Shreen's most active and popular periods (Period 2 and 3) were combined, as an alternative way of classifying time period. This arrangement resulted in three periods: 1, 2–3, and 4. This also helped to confirm the trends obtained in the previous run. As Table 4.6 illustrates, combining the second and third periods together showed similar and clearer trends. Specifically, Shreen disfavored the supralocal dialect the most (FW =.312) in her most active period (Period 2+3) but favored it most in her most inactive period (FW = .812).

This research initially aimed to examine the change over time in the use of each of the six linguistic variables, which was not possible because of the limited number of tokens for each

variable. The multivariate analysis in Chapter 3 showed that linguistic features participated differently in the formation of the local vs. supralocal dialects. To confirm the trends above and gain insight into how each feature interacted with each time period, and thus how individual features behaved over time, the factor groups were grouped in different combinations with multiple Rbrul runs, as outlined below.

Table 4.6: Multivariate Analysis of the Supralocal Variant with Periods 2 and 3 Combined

Period	*N*	%	FW
4	471	84.5	0.815
1	35	48.6	0.334
2+3	1,115	45.4	0.312
Total	1,621		

Note. p = 7.34E-65, r^2 = 0.35, Deviance = 1749.306, Input Probability = 0.698.

First, the second person object suffix, Variable 2 [-(i)k/-(i)ts], was excluded because we learned that it made up a great deal of the supralocal variant (FW = .878) and thus excluding it would provide more accurate ideas about the rest of the linguistic features. Rbrul was then rerun. This produced nearly a similar result, with period being significant (p = 4.58E-64) and Period 4 the only period favoring the supralocal variant.

Table 4.7: Multivariate Analysis of the Supralocal Variant with V2 Excluded

Period	*N*	%	FW
4	453	83.9	0.857
3	660	45	0.421
1	31	41.9	0.334
2	359	34.8	0.314

Note. p = 4.58E-64, r^2 = 0.32, Deviance = 1662.479, Input Probability = 0.557, N = 1,503.

Additionally, Rbrul was rerun with V3, V5, and V6 only (i.e., the third feminine object suffix, the negation particle, and the preposition). This was done because the multivariate analysis conducted in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.5) showed that these features contributed more prominently to the local dialect. The distributional analysis also showed these variables

witnessed a shift from local to supralocal variants (see Table 4.8). Therefore, this Rbrul run aimed to assess whether time period would still correlate with dialect when excluding the other variables and including V3, V5, and V6 only.

Table 4.8: Multivariate Analysis of Time Periods with V3, V5, and V6 Only

Period	*N*	%	FW
4	368	81.5	0.846
1	24	41.7	0.403
3	479	32.4	0.363
2	260	28.1	0.323
Total	1,131		

Note. p = 2.82E-56, r^2 = 0.28, Deviance = 1276.519, Input Probability = 0.395.

The results suggested that even with features that constructed the local dialect in general, Period 4 favored the supralocal variants (FW = .864). Meanwhile, these features disfavored the supralocal variants in the first (FW= 0.403), second (FW = 0.323), and third (FW= 0.363) periods. This finding pointed to a significant shift over time from local to supralocal dialect in Shreen's use of the features that mostly constructed the local dialect.

Since tracking changes in individual features over time was difficult with the limited number of tokens collected for each feature, the time period and feature factors were combined in different ways to obtain interaction results. One method was combining the features that behaved the same and rerunning Rbrul. The results previously presented in Table 4.6 above show that V1, V2, and V4 (the first singular object suffix, the second feminine object suffix, and the future particle) were similar in being realized mostly in the supralocal variants. In contrast, V3, V5, and V6 (the third person feminine object suffix, the preposition fii, and the negation particle) mostly described the local variants. Based on this result, these features were combined into two groups, and interaction was run between time period and each group (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9: Multivariate Analysis of Period-Feature Interaction

Feature-Period Interaction	*N*	%	FW
V1V2V4:3	249	81.5	0.592
V3V5V6:1	24	41.7	0.572
V3V5V6:2	260	28.1	0.522
V1V2V4:4	103	95.1	0.502
V3V5V6:4	368	81.5	0.498
V1V2V4:2	127	59.1	0.478
V1V2V4:1	11	63.6	0.428
V3V5V6:3	479	32.4	0.408
Total *N*	1,621		

Note. p = 9.26E-03, r^2 = 0.32, Deviance = 1761.239, Input Probability = 0.647.

The interaction between feature groups and time period was significant (p = 9.26E-03). This suggested Shreen's style shifting across time varied by feature. In the third period, the group containing V1, V2, and V4 favored the supralocal variants the most (FW = 0.592), while V3, V5, and V6 favored them the least (FW = 0.408). In the second period, even V1, V2, and V4 to some degree disfavored the supralocal variants (FW = 0.478), while V3, V5, and V6 showed nearly the same probability of choosing either variant (FW = 0.522). In the fourth period, V1, V2, and V4 (FW = 0.498) and V3, V5, and V6 (FW = 0.502) showed nearly the same preference for either variant. In sum, the analysis revealed a positive influence only in the third period, in which V3, V5, and V6 favored the local variants while V1, V2, and V4 favored the supralocal variants. Thus, at this stage, the question of how each individual feature changed over time remained insufficiently answered. The only method remaining to examine this, despite its limitation, was through a proportion/frequency analysis of each feature across time, as described below.

4.2.2.1 Individual Dialectal Variables' Behavior Across Time

As explained earlier, all regional dialect features were combined to make one dependent variable, *regional dialect*, and thus have enough tokens for a meaningful multivariate analysis.

However, it was still crucial to track changes in each feature over time. This step was especially important because of the trends revealed by the multivariate analysis, since linguistic features showed a significant influence on style shifting, as some features favored the supralocal variants and others the local variants. Without enough tokens for each feature, however, obtaining significant results about how each feature behaved across time was not feasible. In addition, grouping features that behaved similarly showed significant interaction between feature groups and time periods. In this section, I follow each feature across time using count and proportions. Features shown to behave similarly in the multivariate analysis are presented together.

4.2.2.1.1 Features Used Mostly in the Realization of the Supralocal Dialect

According to the multivariate analysis, V1, V2, and V4 (the singular object suffix, the second person feminine object suffix, and the future particle) favored the supralocal variants. Table 4.10 shows how each behaved across time.

Table 4.10: Proportions of the Supralocal Variants of the First Group of Features

Feature	Period	*N*	%	*N*
V1	1	2	50	4
	2	27	48.2	56
	3	81	78.64	103
	4	52	100	52
V2	1	4	100	4
	2	22	78.57	28
	3	61	89.7	68
	4	18	100	18
V4	1	0	0.00	3
	2	25	58.14	43
	3	61	78.2	78
	4	28	84.8	33

Shreen used V1, the supralocal variant of the first singular object suffix [-ni], in the first (50%) and second (48.2%) periods. In the third period, however, supralocal variant use rose to 78.64% and peaked in the fourth at 100%. As for V2, the supralocal variant [-(i)k] of the second-

person feminine object suffix was used 100% in the first period but declined in the second (78.57%) and third (89.7%). In the fourth, it returned to being used 100% of the time. Thus, although this feature strongly favored the supralocal variant (see Table 4.6) at the beginning and end of the dataset, the local variant appeared in the second and third periods. For V4, the supralocal variant of the future particle [ba-] did not appear in the first period but was used increasingly more often in the second (58.14%), third (78.2%), and fourth (84.8%) periods.

This group of features behaved similarly as all of them favored the supralocal variants, which were used more in the second, third, and fourth periods (see Figure 4.2). The only exception to this trend was V1, which showed a 50/50 split between local and supralocal variants in the first period; however, it should be noted that the number of tokens in the first period was very small. Furthermore, the frequency of supralocal use increased across periods for all three features. It is worth noting that [-ts], the local variant of V2, was used in the second and third periods but never in the first or fourth.

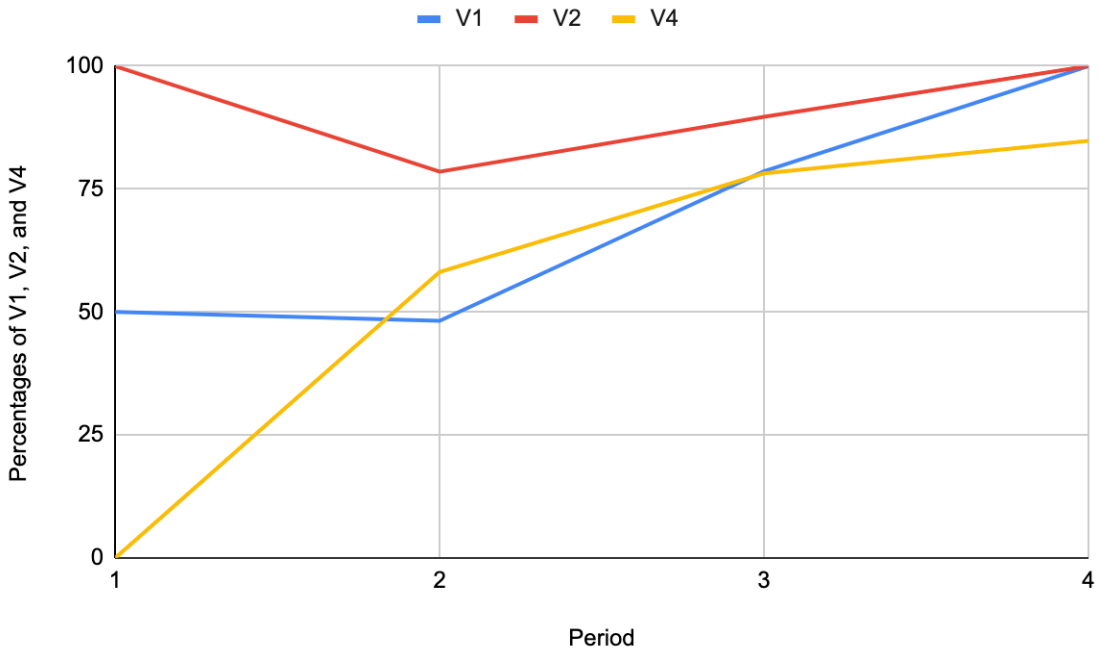

Figure 4.2. Percentages of V1, V2, and V4 across time periods.

4.2.2.1.2 Features Used Mostly in the Realization of the Local Dialect

V3, V5, and V6 mostly constructed the local dialect. Table 4.11 presents the proportions for each period to track how the feature behaved across time.

Table 4.11: Proportions of the Supralocal Variants for V3, V5, and V6

Feature	Period	*N*	%	N of Variables
V3	1	4	33.33	12
	2	13	15.12	86
	3	69	33.66	205
	4	149	97.39	153
V5	1	0	0.00	0
	2	0	0.00	19
	3	0	0.00	36
	4	16	100	21
V6	1	5	41.66	13
	2	61	39.1	156
	3	81	33.75	240
	4	135	69.59	194

V3, the third-person feminine object suffix, was used more frequently in the local variant [-eh] in the first (66.67%), second (84.88%), and third (66.34%) periods. This trend shifted in the fourth, when the supralocal variant [-ha] was used far more frequently (97.395%). V5, the negation particle, showed a particularly interesting shift. In the first three periods, the supralocal variant [mu] was never used, with only the local variant [muhub] appearing. In the fourth period, this trend reversed, with the supralocal variant appearing 100% of the time. For V6, the local variant [bu-] was used more frequently in the first three periods at 58.34%, 60.9%, and 66.25%, respectively. However, like the two features above, the supralocal variant was used more frequently in the fourth period (69.59%). These three features showed similar behavior over time. Besides favoring the local variants, which appeared more in the second and third periods, they exhibited a shift to the supralocal variants in the fourth (see Figure 4.3).

