

**THE INFLUENCE OF AGE, SEX, AND LENGTH
OF STAY ON SYRIAN REFUGEES' ATTITUDES
TOWARDS AND USE OF JORDANIAN ARABIC
DIALECT**

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by

SAMAHER AMIN ABDEL RAHMAN FAKHOURI

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
NSA	Non-Standard Arabic
UN	United Nation
SIT	Social Identity Theory

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**PENGARUH UMUR, JANTINA DAN TEMPOH MENETAP PELARIAN
SYRIA KE ATAS SIKAP DAN PENGGUNAAN BAHASA ARAB DIALEK
JORDAN**

ABSTRAK

Rakyat Syria di Jordan perlu mempelajari dialek Jordan untuk berkomunikasi secara berkesan dengan penduduk negara tuan rumah. Walau bagaimanapun, sikap pelarian Syria terhadap dialek Jordan dan penggunaan dialek Jordan dalam pelbagai domain kehidupan tidak dibincangkan dengan sewajarnya dalam penyelidikan terdahulu. Maka, kajian ini mengenal pasti sikap pelarian Syria terhadap dialek Arab Jordan berbeza mengikut umur, jantina dan tempoh tinggal mereka di Jordan. Kajian ini juga mengkaji domain (keluarga, tempat keagamaan, kejiranan, pasar, rakan, tempat kerja, pendidikan, dan media) yang menunjukkan pelarian Syria lebih suka menggunakan dialek Jordan. Kajian ini juga meneroka sebab-sebab pelarian Syria menggunakan dialek Jordan dan Surian dalam lapan domain kehidupan. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran berjujukan penjelasan digunakan, dengan dua fasa: kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Manakala data kuantitatif diperolehi menggunakan dua soal selidik: Soal Selidik Satu (sikap terhadap Dialek Jordan) dan Soal Selidik Dua (keutamaan dialek dalam lapan domain kehidupan: keluarga, tempat keagamaan, kejiranan, pasar, rakan, tempat kerja, pendidikan, dan media). Seterusnya, data kualitatif dikumpul menggunakan temu bual separa berstruktur. Walaupun sampel dalam fasa kuantitatif merangkumi 400 pelarian Syria yang dipilih secara rawak, temu bual dijalankan dengan 30 pelarian Syria yang dipilih secara rawak, dengan variasi dalam umur, jantina dan tempoh tinggal mereka di Jordan. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif dan statistik inferensi (ujian Kruskal-Wallis dan Mann-Whitney U).

Selain itu, analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengekod 30 temu bual. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat variasi dalam sikap pelarian Syria terhadap Dialek Jordan. Pelarian Syria secara amnya melihat Dialek Arab Jordan secara positif sebagai mudah dipelajari dan membantu dalam proses integrasi, serta menghargai nilai budayanya tanpa merasakan ia mengancam identiti Syria mereka. Selain itu, pelarian Syria bersikap neutral tentang penggunaan Dialek Arab Jordan dalam pendidikan dan bahan bacaan. Mereka ragu-ragu untuk berkahwin dengan penutur asli dan tidak percaya ia dapat meningkatkan status sosial, sebaliknya lebih menghargai faedah praktikalnya. Secara keseluruhan, pelarian Syria menunjukkan bahawa mereka menghargai penggunaan Dialek Jordan dalam komunikasi harian mereka. Kajian juga menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam sikap pelarian Syria terhadap Dialek Jordan mengikut umur dan jantina mereka. Walau bagaimanapun, tiada perbezaan yang ketara secara statistik dalam sikap pelarian Syria terhadap warga Jordan mengikut tempoh mereka tinggal di Jordan. Pelarian Syria lebih suka menggunakan Dialek Jordan dengan orang Jordan dalam pelbagai domain kehidupan, manakala mereka bergantung pada dialek sendiri apabila bertutur dengan orang Syria lain di Jordan. Sebab-sebab pemilihan dialek pelarian Syria adalah termasuk kemudahan komunikasi dengan orang Jordan, minat dalam integrasi dengan masyarakat Jordan, mengekalkan identiti budaya mereka, dan mengekalkan hubungan yang kuat dengan akar budaya dan warisan mereka. Menjaga identiti budaya merujuk kepada komitmen mereka untuk mengekalkan penanda identiti peribadi dan kebangsaan, sementara memelihara hubungan dengan akar budaya dan warisan melibatkan pemeliharaan tradisi dan nilai-nilai yang berkaitan dengan tanah air mereka. Secara keseluruhan, elemen-elemen ini menunjukkan cara pelarian Syria mengharungi integrasi linguistik sambil menghormati latar belakang budaya mereka.

Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa pelarian Syria menganggap bahawa Dialek Jordan berguna dan penting untuk integrasi dalam masyarakat Jordan. Ia boleh membantu mereka untuk bergaul dengan baik dalam kedua-dua majlis sosial formal dan tidak formal di Jordan. Maka, kajian menyimpulkan bahawa Dialek Jordan adalah penting bagi pelarian Syria untuk bergaul dengan masyarakat Jordan.

**THE INFLUENCE OF AGE, SEX, AND LENGTH OF STAY ON
SYRIAN REFUGEES' ATTITUDES TOWARDS AND USE OF JORDANIAN
ARABIC DIALECT**

ABSTRACT

Syrians in Jordan need to learn the Jordanian Arabic Dialect to effectively communicate with the people of the host country. However, the attitudes of Syrian refugees towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect and their use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect in various domains of life have not been adequately addressed in previous research. Thus, the study examined how Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect differ across their ages, sexes, and length of stay in Jordan. The study also examined the domains (family, religious places, neighbourhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media) in which Syrian refugees prefer to use the Jordanian Arabic Dialect. The study also explored Syrian refugees' reasons for the use of the Jordanian and Syrian dialects across eight domains of life. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed with two phases: quantitative and qualitative. While the quantitative data were obtained using two questionnaires: Questionnaire One (attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect) and Questionnaire Two (dialect preference in eight domains of life: family, religious places, neighborhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media). Further, the qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews. While the sample in the quantitative phase encompasses 400 Syrian refugees who were selected randomly, the interviews were carried out with 30 Syrian refugees who were selected purposively, with variations in their age, sex and length of stay in Jordan. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics

(Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U test). On the other hand, thematic analysis was used to code the 30 interviews. The study revealed that there are variations in the Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect. Syrian refugees generally view the Jordanian Arabic Dialect positively as easy to learn and helpful for integration, appreciating its cultural value without feeling it threatens their Syrian identity. Furthermore, Syrian refugees are neutral about using the Jordanian Arabic Dialect in education and reading materials. They are hesitant about marrying primary speakers and do not believe it enhances social status, valuing its practical benefits instead. Syrian refugees generally appreciate using Jordanian Arabic Dialect for daily communication. The study found significant differences in attitudes based on age and sex, but not on length of stay. Refugees prefer using the Jordanian Arabic Dialect with Jordanians across various domains, while adhering to their own dialect when speaking with fellow Syrians. Their preferences are driven by factors such as ease of communication, interest in integration, and a desire to preserve cultural identity and heritage. Maintaining cultural identity refers to their commitment to retaining personal and national identity markers, while preserving a connection to cultural roots and heritage involves upholding the traditions and values associated with their homeland. Together, these elements reveal how Syrian refugees navigate linguistic integration while honouring their cultural background. The study concludes that the Syrian refugees perceive that the Jordanian Arabic Dialect is useful and important for integration purposes in the Jordanian community. It can help them to blend well in both formal and informal social occasions in Jordan. Further, the study concludes that the Jordanian Arabic Dialect is necessary for the Syrian refugees to get along in the Jordanian society.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This is the first chapter of the thesis, which sets the stage for the entire research and provides a comprehensive introduction to the study. This chapter starts with an important background to the study and its context. This is followed by the statement of the problem, which is an important component of almost any PhD research. In this thesis, the statement of the problem provides clear articulation of the main problem addressed by this PhD research. Grounded in the existing literature concerning attitudes towards the dialect of the host country for refugees, the statement of the problem has shown the need for the study and explained its rationale. Based on the statement of the problem, specific research objectives and their corresponding research questions were presented. The potential significance and contributions of the study are also declared in this chapter. Subsequently, a section on the limitations of the study is presented to show issues that were not under the control of the researcher. Additionally, the scope of the research is clearly defined and explained to show the readers what is covered by the study. Definitions of the important key terms are also presented in this chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Individuals' identities and attitudes towards a language have a strong impact on their status in a given community. Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed motivation as a construct that is made up of specific attitudes to language. The duo stated that the attitude someone has towards the members of a cultural group who speak a different language has an impact on his/her choice of either adopting their

language or not. In the context of the current study, a positive attitude of a Syrian refugee living in Jordan towards Jordanian Arabic and culture, for instance, will help him/her formulate a strong motivation to learn the Jordanian Arabic Dialect. According to Mugaddam (2006), in such an instance, the Syrian refugee who is willing to learn and use the Jordanian Arabic Dialect is thought to have the integrative motivation. People are said to develop interest in learning a language because they want to achieve certain objectives and social goals through it. However, for integrative motivation, it is clear that users of the language or dialect of the host country have high interest to be a part of the new community. Gardner and Lambert (1959) identified different factors that explain language acquisition among immigrants, including aptitude, attitudes, and motivation.