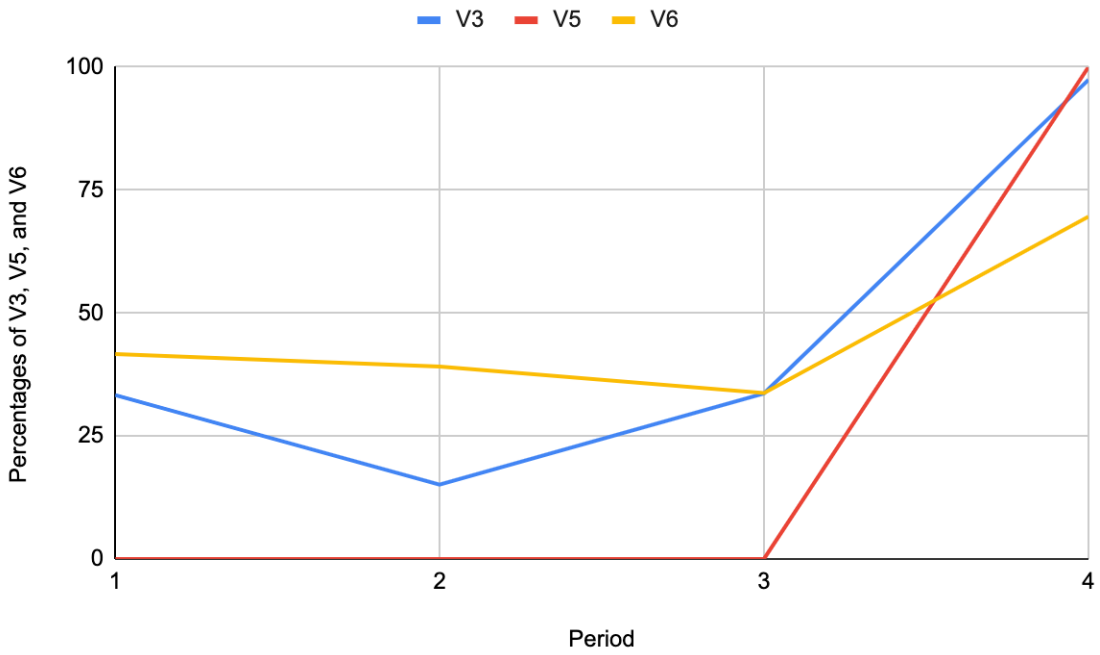

Figure 4.3. Percentages of V3, V5, and V6 across time periods.

4.3 Language Choice Variables

As part of looking at shifts in style, the study examined fluctuation in language choice, including script choice and orthographic bilingualism (English written in Arabic letters), as Shreen's celebrity persona developed. The research question guiding the analysis in this section was, "Does the participant's language choice change across time and topic?" Below, I present the distributional analysis and the results of the multivariate analysis for each variable.

4.3.1 Distributional Analysis

4.3.1.1 Code Choice

The study looked for a change in the language choice (i.e., script) in posts across time and topic (see Table 4.12). The languages tracked and coded were Arabic (0), English (1), and mixed (2). All 391 posts were coded, producing 391 tokens.

Table 4.12 shows a change in language choice across time. During the first period (when Shreen had an ordinary account), she most often used English (42.6%), followed by Arabic-only

posts (34%) and both (23.4%). During the second period, English use decreased sharply to 4.3% and mixing languages to 14.8%, while Arabic-only posts rose to 80.9%. This trend continued in the third period, with Arabic-only posts occurring 88.7% of the time, English not used at all, and language mixing only 11.3% of the time.

Table 4.12: Code Choice Across Time

Period	Statistic	Arabic	English	Both	Total
1	*N*	16	20	11	47
	%	34%	42.6%	23.4%	100%
2	*N*	93	5	17	115
	%	80.9%	4.3%	14.8%	100%
3	*N*	125	0	16	141
	%	88.7%	0%	11.3%	100%
4	*N*	59	2	27	88
	%	67%	2.3%	30.7%	100%
Total	*N*	293	27	71	391
	%	74.9%	6.9%	18.2%	100%

In the fourth period, Arabic-only posts still predominated, but mixed-language (30.7%) and English posts (2.3%) increased (see Figure 4.4 for a visual representation of language/code choice across time).

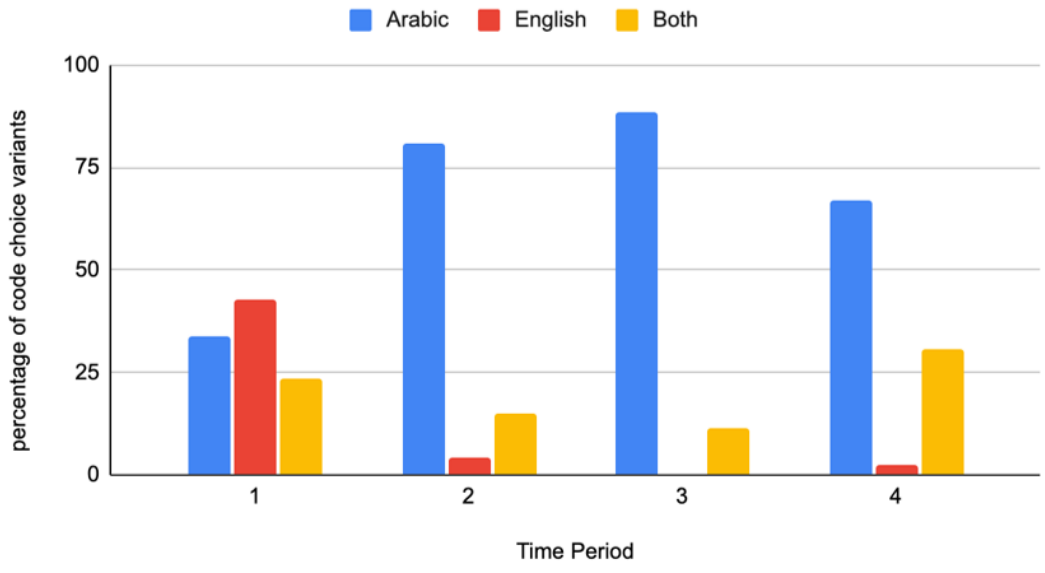

Figure 4.4. Language/code choice across time periods.

4.3.1.2 Writing English in the Arabic Alphabet: Orthographic Bilingualism

The second variable related to language choice, was orthographic bilingualism, i.e., whether Shreen's use of the Arabic alphabet to represent English changed over time. Once again, all 391 posts were coded, producing 391 tokens that were coded either as 1 (occurred at least once in the post) or as 0 (no occurrence in the post), as shown in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13: Distributional Analysis of English Written in the Arabic Alphabet Across Time

Period	Statistic	Did Not Occur	Occurred	Total
1	*N*	45	2	47
	% within period	95.7%	4.3%	100%
2	*N*	71	44	115
	% within period	61.7%	38.3%	100%
3	*N*	88	53	141
	% within period	62.4%	37.6%	100%
4	*N*	39	49	88
	% within period	44.3%	55.7%	100%
Total	*N*	243	148	391
	% within period	62.1%	37.9%	100%

The analysis revealed that writing English words or phrases in the Arabic alphabet increased from 4.3% in the first period to 38.3% and 37.6% in the second and third, respectively, peaking at 55.7% in the fourth (see Figure 4.5). This raises the question of whether this rise was related to the decreasing use of English shown in the previous section (see Figure 4.4). This issue is discussed in the discussion section. Next, the multivariate analysis results show whether these changes in language choice were significant.

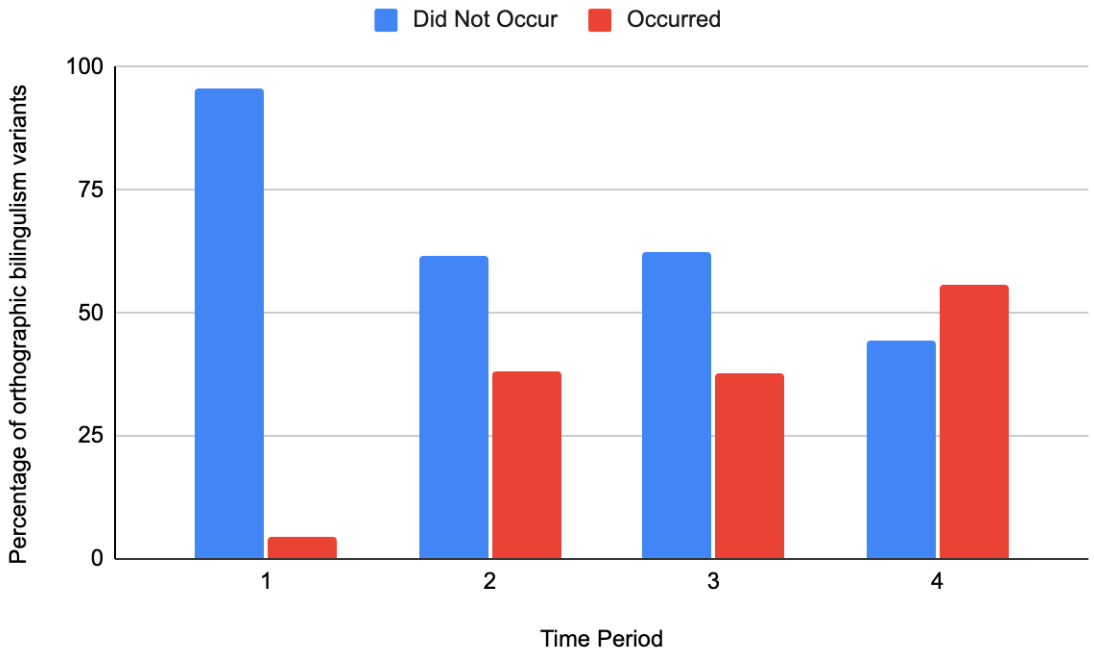

Figure 4.5. Writing English in the Arabic alphabet across time.

4.3.2 Multivariate Analysis of Language Choice

All 391 tokens were included in the regression analysis using Rbrul (Johnson, 2019). The data were run separately for each variable (script choice and English written in the Arabic alphabet), with several runs made with adjustments to get the best models.

4.3.2.1 Code Choice

The third period was categorical in that it showed no use of English and was thus excluded, and the data were rerun. Time period was the only significant factor group (p = 1.71E-07); topic was not (p = 0.514). The model had an r^2 of .34, with an input proportion of 0.076. The analysis showed the use of English could be explained by time period. English was favored in the first period (FW = 0.888) but decreased sharply, disfavored in the second (FW = 0.333), not used at all in the third, and disfavored even more in the fourth than in the second (FW = 0.202). Topic, on the other hand, had no effect on script choice (see Table 4.14).

Table 4.14: Multivariate Analysis of Code Choice by Period/Topic with English as Reference

Factor	*N*	%	FW	*p*
Period				1.71E-07
1	47	42.6	0.888	
2	113	04.42	0.333	
4	88	02.27	0.202	
Topic				0.514
Life in the US	136	0.0956	0.586	
Other	34	0.324	0.521	
Saudi Identity	78	0.0385	0.394	
Total	248			

Note. r^2 = 0.34, Deviance = 122.825, Input Probability = 0.0763.

In the next table, the data were rerun in Rbrul with mixed language as the reference. The model obtained explained only 0.107 of the variances in mixing. However, both time period (p = 0.0116) and topic (p = 0.0282) were identified as significantly affecting language mixing (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: Multivariate Analysis of Code Choice with Mixed Language as the Reference

Factor	*N*	%	FW	*p*	Range
Period				0.0116	0.272
4	88	30.7	0.653		
1	47	23.4	0.519		
2	113	15.9	0.445		
3	141	11.3	0.381		
Topic				0.0282	0.198
Life in the US	234	0.235	0.599		
Saudi Identity	155	0.11	0.401		
Total	389				

Note. r^2 = 0.107, Deviance = 351.385, Input Probability = 0.169.

The analysis showed time period (range = 0.272) to be the strongest factor affecting language mixing in posts, compared to topic (range = .198). The fourth period favored mixing the most (FW = 0.653), and the first period similarly favored mixing (FW = 0.519). On the other hand, the second (FW = 0.445) and third (FW = 0.381) periods disfavored it. The topic of the posts influenced the choice of language mixing as well. When the post was about the US,

language mixing was favored (FW = 0.599), and when the post referred to Saudi Arabia, mixing was disfavored (FW = 0.401).

4.3.2.2 English Written in the Arabic Alphabet

The model obtained (input proportion = 0.285, r^2 = .22) showed time period (p = 3.68E-08) was the only significant factor group influencing the choice to write English in the Arabic alphabet (see Table 4.16). Topic was not significant (p = 0.753) and thus had no influence on variance in the data.

Table 4.16: Multivariate Analysis of English Written in the Arabic Alphabet

Factor	*N*	%	FW	*p*
Period				3.68E-08
4	88	55.7	0.773	
2	113	38.9	0.64	
3	141	36.9	0.62	
1	47	04.26	0.0919	
Topic				0.753
Other	40	22.5	0.557	
Saudi identity	194	40.2	0.482	
Life in the US	155	38.7	0.46	
Total	389			

Note. r^2 = 0.223, Deviance = 473.546, Input Probability = 0.285.

The first period disfavored writing English in Arabic orthography (FW = 0.091), while the three other periods favored it. The fourth favored this practice the most (FW = 0.773), followed by the second (FW = 0.64) and third (FW =0.62) periods, which had nearly the same factor weights.

4.4 Summary and Discussion

The first question asked whether there is a change in regional dialect use as Shreen's popularity developed from an ordinary Instagrammer to a micro-celebrity over time. The multivariate analysis showed that the shift in her regional dialect use was explained by time periods. The topic of the posts did not have a significant effect on regional dialect use.

Additionally, the multivariate analysis, as reported in Chapter 3, examined how the different linguistic features participated in constructing regional dialect. It showed that different linguistic features contributed differently to the construction of the dialect. Thus, a frequency analysis was conducted in this chapter to examine how each feature changed over time, and this analysis similarly showed that the six dialect features behaved differently.

As Shreen developed from an ordinary to a celebrity Instagrammer, her regional dialect use shifted from preferring local in Period 2 and 3 to supralocal variants in Period 4. The shift to supralocal variants is consistent with the findings of dialectology and sociolinguistic variationist studies of Saudi regional dialect variables (Alammar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2015; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 2009). Al-Rojaie (2013), for example, found that the local variant [-ts] was used by "older uneducated speakers," while "younger and middle-aged educated speakers" showed a shift toward the supralocal variant [-k] (p. 1). In the first period, when Shreen had an ordinary Instagram account, she used the local variant the most. It should be noted, however, that the number of tokens was small in this period. In the second and third periods, when Shreen was trying to attract followers and was gaining fame, she used more vernacular local variants. Shreen might have used those local variants to sound local and authentic, create humor, or build friendly relationships with the audience, as will be discussed further in the qualitative analysis. Furthermore, using marked local dialect features might have help her stand out when she was seeking followers. In the fourth period, her identity developed according to the observation and interview. She became less open with her followers and no longer cared to attract more followers. She also became less home-oriented and more flexible and open to different beliefs and ideologies. With this shift, her language changed, she used more supralocal dialect, more Arabic-English mixing, and more English written in Arabic script.

However, linguistic variables participated differently in style shifting, as shown by the multivariate analysis, where the six features examined behaved differently. Some features (V1, V2, and V4) appeared equally or more frequently in their newer supralocal variants from the beginning. Still, they showed up more in the fourth period, having more local variants in the second and third periods compared to the fourth. V2, the second-person feminine object suffix [-(i)k/-(i)ts], is a variable (Al-Azraqi, 2010; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Alrasheedi, 2015) that has been documented to fluctuate with age, gender, and level of education. It has no official representation in Arabic's orthographic system. Thus, the appearance of the local variant [-ts] in Shreen's posts—even if only a few times—was marked and perhaps served stylistic purposes (as discussed in the next chapter). The local variant of V1 (the singular object suffix [-an]) is stereotyped and stigmatized. It also differs from the standard orthographic representation [-ni]. The local variant [-an] showed up in the first and second periods almost as frequently as the supralocal variant. The shift to the supralocal variants happened gradually in the third and fourth periods. It is possible that the local variant contributed to her construction of the friendly, funny, authentic persona, while the shift away from its use could be related to a later perception of its stigmatized status, as discussed further in Chapter 5.

Other features (V3, V5, and V6) were more likely to appear in the local variants in Shreen's posts. Nevertheless, these three variables showed a significant shift to the supralocal variants following the changes to her persona in the fourth period. Shreen strategically employed these local variants in constructing an online persona that appealed to her followers who were curious about the life of a Saudi in the US, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Using more local variants in those periods when she was seeking online fame might have helped her construct a more authentic Saudi persona that her followers would be interested in. The appearance of those

vernacular variants in this US context could also serve to distinguish her from others. In addition, they helped signal the funny, friendly, and humble persona that was attracting followers to Shreen's Instagram. In the fourth period, however, when Shreen developed a different attitude toward fame, she made a substantial shift to the more standard supralocal variants that fit her newer formal and cosmopolitan persona.

The second and third research questions examined in this chapter dealt with Shreen's language choice and whether it changed as her persona changed over time. Language choice here included two variables: script choice (Arabic, English, or both) and English written in Arabic letters. The multivariate analysis showed that English was used the most in the first period, when Shreen had an ordinary profile; however, as she started trying to attract followers and eventually became famous, writing a complete post in English was rare to nonexistent by the third period. This change could be explained by the shift in the kind of online persona she sought to create. In the beginning, her followers consisted mostly of relatives and friends, and she used her profile to demonstrate her photography skills. During this time, she used English mostly in hashtags and short phrases to caption her photos, possibly to give them a more global reach for anyone interested in photography. When she started targeting followers from Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries, she shifted to Arabic, perhaps to sound more appealing to her new target audience and to avoid the stigma related to the stereotype of expatriates' excessive English use. Additionally, the use of Arabic might have helped authenticate her Arab identity, a practice that could get her more followers. Later on, it helped her build a friendly relationship with followers without looking like she was showing off. That is, avoiding English was part of the persona she was constructing.

Shreen's use of language mixing was interesting. The multivariate analysis showed the first period favored mixing, which fit the pattern of frequent English use in this period. In the second and third periods, there was little mixing, which also coincided with little use of English in the Latin alphabet. The fourth period once again strongly favored language mixing, so although she still used Arabic mainly in that period, she made frequent mixed-language posts. In this most recent period, Shreen could have been copying other expat Instagram celebrities. One of the practices common across such profiles is to start posts with English in the form of short phrases (usually formulaic expressions, such as greetings). The ethnographic observation showed Shreen has started to do this, which could explain the increasing mixing of Arabic and English in her posts. Topic was another factor affecting Shreen's language mixing. When the post referred to US-related issues, she favored language mixing, and when the post referred explicitly or implicitly to Saudi Arabia, she disfavored mixing. Using English might therefore be triggered by a post's reference to US culture.

Regarding Shreen's habit of writing English in Arabic letters and integrating English into a mainly Arabic post, the multivariate analysis showed the first period disfavored this practice. This was perhaps due to English being used frequently in that period in the Latin alphabet by itself or mixed with Arabic. However, this practice was favored in the later periods. It could be that as Shreen gave up on the "explicit" use of English when trying to attract followers, she employed this strategy to continue using English in a less obvious way, giving a flavor of the place where she lived without showing off. This practice could also have been due to a lack of alternative words in Arabic. As a result of living in the US, the English words for some practices or objects might have been more easily accessible to her than their Arabic equivalents.

While Shreen used English and language mixing extensively as an ordinary expat Instagrammer in the first period, she mostly avoided English and script mixing and wrote posts in Arabic when trying to attract followers in the second and third periods, contributing to the friendly, humble persona she was constructing. When her persona changed in the fourth period, becoming less engaged with her audience and acting a more cosmopolitan persona, she started to mix English more often again, writing it in the Latin and Arabic alphabets

Chapter 5: Stylistic Variation, Bricolage, and Performance of Personas on Instagram

5.1 Introduction

The quantitative analysis in the previous chapter gave a broad overview of the patterns of variation in Shreen's linguistic style as her persona changed over time. This chapter is based on approaches to style and persona (e.g., Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2008, 2016; Zhang, 2018) that view style as a social practice and process of bricolage (Hebdige, 1984) and that focus on the use/contextualization of variation to make local meaning in discourse. The chapter examines the social meaning of the variation in Shreen's style: what it indexes and how it is used to make meaning. Acknowledging the importance of the combination and recombination of sociolinguistic resources in the creative production of social meaning (Eckert, 2016; Zhang, 2018), this chapter does not limit itself to the morphosyntactic and morphophonological variables and language choice variables examined in the quantitative analysis. It examines Shreen's use and combination of various semiotic and linguistic resources, some with imbued cultural meanings, to perform an attractive Instagram expatriate celebrity persona and reveals how this persona shifted over time as part of a shift in style. Particularly, this chapter addresses the following questions:

1. What linguistic and other semiotic resources did Shreen use to construct her Instagram celebrity personas?
2. How was variation in regional dialect, language choice, and script used and combined with other linguistic and semiotic resources in Shreen's Instagram posts to construct her personas?
3. What social meanings were created as she performed her personas?

Before delving into the analysis, I first provide examples of patterns of variation across the four periods of time found in the previous chapter. In the next section, I analyze example posts to show how Shreen combined and recombined a range of sociolinguistic resources with salient cultural meanings to perform a persona that would be appealing to her target followers and how this persona shifted when she lost interest in fame and developed a different identity a few years later.

5.2 Style Shifting Trends Across Time

This section illustrates the participant's style variation across time as shown by the multivariate analysis. As revealed in the previous chapter, there was a significant shift in style with local variants being favored in the first three periods when Shreen was seeking and achieving Instagram fame. However, in the most recent period after Shreen's interest declined, the supralocal variants were significantly favored. Additionally, the use of English changed over time from being favored in the first period with frequent language mixing to becoming disfavored in the next two periods to rising again in the last period. As for writing English with the Arabic alphabet, there was little use of this practice in the first period. However, it became more common in the second, third, and fourth periods. The following examples from each period illustrate this style shifting trend.

5.2.1 The First Period: An Ordinary Expatriate Instagrammer

Although her account was public (i.e., not set to a private mode), Shreen was not trying to gain "insta-fame" in the first period. She was practicing photography as a hobby and sharing the photos she took, mostly photos of children playing outside. She used a lot of hashtags, mostly in English, which was a common practice on Instagram in the early years of its use (around 2012).

Regarding her language in this period, the number of posts, and thus tokens collected, was limited; however, the quantitative analysis showed significantly more use of English and language mixing than Arabic alone. Arabic was used so sparsely that it is hard to make any claims about variation in local and supralocal dialect use. Of the small number of Arabic tokens in this period, Shreen used slightly more local than supralocal variants with as small a difference as 15 for supralocal vs. 18 for local. The following figures present posts that illustrate language variation in this period, i.e., English posts, mixed language posts, and Arabic with fluctuation in the use of local and supralocal variants.

In Figure 5.1, as is common in this period, Shreen used English alone to caption a photo that shows two little girls running outdoors in nature: "runnnn run like the wind😄🏃‍♀." This is a known English expression, but Shreen reconstructs it for Instagram by repeating the word *run* and lengthening it (runnnn), which reshaped it to be more like media language.

Figure 5.1. Two girls running.

Another common linguistic practice in this period is language mixing in photo captions. In Figure 5.2, Shreen posted a picture of her little sister with the caption "iða: *ʂarat mesawajeh muʂaibah galat* i love you *wa jalah naʈla naʂawer"* [*After she makes trouble, she says* I love you *and let's go have a photo shoot*]. Here, Shreen started with Arabic, switched to English to report part of her sister's speech (I love you), and shifted back to Arabic for the rest of her sister's speech. As for the Arabic dialect used here, none of the variables examined in the multivariate analysis were apparent.

Figure 5.2. Shreen's little sister.

The following post in Figure 5.3 illustrates some of the language mixing practices Shreen demonstrated in the first period. She sometimes mixed short hashtags and/or formulaic

expressions in the two languages (Arabic and English). To caption the photo, Shreen used a formulaic expression in Arabic and a hashtag in English to express admiration for the scene:

Subħan Allah #skyporn

God the mighty! **#skyporn**

The Arabic idiom has a religious origin and is usually used to express exclamations of delight. Along the same lines, the English hashtag #skyporn was a trendy hashtag on Instagram that was used to share beautiful photos of the sky.

Figure 5.3. Sunset.

Figure 5.4 below illustrates yet another way Shreen used mixed language in the first period. As shown in Figure 5.4, another way Shreen mixed English with Arabic was starting with a short formulaic English expression, a greeting, or simply a descriptive word that functioned as a title, the gist, or a greeting, followed by a longer detailed explanation in Arabic. Shreen rarely

did this in the next two time periods but returned to this practice quite frequently in the fourth period. In the caption, Shreen used English as a title, followed up with more detail in Arabic, and concluded with an example in English. In the transcription, text originally in English is in bold. In the post below, the English expression “ain’t nothing wrong with” is very colloquial, idiomatic English (when used by those who are aware that “ain’t” is nonstandard), which is characteristic of language use on social media.

Figure 5.4. Money jar.

> **Ain’t nothing wrong with saving money for an adventure** ❤️😍 *The idea of this picture that I found on Tumbler and wanted to copy involves a vase that you use to put any change you have left and then after a couple of years you see how much you have*

collected and use the money to go on an adventure you dream of like for instance **skydiving** :)

In addition to language mixing, this post illustrates the fluctuating use of local and supralocal Arabic in this period, in this case between the local and supralocal variants of the third person feminine object/possessive suffix [-ha/-eh]. There were six occurrences of the suffix; two were realized as the local variant [-eh] in *nafs**eh*** 'herself' and *ħaṭait**eh*** 'put it' (fm), and four in the supralocal variant [-ha] *lagaita**ha*** 'found it (fm), *fii**ha*** 'in it' (fm), *fii**ha***, and *asawai**ha*** 'do it' (fm). She also used the preposition [fii-] twice, both as the supralocal variant.

5.2.2 Second Period: Seeking Fame

In the second period, Shreen developed an interest in attracting followers and becoming an Instagram celebrity. During this time, her Instagram practices changed on many levels. She posted more frequently and wrote longer captions in which she gave a daily diary and recounted anecdotes revolving around her life in the US. In her posts (in photos and captions), she most often foregrounded her expatriate self and life in the US, either directly by talking about her expatriate experiences or explicitly comparing life in the host and home countries, or indirectly by including scenery, objects, or practices specific to the US without explicit reference to being an expatriate.