Gerstle (2010) also observed that through these processes, immigrants get to integrate and feel part of the host community. Other scholars have noted that when people move to a new community that speaks different language from theirs, they need to learn the local language, as their ability to communicate effectively is crucial for their integration into the host community (Ager & Strang, 2008; Gerstle, 2010; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Learning the local language of the host community can facilitate finding better jobs; fitting into the host community's education system, communicating with health providers, conducting everyday activities, and will enable social and political participation (Longazel, 2017). Recently, Albarracin et al. (2019) have posited that becoming a part of a host community does not only mean settling into a new neighbourhood, but also involves negotiating cultures, learning and adopting the local language, and establishing new social relationships.

Acquiring new languages, accents, or dialects seems directly associated with the movement, immigration, or refugee of individual or people towards new

communities where they expose or contact with a totally or partially different speech (Adserà & Pytliková, 2016). Concerning this issue, Fishman (1989) gave three possible outcomes of language in contact. The first is when the indigenous (host) language interacts with the intrusive (immigrant's language), while the second possible outcome occurs when the indigenous dominates when the intrusive language is lost. Finally, the third outcome happens when an indigenous language interacts with an intrusive one, the intrusive dominates while the indigenous is lost, or both languages are used side by side but in different domains.

Sociolinguistic studies increasingly have become interested in the development of dialect interaction, particularly since the publication of *Dialects in Contact* by (Trudgill, 1986). There was a great diversity of situations, such as in dialects of the new towns (Kerswill & Williams, 2000a), immigrant groups in the city (Kerswill, 1994), and the New Zealand English (Maclagan & Gordon, 2004). Different linguistic changes may arise in contact situations, as certain variants of the original dialect can expand at the expense of other features from the input dialects. In some cases, the merging of features results in the creation of intermediate or fudging linguistic forms (Al-Wer, 2007). Additionally, a third category of features may emerge, which are neither part of the original mix nor considered intermediate.

Language acquisition happens in the dialect-contact frame when distinct but understandable dialects of the same language come in contact (Britain & Trudgill, 2005; Trudgill, 1986). While the concern of social psychology lies in accommodation, but Trudgill (1986) expanded this into the domain of contact dialectology to include dialects that are in contact and dialect formation.

Rumbaut (2015) asserted that in intergroup relationships within the receiving community, migrants face significant cultural changes in both sending and receiving

communities. The presence of new dialects by the process of "koineization" is a prominent linguistic consequence of migration (Kerswill, 2006, p. 14). Through "koineization", the interaction between speakers with the same understandable varieties of a language results in new variations (Trudgill, 1999a).

Gordon (1964) presented the melting pot approach, which is a key component of his assimilation model. He claimed that in the 1960s, the U.S. had four, not three, melting pots for the main ethnic/religious groups and black Americans, each with its own class divisions. This model was a major part of the "traditional" assimilation model. The melting pot theory suggests that a new uniform society will emerge from the fusion of various cultures. The melting pot is a metaphor for the ideal process of immigration and colonization, where different cultures and races would mix into a new, virtuous community. Gordon's work offered a much-needed clarification of concepts that influenced a lot of the later empirical research in the assimilation field. The melting pot also played a crucial role in the establishment of the assimilation school of race and ethnic studies in American sociology.

Hein (2006) demonstrated that the melting pot represents a form of integration capable of producing a cohesive society that intertwines elements of multiculturalism and multinationalism. However, some other scholars have defined the structure of cultural assimilation as a group of individuals develop different cultures and religions in order to show their distinct identities and to construct an ultimate result of clear uniformity (Gloor, 2006). Becoming part of the melting pot refers to immigrants willingly abandoning their original identity and culture to adopt the language and practices of the host country (Phinney et al., 2001).

Learning a language has been viewed as an activity with various purposes. It can be an activity of leisure that often comes with the movement of persons from one

place to another, business activities, or an interest in the culture of another group of people. In another context, however, a language can be one of the most significant assets an individual needs to acquire in order to integrate and acquire a socio-economic status in a country of (no) choice. For refugees fleeing their home countries due to conflicts and war, the language of the host country is a barrier that must be overcome in order to integrate into the society and also access the labour market (Campion, 2018). Here comes one of the major purposes of sociolinguistics, which is to examine how language functions as a tool for social integration, identity construction, and access to socio-economic opportunities. Sociolinguistics seeks to understand how individuals, such as refugees, navigate linguistic challenges in host societies and how language use reflects and influences their social experiences and status.

Among many concerns of sociolinguistics, addressing dialect functions and how speakers select their dialects is another function of this field (Hymes, 2020; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021). Studying the social significance of dialect variability is regarded as variationist sociolinguistics. Variationist sociolinguistics' focus is how social factors (such as race, age, sex etc.) and linguistic structures (such as a speaker's sex, ethnicity, age, level of community integration, etc.) interact.