Shreen's linguistic practices also changed, as confirmed by the multivariate analysis. She used significantly less English and language mixing in her posts and wrote Arabic predominantly in her native local dialect. In the following, I present example posts that illustrate the frequent use of the local variants examined in the quantitative analysis.

Figure 5.5 includes an anecdote that implicitly conjures up life in the US and a picture that is not related to the caption. The picture shows a plate of fruit and a laptop on Shreen's bed.

She captioned this image with a story about a classmate named Mercedes, expressing sympathy for the girl for having such an uncommon name and narrating the story behind the name. A translation of her anecdote is included below.

Figure 5.5. Laptop and fruit.

> *Gosh, I have a classmate whose name is Mercedes* 💔😿 *I felt pity for her. I want to help her change her name* 😂 *One day, she told us the story behind her name* 😔*Her dad is an alcoholic* 🤦 *and when her mom gave birth to her, he was* 😁🤦 *The doctor asked him what he wanted to name her. So he immediately said, Mercedes, after the car I like* 😂 *Poor girl, she was the victim* 💔😿

While narrating a US-based story that contained cultural aspects that would be unfamiliar to her Saudi audience (i.e., where the name is associated solely with the car, and drinking alcohol is not legal or common), Shreen mostly used local variants. In the post, the third person feminine object/possessive suffix [-eh/-ha] was used eight times. Seven were realized as the local variant

[-eh] *ʔum**eh*** ‘her mother,’ *ʔubu**eh*** ‘her father,’ *ʕan**eh*** ‘for her,’ *ism**eh*** ‘her name,’ *tewaled**eh*** ‘give birth to her,’ ***bah*** ‘in it’ (fm), while only one occurrence was realized as the supralocal [-ha] *tesami**ha*** ‘name her.’ Another example post with different variables is given in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6. Shreen’s sister wearing a princess costume.

In this example of indirect representation of the US expatriate life, Shreen used local variants for all dialect variables occurring here. The picture shows Shreen’s sister, whose photos constitute one of the most frequent topics in the early years, behind the scenes during a photo shooting session. Here, her little sister is wearing a Disney princess costume and standing outdoors in front of greenery, both representatives of US life, as is discussed in more detail in the next section. Her sister appears upset in the photo. The caption was a direct comment on and description of the picture. Shreen expressed sympathy for her sister and desire to do anything to convince her to stay for photo-shooting sessions, as translated from Arabic below:

See this exact face? 💔😭 Here, I become like I will bring you the moon but don't give up and leave 💔 I will buy you everything but don't cry 💔😭 This face is what makes me do everything she wants 💔😂

In the post, there were a few occurrences of the variables examined in the multivariate analysis. The future particle occurred twice, both times as the local variant [aba-] in ***aba****ʒiblik* 'I will bring you' and ***aba****afrilik* 'I will buy you.' The first-person singular object suffix occurred once in the local variant [-an] *jaxali**an*** 'have me,' as was the third person feminine possessive suffix [-eh] *ʈalabat**eh*** 'her desires.' On the other hand, Shreen used the second-person feminine object suffix twice, both as the supralocal variant [-(i)k] *abaʒibl**ik*** 'I will get you' and *abaafril**ik*** 'I will buy you.'

5.2.3 Third Period: Peak of Fame

The third period marked the peak of Shreen's Instagram fame, which I defined as starting from the date she reached 60,000 followers after August 2014. Her followers then continued to grow rapidly until she exceeded 160,000. Shreen's sharing practices were similar to the previous period: sharing frequently, engaging with her audience, foregrounding life in the US, and telling funny anecdotes. At this stage, she clearly considered herself an Internet celebrity as shown by the way she referred to herself or her followers. For example, in a 10-facts-about-me post, explaining that she was not very social, Shreen wrote that she was the kind of person who was well-known on the Internet but not by many people in real life.

Shreen's linguistic style was likewise the same as the previous period, showing a preference for local variants. However, there was a gradual decrease in the frequency of local variants and an increase in supralocal variants (as shown by the higher factor weight in Table 4.6 in Chapter 4). Similar to the second period, there was little use of English or language mixing.

Arabic alone was used significantly more than English or both languages together. In the following, I present posts that show the trends in this period regarding the variables examined in the multivariate analysis.

Figure 5.7 exemplifies the kind of content Shreen mostly shared in this period: meaningful representations of the US and expatriate life. This can be seen here through the choice of topics specific to the US and different from her home country. There is more discussion on this in the next section. This post shows a picture of three little girls sledding in the snow, captioned with an unrelated story from Shreen's early days of school in the US. The story was about one of the first projects she had to take part in for a history class and is translated after the figure.

Figure 5.7. Girls skiing.

> *One day, in a history class, we had to do a group project. The teacher put me in a group where I was given no task to do, I was like a flower vase. I felt like meh.. I want to do*

something with the others, so I went to the teacher and asked her to assign me a task to do. She said it was okay, there was no need and blah blah. I said but I want to, I will read the passage. She said do this thing it's easier. I said Madam I am reading the story in all cases, ***may Allah not prevent it*** *[a formulaic expression]. On the day of the presentation, it turns out things are not easy.* ***May Allah take away*** *[a formulaic expression] that decision that I wanted. I was frozen in place. I don't know why I troubled myself with this.*

The story was about a group project she had to participate in where the teacher did not assign her anything to do because she was new. However, she insisted on participating and picked presenting the reading passage, which she failed to do on the day of the presentation.

With regard to linguistic style, Shreen used the local variants for all the linguistic variables in the post. The negation particle was used twice, both times as the local variant [mub] in *mub lazem* 'not necessary' and *mub sahlah* 'not easy.' The singular object suffix occurred once as the local variant [-an] *ħatˁat****an*** 'puts me.' The future particle was used twice, both times as the local variant [-aba] in ***aba****sawi* 'I will do' and ***aba****gra* 'I will read.' Finally, the third-person feminine object suffix was used three times, all as the local variant [-eh] in ʔ*abj****eh*** 'I want it' (fm), *garajt****eh*** 'I read it' (fm), and *lam****eh*** 'to her.'

5.2.4 Fourth Period: Decline in Activity

The fourth period was marked by Shreen's loss of interest in fame and her development of a more cosmopolitan feminine persona as she grew older. These changes were reflected on her Instagram profile on several levels. On one level, Shreen's activity declined to a large degree. As she explained in our interview, she had become busy with school and was no longer interested in putting her life on display. Accordingly, her sharing practices and communication strategies

changed as well. She became less engaged with her audience. The way she referred to herself and the audience also shifted; i.e., she no longer acted out an Instagram celebrity persona. On a different level, Shreen showed more cosmopolitan behavior, becoming open to different ideas, beliefs, and ways of doing things. For instance, her attitudes toward other cultures, including Americans, became more flexible and accepting. At the same time, Shreen engaged in behavior and language use that are associated with being feminine. For example, she no longer performed the same coarse or self-deprecating humor she did when she was younger, and her choice of emojis shifted to nicer, softer reaction faces.

As part of this identity development, there was a drastic change in Shreen's linguistic style. The multivariate analysis confirmed a significant shift to the supralocal dialect for the variables examined. Also, this period favored language mixing the most, and the use of orthographic bilingualism was the highest in this period. At the same time, as explained in the next section, Shreen's use of slang almost ceased. Instead, she used more standard or formal words. Examples of the trends found in the multivariate analysis follow.

Figure 5.8 exemplifies the shift in Shreen's style at this stage. The picture shows a window with a view of a river; however, it is not apparent whether it is a location in the US or elsewhere. As usual, the caption is not related to the picture. Instead, it narrates a story about when an American classmate helped Shreen when an Arab classmate let her down. This marks a change in her attitude, as discussed further in Section 5.3.3.

Figure 5.8. Window with a view of a river.

With regard to local vs. supralocal variants of the variables examined, Shreen used only the supralocal variants for all 20 occurrences of dialect features in the post. There was one negation particle, which was realized in the supralocal variant *mu mudˁtˁarah* ‘not necessary’. Similarly, the third-person feminine object/possessive suffix occurred several times in the post, always realized as the supralocal variant [-ha], e.g., *malafa**ha*** ‘her folder,’ *waragate**ha*** ‘her paper,’ *ħarakate**ha*** ‘her movement,’ *swaitj**ha*** ‘you did it’ (fm), *la**ha*** ‘to her,’ and *agadem**ha*** ‘I offer it’ (fm). The singular object suffix occurred three times, all as the supralocal variant [-ni], e.g., *me**ni*** ‘from me’ and *samaˁat**ni*** ‘she heard me.’

Figure 5.9 shows a sweater Shreen made after spending the summer learning how to crochet, with the translation given below.

Figure 5.9. Instagram post showing crochet work.

> **Crochet Sweater made by yours truly** 😻✨
>
> *God forbid, have I forgotten to share it in other places?* 💔😅
>
> *Most importantly, the most interesting thing I did during the summer break was that I learned crochet* 😻💞 *a thing that is really good, and yesterday I finished the sweetest project which is a sweater for myself* 💞💞 *I am very happy with its final shape, although it's full of mistakes, but I feel that these make it closer to my heart* 😻 *I feel that nothing can beat the feeling of wearing something you have made yourself* 💞😇

Shreen starts the post with a phrase in English, "a crochet sweater made by yours truly," that functions as the gist or title. Then, she explains in more detail in Arabic until the end of the caption. This practice of using English as a starter before elaborating in Arabic was common in

the first period but was rare in the second and third. In the fourth period, Shreen returned to this practice, which is common among expatriate Instagram celebrities.

Similar to the previous example, in this post, Shreen used the supralocal variants for all dialect features. For example, the third-person object/possessive suffix occurred four times, all as the supralocal variant [-ha] in *gaimate**ha*** 'its value,' *nazalta**ha*** 'I shared it' (fm), and two instances of *ana**ha*** 'that she.' In addition, the existential preposition [fii] was realized in the supralocal variant [fiih].

5.3 Style Shifting and Persona Changes

The multivariate analysis showed a significant shift in Shreen's style as her popularity developed over time, providing broad patterns of her language variation across the four time periods examined. Nevertheless, it remained uncertain how Shreen used and combined these features with other linguistic and semiotic resources in performing an Instagram persona that granted her fame. It was also unclear how her style and her performed persona shifted as she developed. In this section, the qualitative analysis answers these questions through understanding how and what social meanings were created through the use of these linguistic resources.

The analysis showed how Shreen's style shifting indexed and was part of her persona changes over time, more specifically, the change in the combinations of sociolinguistic resources that accompanied Shreen's persona shift from the early to later stages of her Instagram use. In the early stages, when Shreen was seeking and achieving fame (Period 2 and 3), she was mainly projecting a Saudi expatriate persona that was attractive to the target audience. This persona was more oriented toward home values and traditions, celebrating her expatriate experience, and was playful and humorous. However, as Shreen's identity developed and she realized public life was not for her, she became less active on Instagram and her projected online persona changed. In

that later stage (Period 4), she predominantly performed a cosmopolitan feminine persona that was more open to differences and less home-oriented in her posts. Shreen was able to bring to her virtual life these distinct personas through combinations of sociolinguistic resources, illustrated in the sections below.

5.3.1 Seeking Fame: The Traditional Humorous Expat Persona

When Shreen was trying to gain fame on Instagram, she projected a persona that would appeal to her target audience (mostly people from her home country). That is, in her Instagram presence, Shreen mainly illuminated the traditional Saudi expatriate persona. In doing so, Shreen reproduced and recreated online the two simultaneous features that seemed to be attractive to her target followers: her being a Saudi and her living in the US, i.e., a Saudi expatriate. She was emphasizing the expatriate aspect of her persona in a way that most often highlighted the Saudi side of her persona. In constructing the expatriate persona, she most often merged elements from both sides (her home country and the US) in her presentation of her Instagram self. For example, she celebrated traditional cultural holidays and occasions; teased followers about the start of school or exams in Saudi Arabia; showed traditional dishes, clothes, or furniture; quoted from the Quran and Sunnah; used Arabic more often; and avoided English. At the same time, Shreen liked to present aspects of the host country, focusing on cultural differences, i.e., issues that would not be familiar to Saudis. For example, Shreen most frequently brought up topics such as American holidays (e.g., Christmas and Halloween), nature (e.g., forests and green spaces), weather (e.g., snow), and landmarks (e.g., the Statue of Liberty and Disneyland) and unfamiliar cultural and social practices (e.g., women driving, alcohol, and having dogs as pets). As for language, this was shown in the occasional use of American location and landmark names and other English words written in the Roman or Arabic alphabet.

At the same time, Shreen presented her expatriate persona as playful, humorous, and friendly, which she believed would be attractive to followers. Shreen explained in the interview that among other things her talks, *swalif*, helped her considerably in gaining fame. By *swalif*, she was referring to her stories, anecdotes, and short stories in her posts. This playful and humorous side of her persona helped to mitigate the impression of bragging that her reference to her life in the US might cause and create a friendly rapport with her audience.

As mentioned above, creating this humorous, home-oriented expatriate persona, Shreen deployed a range of semiotic and linguistic resources. This was shown in the content and picture choices of the posts, emojis, and communicative practices, such as questions, gossip, and jokes that engaged the audience. As mentioned earlier, semiotic practices included pictures of home or host country materials (e.g., food, furniture, nature, places) and/or cultural issues (e.g., religious occasions, holidays, cultural practices). On the linguistic level, she combined linguistic resources with culturally salient meanings, such as diminutive forms, slang, and local dialect features that are often associated with "old lady speech," and she avoided English as a stigmatized stereotypical feature of expatriate language. The examples below illustrate how Shreen combined sociolinguistic resources to perform this persona.

Figure 5.10 illustrates how Shreen recreated a mixed sense of place by juxtaposing features of her home and host country. The picture shows a traditional Saudi seating arrangement with pillows, thermal carafes of tea, and a plate of dates all arranged around a fire pit on the patio of Shreen's house with a view of a green space. In the caption, Shreen jokingly commented on the resemblance of her family's patio in the picture with its traditional Saudi floor seating, attributing this arrangement to her family's Qassimi roots:

Qassimi roots 💔🤪 *Beautiful* ***fire pit*** *[diminutive form], in front of these faces that bring happiness* 😭💔*my family, you are my passion* 💃*I swear by Allah's name, we only need sand to feel like we are in Saudi Arabia* 💔🐮

Figure 5.10. Fire pit.

This post is representative of the home-oriented expatriate persona Shreen enacted while working toward fame. Semiotically, the picture and content have cultural elements from her home country added to the elements of the place where she was living at the time. In the caption, she explicitly and jokingly mentioned her Qassimi and Saudi origins (as indicated by the winking emoji 😜). She also referred to her family as being her greatest blessing. Celebrating love of family in this way is a cultural tradition. Another cultural component Shreen brought into the construction of her Saudi persona was reference to sand, one of the hallmarks of Saudi Arabia's

landscape. These symbols of Saudiness were all set against an American background i.e., the green lawns and pine trees.

The linguistic resources Shreen deployed here in her performance of this home-oriented expat persona included lexical items, diminutive forms, and intensifiers. First, the use of lexical items, such as references to Saudi Arabia (Qassimi and Saudi) and cultural emblems (e.g., sand), created a sense of Saudiness. Moreover, use of the diminutive form *adʿwajeh* 'fire pit' for endearment, which is a traditional feature associated with old people, created a sense of localness and authenticity. In addition, the use of this feature, which is known to be mostly used by old people, by a young educated woman on a public domain expressed humor, as discussed below. In addition, Shreen's feelings of loyalty and homesickness were highlighted by an intensifier *gasam biʔalah* 'I swear by Allah's name' that is used here to confirm her statement. Similarly, her use of the crying face and broken heart emojis helped in creating the homesick expat picture she was aiming for.

In addition to illuminating the traditional Saudi aspect of her expatriate persona, Shreen frequently highlighted the differences between her home and host countries and the things specific to the host country to build her expatriate persona by utilizing contrast. As mentioned above, major differences included cultural issues, American holidays, and nature. The post in Figure 5.11 shows a picture of food on a table on the patio with a view of the snow in the background. Shreen purposefully took the picture from a distance, so the food is not too clear despite the careful arrangement of the table. It is not clear whether the food in the plates are American pancakes or Saudi traditional *maṣabeb* (similar to pancakes but not usually served with strawberries). In the caption, Shreen mentioned some of the behind-the-scenes stories and complained about an unrelated topic (i.e., her clothes and the backdrop of the picture).

It is better to take a picture of food from a distance so its flaws are not visible 😂💔*Being too stupid, I went outside to take this photo wearing only a gamis rose (a nightgown), my feet almost got frozen* ☃️❄️*Why did you not believe that M***** is my uncle?* 💔😂*Honestly, you hurt my feelings; do you mean that we do not fit as relatives, God the Preserver!?* 💔😹 *The comments are all like "swear he is your uncle",, I inherited my sense of humor from him, by the way* 💔😉

Figure 5.11. Instagram post showing food with background view of snow.

In styling her expat persona in this post, Shreen mainly tapped into the differences of the host country but also brought out aspects of her home country through several semiotic resources. The choice of the picture with a view of snow in the background, complaining about the cold in the caption, and the snow emojis all helped create a sense of the host country. It is interesting, however, that this was to some extent implicitly drawn. That is, the snow was not the main topic of the caption or photo; rather, the picture's main topic was supposedly the food, and the caption was mainly about how she took that picture. However, adding such "asides" as the background snow, complaining about the cold, and snow emojis ☃️❄️ all indexed the US and expatriate life without explicitly showing off.

On the other hand, Shreen employed semiotic and linguistic resources that indexed the home-country side of her expatriate persona. Here, these included names of cultural objects, use of local dialect variants, and expressions associated with old people. In the caption of the picture with the snow background, Shreen presented a traditional Saudi image of herself. She mentioned wearing a type of traditional, light nightgown (*gamis rouz*) that is good for hot weather. It was originally worn by older women as formal attire for outside, but younger women sometimes wear it at home because of it is comfortable, light, and breathable. Linguistically speaking, the use of the local variant of the second-person possessive suffix [-ts] (*xali**ts*** 'your uncle')—despite the predominance of the supralocal variant [-(i)k] in the corpus—was interesting. This is because it is a stigmatized variant widely known to be associated with local or rural Najdi dialects and mostly with older people. I suggest this use of the local variant [-ts] is a stylistic move that creates authenticity and indexes locality and Saudiness (as well as humor, as discussed below).

At the same time, Shreen often used features associated with older people in performing her humorous, playful persona, e.g., formulaic expressions, slang, and local dialect variants.

Humor was created from the contrast of a young woman using such features and from being used on a public platform in front of a large number of followers despite being informal. As mentioned above, the use of the affricated form of the second-person possessive suffix [-ts] and the cultural object *gamis rous* that are associated with older people, creates humor. Another form was the use of the formulaic expression *yaa ħafiðˤ* 'God, the Preserver!' to express an exclamation. A 19-year-old girl in the US using this traditional formulaic expression commonly associated with older women was likewise amusing.

In addition to the use of signs associated with older people and local features, Shreen deployed other resources to create humor, such as self-deprecation, slang, and emojis. Making fun of herself, Shreen described herself using the slang word *debesheh* 'stupid' for going outside in the cold to take a photo while wearing only a traditional nightgown. Making fun of herself in front of hundreds of followers was a type of self-deprecating humor that was particularly common in the early periods of her Instagram use (Period 2 and 3). In addition, humor resulted from the contrast produced by the unexpected use of such a slang word on a public platform by a young expatriate woman. For someone with similar demographics (young, middle-class, expatriate, educated in the US) and sharing on a public platform with such a large audience, using such slang is not expected, which makes it funny. Other features deployed to create a playful persona included the laughing 😂 and teasing emojis 😉. In addition, Shreen explicitly joked about inheriting her sense of humor from her comedian uncle ("my sense of humous is inherited from him"). All of these linguistic and discourse features that Shreen used to perform a humorous persona also helped create a friendly relationship with her audience.

The ethnographic observation and profile analysis showed that one of the sociolinguistic practices Shreen deployed at this stage in performing her appealing home-oriented expatriate

persona consisted of talks, stories, and gossip about Americans (i.e., the host country) and their culture. This had a twofold social meaning: it created a sense of the US and attracted the audience's attention. Shreen told stories of situations she found herself in, things she observed around her, and cultural practices that were different from her own (and the audience's) culture. For example, she once posted a picture of a police officer arresting a young man drinking alcohol in the street. She told her audience the conversation she heard and some of the rules regarding drinking in the US. The story was interesting to the audience because drinking alcohol is not part of Saudi culture, as selling, buying, or drinking alcohol is illegal. Along the same lines, Shreen used gossip that might involve direct reported speech of Americans she encountered, either translated into Arabic or in English written in Arabic script. These practices of gossip and reported speech played a part in styling the virtual place in a way that mimicked the transnational space Shreen was experiencing and her followers aspired to. In the post in Figure 5.12, for example, Shreen complained about a quiet American teacher while directly reporting the teacher's speech.

This post illustrates how Shreen used gossip and reported speech, among other things, to create her playful humorous expatriate persona. The picture shows a street in New York on a rainy day. As usual, the caption was unrelated to the picture. In it, Shreen complained about being sleepy in class and that her teacher's quiet voice was making her even sleepier:

> *Sleep is taking me over.* 💔😓 *I am trying but I cannot open my eyes* 😭*. And the first class's teacher is so quiet that you die before she finishes saying what she wants* 🙋*.* ***<u>Oooooooookayyyy claaaaaaaaaass, goooooooooooooood mooooooorning</u>*** 😴*. And her voice is so low* 💔😭*. But it seems she knows because when I or other students sleep,*

she doesn't call us out 🤷‍♀️*, rather she says "it's okay, I know you're tired." Your voice triggers sleep too, sweetheart.* 💅❤️❤️

Figure 5.12. Instagram post showing a rainy street and a caption.

In addition to using the picture of a New York street, Shreen creatively established a sense of place by conjuring a scene from her class on Instagram. She was complaining about sleeping in class and gossiping about her American teacher while directly reporting the teacher's speech using English written in Arabic script: اووووووووووكي جووووود مووووورنينج كلاااااااس (Ooooooookayyyy claaaaaaaaaass, goooooooooood mooooooning). Interestingly, Shreen used the same sociolinguistic resources by recreating the space as a shared virtual place of Americanness and Saudiness that represented her expatriate persona. That is, although Shreen quoted her teacher's English words, she wrote them in Arabic script, creating a mixed sense of place for her Instagram post. In addition, using Arabic to quote the teacher made it sound like

gossip, a practice usually shared with friends, thereby creating close bonds with her audience. It is interesting to note here that writing English with Arabic letters is a practice Shreen employed in performing her persona perhaps as a way to avoid "obvious" English, a stigmatized stereotypical practice of expatriates. In addition to writing English in the Arabic alphabet, the use of local dialect features also created authenticity and a sense of Saudiness. Shreen used the affricated variant of [-k] in *tsabdi* 'my liver' (discussed in more detail below) and the local variant [-eh] of the third-person object/possessive suffix in *ʃakl**eh*** 'she seems' and *sˁawt**eh*** 'her voice.' This creative mixing and remixing of local variants along with English in Arabic script and the semiotic resources (in this case, the photo) all constructed an expatriate virtual persona through the processes of bricolage.

On a different note, Shreen creatively combined a couple of linguistic resources in performing the humorous facet of her persona. The use of the traditional affricated variant of the velar [-k] in *tsabdi* 'my liver' was humorous as this traditional feature sounds odd in writing because it is not part of the orthographic system, is less prestigious, and is usually associated with older people. This unexpected contrast had a humorous effect. In addition, Shreen's creative mixing of language varieties (English written in Arabic and the local Arabic dialect) and creative alternation of frames was another practice that helped construct a playful, humorous persona. Shreen started by addressing the audience with her complaints about being sleepy. Quoting the teacher's greeting, she switched to the classroom frame as signaled by the address term "class." She then shifted again to address the audience, continuing her complaints about the teacher's low voice and how the teacher thought the students were tired. She switched the frame back to the classroom, shifting the address to the teacher, as she said, "Your voice triggers sleep too, sweetheart." The second-person feminine object suffix [-ik] and sarcastic term of endearment

yalaba ‘sweetheart’ signaled a shift in frame to address the teacher. Through this process of stylistic bricolage, Shreen created a sense of playfulness and humor.

Similarly, Figure 5.13 shows how Shreen combined the local dialect in her stories about her observations and experience of American life. In this post, she narrates an incident she witnessed where American parents forced their disobedient child to go to school. Shreen expressed her feeling of empathy for the girl while sarcastically playing at being nosy, which is stereotypical of people from her home region, Qassim. This post is particularly interesting because it received several metapragmatic comments on her dialect use. Following are the post and the translated caption.

Figure 5.13. Shreen’s sister waiting for the bus with a related caption.

While I was waiting for the bus with my sister, I saw a girl being pulled by her family and she was screaming silently 💔😂 *I saw a girl shaking her head "no" very strongly and her dad was pulling her. It turns out she did not want to go to school and her family was forcing her to go. Her dad put his hand on her shoulder pretending to say goodbye but he actually pinched her hard.* 💔💔😭😭 *Gosh, I felt sorry for her.* 😂 💔 *And when we were at Disneyland, we saw the same incident, and even today, we are puzzled why that girl did not want to go to Disneyland. So when I saw the neighbor girl, I said, "She seems like the same girl, I wish I could go and ask to feel relieved.* 💔😂🤳

Again, this post exemplifies the way Shreen performed her playful expatriate persona in the early years through stylistic bricolage that involved combining elements from the US and her home country. On a semiotic level, as usual at this stage, Shreen drew on the differences between her culture and the host culture in performing her expatriate persona. In this post, Shreen reported an incident she witnessed of American parents taking their daughter to school. Used to construct the "other," this simple incident has many listening-worthy elements that would satisfy her Arab audience's curiosity about life in the US: taking kids to and waiting for the school bus, the way American parents treat their children, and Disneyland. All of these are almost exclusive to life in the US, and thus create a sense of the place. At the same time, Shreen brought to the scene some interesting aspects of her own home culture. That is, she was tapping into the stereotype of people from her home region being nosy, creatively creating authenticity and humor.

On the other hand, these meanings of being expatriate and authentic were linguistically created through the use of local dialect features and slang words in reporting the incident. In her reference to the American girl, Shreen used the local variants of the third-person feminine

object/possessive suffixes, e.g., in *ahalah* ‘her family,’ *ʔubueh* ‘her father,’ *katfeh* ‘her shoulder,’ *ra:seh* ‘her head,’ *jagbeʂeh* ‘pinched her,’ *jwadaʕeh* ‘says goodbye to her,’ *jasħabeh* ‘he is pulling her,’ *jasħabuneh* ‘they are pulling her,’ *jeʒarʒeruneh* ‘they are pulling her,’ and *ʃakleh* ‘she seems.’ There are also a couple of slang and informal spoken words, such as *majer*, which is a filler word used to express transition, in local Najdi dialects.

Interestingly, the post received several metapragmatic comments from followers on her use of local dialect. A group of followers jokingly commented on her dialect, connecting Shreen to the Qassim region. Others commented on the use of specific linguistic features, especially the third-person feminine object/possessive suffix [-eh]. This is because in writing, it sounds like the third-person masculine object/possessive suffix [-eh] realized as [-uh] in Qassimi Arabic. In fact, a number of readers commented on the Qassimi use of this masculine variant for the feminine object/possessive. Others complained about being confused and not understanding her story because of her dialect. At the same time, some comments on the content of the post expressed amusement referring to the stereotype of Qassimi people, and how Shreen, who has Qassimi roots, was still being nosy even in America. As a result of the audience’s strong reaction to the language of the post, Shreen reposted the same story in a mock version of MSA (see Figure 5.14).

In the post, Shreen playfully narrated the same incident again but in MSA for comedic effect. That it is, a play on the previous version of the post was signaled by a number of signs: the use of the local dialect word *jamruduha* ‘pinched her’ in the standard morphological form and the informal use of *mooxi* ‘my brain’ instead of *ʕagli*, which is more commonly used in this position in MSA. In addition, the playful relative clause Shreen added in this version to define Disneyland as “an entertainment place” implied she was linking the use of standard Arabic to

formal writing. Thus, by posting in mock MSA, she was humorously expressing her annoyance with her readers' comments and her belief that standard language is not for Instagram but rather for school-related writing.

Figure 5.14. Instagram post of the previous school bus story written in MSA.

In the following, I focus on another intersecting facet of Shreen's persona: her humorous, friendly side. Like other aspects, this was constructed through a process of bricolage that involved both semiotic and linguistic resources and emerged in context along with other aspects of her expat persona (see Figure 5.15).

Figure 5.15. Shreen's brothers captioned with a sarcastic introduction.

The deployment of various semiotic and linguistic resources to perform a friendly humorous persona is clearly evident in this post. The post showed a picture of Shreen's older brothers sitting next to each other. In the caption, Shreen introduced them drolly and expressed her affection for them:

> ***Sheikh*** *A****** and to his left* ***Aba*** *[the father of] O****** 💔🤪. ***How*** *[affricated -k] I cannot handle boys when they refer to themselves as abu [the father of] someone when they are still in college 💔😂. Yes M****** I am talking about you 💔😂. May Allah not make me miss these* ***faces*** *😻💔.*

Here, Shreen's semiotic stylistic practices that created humor include sharing a picture of her brothers with their names with the audience and teasing them publicly. This also builds intimate relationships with the audiences, treating them like close friends or family.

In the same vein, Shreen employed a couple of linguistic features and practices to construct a humorous persona. Among these are the jocular use of MSA and formal address

terms *alʃeix* ‘sheikh’ and *aba* ‘father’ in the initial phrase where Shreen introduced her brothers. This jocular use of MSA was followed by the local dialect for the rest of the caption. In addition, the affrication of the velar [-k] in the word *keif* to become *tseif* ‘how’ creates a humorous tone and sense of locality/Saudiness. As explained earlier, the traditional affricated variant of [-k] is stigmatized in the suffix (i.e., third-person feminine object/possessive, examined in the previous chapter) and the stem as in this word (*kief* > *tsief*). Affrication, especially in the stem, is usually associated with an image of older or local (as opposed to urban) people. This being said, its use by a young woman and on Instagram has a playful humorous effect. Similarly, slang appeared to be one of the stylistic resources Shreen often drew on in her early Instagram use to perform playfulness and humor and build an intimate relationship with her audience. For example, the use of the slang word for face *ʔalxeʃaʃ* is funny being used on by a young, educated woman in a public domain in front of hundreds of followers. This kind of unrefined humor is different from the softer, more feminine humor Shreen performed later on Instagram, as seen in the examples in the next section. Among the other things Shreen employs to create humor in her posts was shifting frames, topics, and addresses in the same post. Here, the strategic shift in frames from addressing the audience (generally talking) to (specifically) addressing her brother is quite playful and humorous. The shift has been signaled by directly addressing her brother by name (“Yes M**** I am talking about you”) and the shift in pronoun use as in the use of the second person masculine object suffix [-(i)k] in *ʕanik* ‘about you.’

An example of rougher but still playful humor Shreen performed at this stage is the following post in Figure 5.16. Shreen posted a picture of her little sister in the green yard as she came back from school. It appears the picture was taken via another social media application, Snapchat, with text added on containing the English greeting “good morning” represented in

Arabic letters (💗😍 قود مورنينق). In the caption, Shreen greeted the audience in a joking manner:

Sabaħukum waʒeh ***mufagaʕ*** *tegel* ***mulafaʕeh*** *bilfusħeh* 💔😘

Have a morning like a swollen face; it looks like she has been beaten in the break 💔🤕

Figure 5.16. Shreen's sister arriving from school with a related caption.

Shreen has put together a combination of stylistic resources in producing her persona here. In the caption, Shreen used slang, such as, *mufagaʕ* 'blasted' and *mulafaʕeh* 'beaten' to humorous effect. She also playfully represented the English greeting "good morning" in Arabic script (i.e., قود مورنينق; gūd mūrnıng) although there is a common Arabic equivalent of morning greeting. Thus, the use of Arabic writing to represent the English expression was playful. In addition, humor resulted from the intertextual effect created by recontextualizing the common formulaic expression "have a morning like…" that is usually finished with something sweet or nice, such as honey, cream, or flowers. Shreen, however, creatively reused this expression,

substituting a common sweet thing with something unexpected, in this case a “blasted” (beaten) face.

On another intersecting level, the analysis showed that Shreen discursively created for herself an Instagram celebrity persona through the use and combination of various linguistic, semiotic, and communicative resources. In addition to using the Instagram platform to create an aspiring authentic expatriate persona to attract followers, as discussed above, she also took on an Internet celebrity persona as she started to gain fame. Like other Internet celebrities (Marwick, 2013, 2015), Shreen viewed herself as a product to be consumed by her audience. For example, she once asked the audience to say 10 facts about her, and she used to ask them occasionally to engage with her posts by liking and commenting on them (implying what she shared was a product to be consumed). As the examples above have shown, Shreen enacted an ordinary authentic persona, one of the main things that distinguish Internet celebrities and attract people to them (Marwick, 2013, 2015). As shown above, this was done through different linguistic and semiotic practices, such as using her local dialect, direct interaction with her audience, and revealing personal information about herself (e.g., see the post about her brothers above).

Like mainstream celebrities, in this phase, Shreen referred to her audience as being her audience or fans rather than family or friends, e.g., “my followers” and “my group.” She also compared her followers to other Instagram celebrities’ followers. More importantly, Shreen referred to herself as a celebrity, e.g., *Sheerenualmashhurraaa* ‘Shreen the celebrity.’ She jokingly asked her followers a couple of times to send her presents (like fans usually do) and playfully pretended to give an Oscar award speech a couple of times when celebrating milestones. The post in Figure 5.17 exemplifies some of these resources.

Figure 5.17. Instagram post showing Shreen's celebration for reaching 43,000 followers.

In Figure 5.17, Shreen celebrated reaching 43,000 followers. She was annoyed that her family did not celebrate this occasion, so she prepared a dessert with puff pastry, used Hershey's syrup to write "43K" (the type of decoration that would usually be found on a cake), and made a mock prize-winning speech in which she thanked Hershey's syrup, Sam's Club, and herself for the surprise.

> ***Make yourself happy*** *[MSA]* 💔😉*. Realizing that my family wasn't planning to do anything, I said to myself "****Sheri****, do it yourself and have fun"* 💔💁*. I would like to thank Hershey's syrup which is everywhere in our house* 😉*, Also I would like to thank* ***Sam's Club*** *for the delicious* <u>*pastry*</u>💋😃*. Finally, thanks to myself, thank you for the* <u>*surprise*</u> 😬*.*

Multiple layers of intersecting personas were performed in this post. Shreen was enacting an Instagram celebrity persona while continuing to perform the playful humorous persona she

believed was increasing her popularity, as she expressed in the interview and comments. Besides celebrating this milestone, Shreen mocked Grammy or Oscar speeches, playfully thanking herself and the brand and store names of the dessert she made. This intertextual borrowing from a genre commonly known to be related to mainstream celebrities meaningfully contributed to her construction of an Instagram celebrity persona. Also, the playful use of emojis signaled a mocking tone. The exaggerated use of hearts ❤️, kissing emojis 😘, broken hearts 💔, woman tapping hand emoji 💁‍♀️, and teasing emoji 😬 at the end pragmatically indexed that the speech was meant in jest. Besides this, in constructing this playful expatriate persona, Shreen used a range of other resources. The switch to MSA in this conversational situation was deployed for humorous effect. In the initial sentence, Shreen said, "make yourself happy"; this use of the standard form made her statement sound like a sacred law, but for the purpose of humor in this case. Shreen used English words written in Arabic script سامز كلوب (Sam's Club), سبرايز (surprise), and بيستري (pastry), adding the Arabic definite article al- to them. Using these English words and the name of the American store Sam's Club helped give a sense of place, i.e., the US.

5.3.2 Loss of Interest in Fame: The Cosmopolitan Expat Persona

In the recent time period, as Shreen became less interested in fame, preferring more privacy in her personal life, she became less active, less engaged, and more distant in her relationships with her audience. Her identity also appeared to develop on other levels. As she grew older, the persona she projected online became less home-oriented, less traditional, more open, and more feminine. The change can be observed not only in her semiotic practices but also in her linguistic choices. For example, she has shown more openness to differences and other ways of doing things, changes of attitude toward Americans, and softer and more feminine kinds of humor. Her linguistic style played a part in the changes in her persona. She shifted to the use

of more supralocal dialect variants, used more standard lexical items, and incorporated more English and language mixing. In this section, I present examples that illustrate the shift in Shreen's persona and the semiotic and linguistic choices Shreen reused and recombined in the making of her newer persona.

The post in Figure 5.18 illustrates some of the intersecting ways Shreen's persona shifted. The change includes her positioning toward her own culture, the kind of feminine identity she performed, and her celebrity-related persona. The post shows a night view of a street in the US captioned with holiday greetings. It was *Eid al-adha*, Festival of the Sacrifice, an Islamic holiday on which Muslims ritually sacrifice an animal, usually a sheep, to God. Shreen expressed her annoyance with people who film and post the animals being slaughtered and her desire to become a vegetarian:

> *Happy Eid,* ***sweeties*** 💔🤩. ***Of course****, I wish filming animals being slaughtered becomes prohibited* 💔😩. *This is unfair* ***Wallah*** *[I swear].* ***Of course****, every Eid Al-adha, I seriously consider going vegetarian because of what I watch* 😅

What is also interesting is a comment she left replying to a follower's comment to another follower's supporting comment. One follower agreed with Shreen about going vegetarian, saying animal sacrifice was not a must in Islam and that she was vegetarian and did not eat animals' dead bodies, which had given her peace of mind. A different follower responded angrily to that follower explaining that eating animals was approved in Islam and that the prophet himself ate the meat of the slaughtered animals. She added that God created those animals for the benefit of humans, and mocked the idea of a person getting peace of mind by becoming a vegetarian. She continued that neither God nor the prophet described meat as "dead

animals' bodies." Shreen's response expressed her resentment at the original comment that dismissed the freedom of choice for others:

> *I still don't get why you judge her decision from a religious perspective? The girl made her point and felt comfortable with it. We have no right to question her choices or decide what works best for her.*

Figure 5.18. Night view of a street captioned with holiday greetings.

First, this post and her reply to her follower demonstrated a change in how Shreen positioned herself in relation to her traditional cultural practices. Although she acknowledged the

holiday, she distanced herself from filming the animal sacrifices, which may indicate an objection to slaughtering animals. Objection to religious practices is forbidden in the eyes of some groups. In the comment, she also expressed a belief in freedom of choice, a concept that is to some extent lacking from the traditional Saudi cultural perspective, which views personal freedom as restricted by religion and custom.

Shreen's disalignment with this traditional cultural practice was indexed by the exaggerated use of intensifiers and discourse markers. Shreen used the discourse marker *tˁabʕan* 'of course' as an intensifier twice in the post. The same is true for the use of the formulaic expression *waʔalah* that originally comes from 'I swear in Allah's name' used as an intensifier for the formulaic expression *ħaram* 'unfair' and the adjective phrase 'the first thing that occurred to me.' All of these index Shreen's stance of objection to and lack of alignment with this cultural practice. Additionally, her changing stance toward traditional cultural practices was accompanied by using only supralocal variants in these posts, as explained in detail below.

Second, Shreen appeared to align herself with engaging in practices other than those found in her traditional culture. In the post, she expressed her desire to become a vegetarian. Vegetarianism is an originally Western concept that is relatively new in Saudi Arabia, particularly as being motivated by mercy for animals. Interestingly, Shreen used no local dialect features and only supralocal ones to express such cosmopolitan ideas. In the post and her comment, there were no local dialect features. In contrast, a number of supralocal features were present. For example, [-k] in the word ***k****ief* 'how' was not affricated as in the example above from the previous phase of Shreen's Instagram use (affrication of [-k] is associated with regions and older people as explained above). Additionally, Shreen used the supralocal variants of the third-person object/possessive suffix [-eh/-ha] in the words *gararata****ha*** 'her decisions,' *garara****ha***

'her decision,' and *jarajaħ-**ha*** 'comforts her.' Negation was also expressed in the supralocal variant ***mu*** *min ħagana nashakik bi-gararata**ha*** 'we have no right to question her decisions.'

Shreen's performance of *naʕmah* 'soft,' a sweet feminine persona, could be seen in her choices of lexical items, frequent intensifiers, and choice of emojis. A sweet/soft girl is a cultural type of young women with soft voices, body types, behaviors, and styles of clothes; they are feminine and sweet. Shreen, for example, addressed her followers with the word *jaħelwain* 'sweeties.' Noticeably, in this stage, Shreen tended to address her followers as family or friends instead of like a celebrity's fans. In addition, emphasizing her feelings of resentment at people who film the animals being slaughtered, Shreen used five intensifying lexical items and a couple of broken hearts and crying emoticons. The exaggeration in intensifiers and discourse markers to express feelings of objection and resentment is linked to the sweet/soft feminine persona. Moreover, Shreen's choice of the emojis indexes a sweet online persona. Shreen used a broken heart 💔, hearts❤️, loving 😍, crying 😩 and shy faces 😅. The combination of emoticons she usually used in this phase indicated a soft/sweet persona. She also demonstrated less use of action-depicting emojis, such as an old lady emoji to mean old (as she once did in the first phase).

The next example in Figure 5.19 shows how Shreen performed an expatriate persona in the most recent years after losing interest in fame, where she has shown less focus on the differences between the two countries. The post shows a picture of the same patio of her family's house that was shown in a post earlier in the first phase and discussed above. This time, the patio has a sectional sofa (instead of the traditional floor seating) along with a fire pit. Shreen expressed her admiration for Ohio's weather in October and her wish to live in a place with such weather:

I love how cozy October weather is! 🍃 *ʔatmana aʕeeʃ bi-makan ʒawuh tʿawal asanah meθel ʒaw ʃaher ʔuctober fi oʊhaɪo* 🍂❤️

[*I wish I could live in a place that has Ohio's October weather year long.]*

Figure 5.19. A patio with fall colors and a caption about Ohio weather.

The performance of the expat persona is different in this post from the post about the patio in the first phase. Apparent in the post are some semiotic features that create a sense of the US: the green trees in the background and the name of the state (Ohio). In contrast to the

previous photo (Figure, 5.10), elements from her home country were absent. Also, Shreen used few, if any, local dialect features in her most recent years on Instagram. In this post, for example, there were no local dialect features. She also mixed English with Arabic more frequently than she used to. In this post, she used English initially, providing the gist of the post, "I love how cozy October weather is!" Then she added a comment in Arabic about her wish to live in a place with similar weather.

At this stage, Shreen's shift in persona can be seen in her shifting stances and attitudes toward cultural others, particularly the host country's culture. The following post in Figure 5.20 illustrates this change.

Figure 5.20. Window with a view of a river and a story reflecting a change in attitude.

In this post, Shreen compares the ways two classmates, an Arab and an American, reacted to her urgent need for help with a class assignment. As explained above in the example in Section 5.2.4, the post shows a picture of a river view from a window, with no location label. It is not clear whether this place is in the US, Europe, or Saudi Arabia. In the caption, which was

not related to the picture, Shreen told a story she said she would never forget about an American classmate who helped her when the Arab one let her down:

> *One day in class, we had to turn in an assignment, when I realized that I had a page missing. I had an Arab classmate in the same class. I turned to her and asked "So and so, can you give me that page so I know the question and can do it?" She said she hadn't done it. An American student next to me guessed what I wanted from the few English words I used and turned to me asking which page I needed. When I told her, she immediately opened her file, found the page, and gave it to me saying hurry up look at the requirements and do it before they collect the papers. I felt* ***so happyyyyyy*** *and grateful. Of course,* ***the Arab*** *classmate turned in her assignment and it turned out she had done that page, but I have no right to be mad at her. She has all the right to refuse to share her work. But I learned from this that when she needs my help in the future, I don't have to lend her a hand.*

Unlike earlier in her account, Shreen's stances toward Americans appeared to be different. In this story, she purposefully contrasted the reaction of the Arab and American classmates, referring to them by their nationalities to convey the cosmopolitan idea that sharing the same citizenship or ethnicity with someone is not necessary to have people's support, and to show her positive attitude toward Americans.

Interestingly, Shreen used different combinations of linguistic resources than the ones she employed in her old persona as she expressed this seemingly newly developed positive attitude toward America and thus constructed a more open and flexible persona. As shown in the example in the section above, Shreen used the supralocal variants for all 20 dialect variables occurring in this post (shown in Section 5.2.4). There was also a lack of slang, diminutive forms,

and other features commonly associated with older people. Her positive stance could be seen in her lexical choices, for example, using nationality names "Arab" and "American" in the story to emphasize the difference. To exaggerate the effect this had on her, she used the verb انبسططت: *inbasatˁtˁtˁtˁ'* 'felt happy,' doubling the letter ط (corresponding to the emphatic sound tˁ) for emphasis, and used the adverb مررة: *marrrah* 'so' also with double 'ر' letters (corresponding to the trill [r]). This kind of exaggeration in expressing feelings were often characteristics of the soft feminine persona.

In the same vein, Shreen's persona shifted in regard to performing being an Instagram celebrity. In addition to limiting her sharing of her activities, she became less open in what she shared (e.g., she stopped sharing pictures of and talking about her family and appreciated personal privacy), which is different from what she used to do when she was seeking fame. For example, she no longer mentions her family members by name or shares pictures of them. Shreen also started addressing her followers as family or friends (e.g., beautiful, family) rather than followers, reflecting the change in how she viewed herself. The post in Figure 5.21 exemplifies her newly developed expatriate persona that lacks interest in fame.

This post illustrates the kind of feminine expat persona Shreen performed on Instagram when she was not seeking fame. The post shows a building, green trees, and flowers. Shreen captioned it with the following:

> *Hi, Instagram family* 💔🤚🏻*. How are you? I have a problem with multitasking. This means I can't use more than one social media platform and stay active on all of them.*
>
> 💔😂 *Who is like me?*

With regard to the construction of a celebrity persona, this post, like others in this period, shows the different way Shreen is presenting herself; i.e., she ceases performing an Internet celebrity

persona. For example, Shreen addressed the audience saying *ʕaʔilat Instagram* ‘Instagram family,’ as opposed to calling them “my followers” or “my group/people” as she did when she was interested in fame. Shreen started the caption with a greeting *ahleen* ‘hi’ and asked the audience how they were doing. This was not just a question about their status; it was a hint that she had been away for a while (as can be inferred from the text that follows). Shreen then added that she had a problem with مالتي تاسكينق (the English word “multitasking” written in Arabic script). She concluded by asking who was similar to her, which apparently failed to get much attention from the audience (only 10 comments).

Figure 5.21. Instagram post of a building and green trees with greetings in the caption.

At the same time, another intersecting layer of her persona was being performed: the feminine urban persona. There were no local dialect variants, slang, or any expressions associated with local regions or older people. Rather, there were a couple of urban words, such as the greeting *ahleen* ‘hi’ and the borrowing of the modern concept ‘multitasking’ written in

Arabic script and prefixed with the Arabic definite article *al* 'the.' In addition, the use of emojis, the hand for "hi" and the hearts, all showed a softer more feminine way of self-presentation.

5.4 Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter sought to understand how Shreen performed an Instagram persona that granted her fame in the early years of her Instagram use and how her sociolinguistic style changed with her developing identity and her loss of interest in fame. Built on speaker design approaches to style and persona (Coupland, 2007; Eckirt, 2008, 2016; Zhang, 2018) and employing discourse analysis, I examined the sociolinguistic resources Shreen used in constructing her personas, how she combined linguistic and semiotic resources with salient cultural meanings in her performance, and what social meaning these resources produced as they were reused and recombined before and after fame.

In the span of late 2012 to early 2019, Shreen's projected Instagram persona shifted as she moved into and then away from an interest in fame, as can be inferred from and shaped by the shift in her semiotic and linguistic style. Earlier, she exhibited a persona that was playful and more home-oriented while illuminating the expatriate aspect of her persona by focusing on the differences between her home country and the US and highlighting Saudi aspects of herself. Later on, however, she lost interest in fame and developed a style that was more cosmopolitan and feminine. She exhibited different attitudes toward Americans and the host country's culture, a more flexible way of thinking, and a softer style of humor.

In the construction of these distinct personas, Shreen used and recombined a range of sociolinguistic resources with salient cultural meanings. As part of her persona shift, her linguistic practices shifted. She moved away from frequent use of local dialect variants, slang, diminutive forms—linguistic features often associated with older people—and the lack of

English script alone or mixed. As she became less interested in fame and exhibited more cosmopolitan ideas in Period 4, she shifted to more frequent use of supralocal dialect features, more standard lexical items, lack of diminutive and slang words, and more English and script mixing.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction and Overview

This study explored linguistic variation as a stylistic practice in the language of a micro-celebrity and how sociolinguistic resources with distinct sociohistorical trajectories were employed in constructing personas on Instagram. In so doing, this work employed a combination of variationist and anthropological frameworks to the study of style (Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2000, 2016; Schilling, 2013; Zhang, 2018). It used a social media platform to quantitatively examine style variation in real time as the participant's persona evolved. Informed by anthropological approaches, the study employed ethnographic observation, examined performed language in social media, and combined quantitative and qualitative analyses of linguistic and other semiotic resources. This chapter provides a discussion of the study's findings, contributions, implications, and issues the findings bring to light. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

6.2 Summary and Discussion of the Findings

Chapter 4 examined variation in regional dialect, code choice, and English writing in the Arabic alphabet in the participant's Instagram posts across four periods of time that were defined to mark changes in her popularity and persona: before fame, seeking fame, during fame, and after losing interest in fame. Additionally, it sought to understand whether the topic of the post influenced style variation across time. Generally, the findings revealed a shift from local to supralocal dialect features and from less to more language mixing that coincided with changes in popularity and interest in fame. Topic played no significant role in the variation across time of dialect and code choice, except for writing English in an Arabic script.

It was also found that the six dialect features participated differently in the formation of the local and supralocal dialect. Three features—the second-person object/possessive suffix [-(i)k/-(i)t], singular object suffix [-ni/-an], and future particle [ba-/aba-]—were more frequently used as their supralocal variants and thus played an important role in the formation of the supralocal dialect. This was in contrast to the three other features examined: the negation particle [mu/muhub], preposition [fii-/bu-], and third-person object/possessive suffix [-ha/-eh]. The latter group of features favored the local variants overall and thus participated more significantly in the construction of the local dialect. All features, however, showed more frequent use of the supralocal variant in the fourth period, which significantly favored the supralocal variant. The different behavior of the two groups of features could be due to the different social saliency of these variables. The first three are more stigmatized and associated with negative stereotypes about locals. Furthermore, regarding code choice, changes in Shreen's use of English coincided with changes in her persona and popularity. That is, she used English frequently in the first period, but this use decreased sharply in the second and third periods as she was trying to attract followers. Its use rose in the fourth period when Shreen's style and persona changed again. Overall, while Shreen was seeking fame earlier, she used mostly local dialect features and avoided English and language mixing. However, as she lost interest in fame and with another shift in her persona in Period 4, she mostly used supralocal dialect features and returned to frequent language mixing; her use of orthographic bilingualism also reached its peak during this period.

Chapter 5 examined how the three dependent variables examined in the quantitative analyses were used and combined with other linguistic and semiotic resources to construct social meaning in moments of interaction in Shreen's Instagram posts. The ethnographic observation,

interview, and profile analysis confirmed a change in Shreen's persona in multiple ways. In the beginning, Shreen used semiotic and linguistic elements to illuminate a authentic traditional playful Saudi expat persona by often integrating elements from two aspects of herself (i.e., being Saudi and living in the US). For example, semiotic elements from her home country (e.g., dishes, clothes, and furniture) were mixed with things representing the US, such as views of nature in the background, names of streets and places, and talks about specific cultural practices, such as drinking alcohol and owning pets. Additionally, the use of traditional and local linguistic features, such as the traditional variant of [-ts], the local variants of the other linguistic features examined here, the diminutive form, and slang, all contributed to creating an authentic traditional expat persona by reframing the expat experience within a local frame.

Additionally, perhaps as a strategic move to attract followers, Shreen performed a humorous persona. The kind of humor she performed in her early stages on Instagram was different from how she acted later. When seeking fame, she created humor through self-deprecation and funny stories. Most interesting was the use of slang and expressions mostly associated with older people that did not conform to her social status or the public platform of her performance. For example, older slang and the stigmatized local variant of [-k] in the stem or suffix, in addition to the use of the local variants of other linguistic features, were major resources to create humor in Shreen's earlier persona.

Over the course of her life, Shreen's Instagram persona noticeably changed. Shreen lost interest in fame, but her persona also changed on different levels that might be related to each other. This change was realized through the use of different combinations of semiotic and linguistic resources. These included changes in activity, content, interests, beliefs, and ideologies. For example, there was less emphasis on things the US had that were not available in

her home country. Shreen's later posts also showed more flexibility and acceptance of different cultural practices and beliefs, and different attitudes toward Americans. As part of this shift in persona, her linguistic style changed as well. At this stage in her posts, she mostly used supralocal dialect variants, mixing English with Arabic more frequently, and reached a peak in orthographic bilingualism. In addition, she used less old slang and more standard lexical items. This combination of non-regional dialect features, English, and standard Arabic is a new emerging style commonly used among young urban people, as discussed in detail below.

6.3 Contributions and Implications

This study offers several contributions to the field of stylistic variation in general, Arabic variation specifically, and the study of sociolinguistic interaction in the media. First, several studies of Saudi dialects in the fields of Arabic dialectology and language variation and change have documented the ongoing shift from local to supralocal variants and dialect leveling (Alammar, 2017; Al-Essa, 2008; Al-Ghamdi, 2013; Al-Qahtani, 2015; Al-Rojaie, 2013; Ingham, 2009). However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no study on Saudi Arabic dialects had looked at the use of such variation in stylistic practices to create social meaning in interaction. Thus, this study has contributed to the field by examining how socially salient regional and supralocal variables have been used in the creation of social meaning. At the same time, while this work has examined some of the most frequently studied variables (e.g., [-k]), it has also explored new variables. For example, despite the change, social saliency, and stereotypical nature of some local features, such as the singular object suffix [-ni/-an] and the preposition [fii-/bu-], no research in this field had explored the direction of variation or change in its stylistic use. This study has contributed to this area of research by exploring Saudi Arabic variables that have not been examined before (i.e., the singular object suffix [-ni/-an], negation

marker [mu/muhub], third-person object/possessive suffix [-ha/-eh], preposition [fii-/bu-], and future particle [aba-/ba-]).

Furthermore, this study shows the usefulness of combining analyses of multiple linguistic and semiotic resources in the study of style as a system of distinctiveness. Rather than studying dialect variables or code and script choice separately, this study combined analyses of these and resources together to give a more comprehensive picture of the participant's style. Examining dialect or code choice alone or isolating the analysis of these linguistic features from other semiotic elements would have resulted in a narrower picture of the participant's distinctive style.

Beyond looking at the effect of media as an external factor on language variation, this study took a holistic approach, considering media as part of meaning making (Androutopoulos, 2017; Coupland, 2017; Zhang, 2018). That is, the analysis considered how the mediating platform (Instagram) with its features and constraints participated in the construction of social meaning. Instagram is a visual platform that has advantages over mainly textual platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. This multimodality offers certain advantages to constructing an online persona. Other technical features of Instagram includ the comment and like functions, which encouraged interaction with the account owner; the reply function, which made communication with followers easy; the chat feature, which allowed communication with the participant; the ability to post videos and live stream; and the availability of multiple scripts and emojis. All of these features shape the social meaning produced on this platform. Additionally, Instagram's popularity, impact, and user culture in Saudi Arabia have shaped the combination of sociolinguistic resources and meaning produced on this platform. For example, certain old slang words or local dialect features that might be used among friends and family could become funny when used on Instagram. The medium itself, i.e., Instagram, is what has given those resources

part of their stylistic and social meaning. For instance, the pictures of nature Shreen posted have a different social meaning beyond their content when posted by an expatriate Saudi to a Saudi audience.

On a different note, this research has contributed to the sociolinguistic study of interaction on social media methodologically and conceptually. It highlights the importance of considering both semiotic and linguistic resources to analyze interaction on social media, as well as the sociohistorical meaning of sociolinguistic resources (Bakhtin, 1981) and the new meaning they acquire as they are reused and recombined in different media. This work adds to the scholarship that integrates anthropological and variationist approaches to the study of style (Eckert, 2000; Trester, 2008; Zhang, 2018) by expanding to a social media context and mediatized language. In doing so, the study employed ethnographic approaches that included longitudinal observation and direct contact with the participant, in addition to analyzing screen-print texts, as inspired by discourse-centered online ethnography by Androutsopoulos (2008). Thus, ethnography informed the definition of the periods and topics of posts in the analysis. The analysis also accounted for the production and perception processes and did not limit itself to the final product (a multimodal text). The interview with the participant helped triangulate the results, offering validation and additional resources for the analysis. One methodological implication for research on style variation is that this study shows the richness of social media as a platform for data collection and tracking language change/variation over time. This was similarly done in Sharma (2018), in which the data were collected from TV shows and interviews within an eight-year timespan to examine the mechanisms of variation in Fareed Zakaria's use of bidialectal features.

This study considered the participant's language on Instagram as a type of performed language (Bauman,1996; Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Coupland, 2007). One reason for this was that Shreen was aware she was being watched and that what she posted would attract followers and influence her popularity on this social media platform. Instagram, especially with such a public account and large number of followers, resembles theater. Thus, similar to other studies (e.g., Schilling, 1998; Trester, 2008), this work has shown the significance of examining performed language in the study of variation. Although still debated, language on social media could be used to study the vernacular in performance, as research has shown that people can use their native dialects on such platforms and vary that use according to formality, audience, and other speaker-related factors. In addition, using language on social media could increase reflexivity and thus bring up or exaggerate stereotypes and socially salient variables.

6.3.1 The Emerging Supralocal "White" Dialect

This project has shown how different sets of old and new resources were employed to create distinct personas. Particularly, it showed the shift in Shreen's linguistic style from local to supralocal dialect variants as her persona changed over time. The local variants co-occurred with old slang words, the diminutive form, and avoidance of English, while the supralocal variants often occurred with more standard words, cute/feminine words, and language mixing. These two styles are typically associated with certain personas. The analysis has shown that the contrast between Shreen's characteristics (i.e., being young, educated, and living in the US) and the kind of "old and local" language she used earlier on Instagram while seeking fame created authenticity and humor, making her profile more attractive to followers. However, as she grew older and her identity developed, using supralocal forms was a critical part of constructing a new online persona. Supralocal features—along with standard Arabic words, English, youth phrases,

and cute/feminine language—were all used and associated with more cosmopolitan, and less-traditional ideologies and behaviors. This was not a coincidence, as discussed below.

There is an ongoing enregisterment of a supralocal Saudi dialect (this study focused on the Najdi-based one). Research on dialectology and classical sociolinguistic variation has focused on dialect leveling and the shift in specific regional features from local to supralocal variants, predicting an emerging supralocal Saudi dialect. However, there is more to this emerging dialect than a lack of regional features. As the findings of this study indicate, it consists of a combination of nonregional variants, MSA lexical items, Internet and youth neologisms, and possibly English borrowings. The Traditional Grammarians Council of the Arabic language in Saudi Arabia has mentioned the emergence of *ʔal-lahdʒah alwastˁa* 'the intermediate dialect,' which the Council defines as a colloquial form of Arabic that has no regional features and is mixed with MSA lexical items. Interestingly, it has been mentioned in explicit and implicit metapragmatic comments in the media and elsewhere. As a result, laypeople, especially young Saudis, are aware of the emergence of this dialect. Some participants in the larger project (of which this study was a part) classified the dialect they spoke in the media as *ʔal-lahdʒah al-beiðˁa* 'the white dialect,' meaning it has no regional dialect features. Also, there has been explicit discussion on Saudi TV and social media (e.g., Twitter) related to the nature of this dialect, attitudes toward it, and the people who speak it. Generally, it is rising among young people, at least on social media, on TV, and in advertisements and public commercial signs in the streets. It is often associated with characteristics such as being youthful, urban, modern, and cool, and thus can be used in performing styles and personas that have such qualities. This study has shown how Shreen used a combination of supralocal features and other resources to construct a more open-minded, flexible, untraditional, and feminine persona. More studies are

needed on how this style is being used to perform other urban personas, attitudes toward it, and its enregisterment.

6.5 Future Research

This study examined the stylistic practices of a Saudi expatriate Instagram celebrity and how she used traditional and supralocal linguistic styles to construct meaning, focusing on six dialect variables. More research on the stylistic use of other socially salient linguistic features in the Saudi context is needed. Additionally, while this study focused on one social media platform, future studies could look at the use of such variables in other media contexts and in-person situations. Since this study was an individual case study, it was impossible to generalize the results. Future research could therefore benefit from examining more participants and groups. Finally, while this study dealt with the social meanings of local and supralocal features as they were being used in the context of the study, future research could examine the processes of enregisterment of different varieties with social types and personas.

Appendix

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was used to transcribe Arabic examples. When an example was quoted from another study, the original transcription was maintained. The following tables show the transcription system used for consonants and vowels.

Consonant Transcription

Arabic	IPA	Sound
أ	ʔ	voiced glottal stop
ب	b	voiced bilabial stop
ت	t	voiceless dento-alveolar stop
ث	θ	voiceless interdental fricative
ج	dʒ	voiced palato-alveolar affricate
ح	ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative
خ	χ	voiceless uvular fricative
د	d	voiced dento-alveolar stop
ذ	ð	voiced interdental fricative
ر	r	voiced alveolar trill
ز	z	voiced alveolar fricative
س	s	voiceless alveolar fricative
ش	ʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative
ص	$s^ˤ$	voiceless pharyngealized alveolar fricative
ض	$d^ˤ$	voiced pharyngealized dento-alveolar stop
ط	$t^ˤ$	voiceless pharyngealized dento-alveolar stop
ظ	$ð^ˤ$	voiced pharyngealized interdental fricative
ع	ʕ	voiced pharyngeal fricative
غ	ʁ	voiced uvular fricative
ف	f	voiceless labio-dental fricative
ق	q	voiceless uvular stop
ك	k	voiceless velar stop
ل	l	voiced dental lateral
م	m	voiced bilabial nasal
ن	n	voiced alveolar nasal
هـ	h	voiceless glottal fricative
و	w	voiced labio-velar glide
ي	j	voiced palatal glide
ئس	ts	voiceless alveolar affricate
ڤ	g	voiced velar stop

Vowel Transcription

Monophthong		Diphthong
Long	Short	
a:	a	aj
e:	e	aw
i:	i	
o:	o	
u:	u	

Different font styles denoted different languages in translated examples, as shown in the following table.

Font Style

Language	Font Style
Arabic	Italics
English	Regular
English written in Arabic alphabet	Underlined italics

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