Varieties of Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and local Non-Standard Arabic (NSA), were investigated by many researchers (e.g., Al-Ani, 2007; Al-Khatib, 2001). As Arabic is diglossic in nature, the complexity of the language surpasses sociolinguistics' boundaries as it intertwined with the speakers' culture and implicated by their political stand (Bidaoui, 2017). Ferguson (1959) classified Arabic into two categories: High (Modern Standard Arabic, MSA) and Low (Non-Standard Arabic, NSA) varieties. MSA is primarily used in formal settings, such as schools and official

functions, while NSA represents the dialects that serve as mother tongues and uniquely distinguish one Arab country from another (Al-Huri, 2015).

Dialects under NSA can be divided into five types. Zaidan and Callison-Burch (2014) explained that it is important to note that the five groups of NSA are also made up of different dialect subgroups. Groups are made up firstly of a dialect spoken in Egypt, the second is Levantine, which are spoken by those in the Arab Peninsular such as the Jordanians, Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians (Al Suwaiyan, 2018). The third group is Arabic dialects used by those in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and United Arab Emirates (UAE). The fourth group is a Mesopotamian used by the Iraqis and the fifth is used by those from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya.

Despite being categorized under the same unit, each dialect differs significantly. They do not only differ in terms of vocabulary, but grammatically, morphologically, and phonologically. Although there are variants, it is not impossible for those speaking NSA to communicate with others from different groups. Nevertheless, the similarities do not guarantee that those from different Arab regions would understand each other well as the dialect cannot be accessed by those living in different Arab countries. A good example is when a Syrian attempt to communicate with a speaker from Tunisia, miscommunication could occur as Mahgrebi dialects, which is spoken in Northern Africa, are heavily influenced by French and Berber. Further, it is important to note that while Jordanian and Syrian dialects fall under the broader Levantine classification, significant localised differences exist between the two dialects.

To live in host countries, refugees must not only adapt to existing cultures but learn the language as well as good proficiency in the host's language proficiency could

increase chances of employment and integration (Morrice et al., 2021). The significance of language cannot be undermined especially in the context of refugees as it makes cultural and material resources accessible and a way for refugees to show their identity (UNICEF, 2016). Alshoubaki and Harris (2018) further emphasized on the importance of language as language barrier is one of the main factors, after racism and xenophobia, which could create social tension between refugees and their hosts. Moreover, language has been identified as a barrier preventing Syrian refugees' children from accessing education as their Arabic literacy rate was affected when their formal education was halted by the war, hence becoming an obstacle when they wish to be enrolled in formal education in Jordan (Alrawashdeh & Kunt, 2022).

In sociolinguistics, language attitudes refer to the beliefs, feelings, and perceptions people have towards specific languages or dialects (Amin, 2020). These attitudes are shaped by social factors such as age, sex, ethnicity, and social status, and they influence how language is used as a marker of identity and group affiliation. Language attitudes can be overt (explicit expressions) or covert (subtle behaviours), and are often linked to social identity, as language is a key tool in constructing both individual and group identities.

Social identity theory suggests that language plays a crucial role in how people align themselves with social or cultural groups (Harwood, 2020). In their seminal work, Tajfel and Turner (1979) discussed how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics, fostering a sense of belonging and identity. This categorization process is fundamental to social identity theory, as it influences self-concept and contributes to the development of a social identity. Language, as a shared characteristic, plays a pivotal role in this categorization and identity formation process (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In the case of refugees, language

can serve as a tool for either integrating into a new community or preserving connections to their original identity. Lambert's Matched-Guise Technique (1967) further explores how attitudes toward language varieties are not only based on proficiency but also on the social prestige attached to them (Lambert, 1967).

For Syrian refugees in Jordan, attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect reflect both the desire to integrate and the need to preserve cultural identity. These attitudes shape their social interactions and influence their integration process. By examining these attitudes through a sociolinguistic lens, this study contributes to understanding how language functions in identity negotiation and community belonging.

Attitudes towards a language, influenced by age and sex, play a significant role in its adoption within a community (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Kircher & Zipp, 2022). For Syrian refugees in Jordan, younger individuals may have a stronger motivation to learn Jordanian Arabic due to its social benefits, whereas older individuals might resist due to a stronger attachment to their native dialect (Mugaddam, 2006). Sex also impacts language learning and acquisition of the dialect of the host country, with women often showing more willingness to adopt the host language as part of their social integration, while men may prioritize maintaining their original dialect (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018; Zhao, 2023).

Understanding the dialect of the host country is crucial for integration, with refugees' access to education, healthcare, and employment depending on their proficiency in Jordanian Arabic (Ager & Strang, 2008; Lou & Noels, 2020; Padilla & Perez, 2003). Sociolinguistic research on dialect contact suggests that refugees adjust their speech patterns to align with the host dialect for better integration, and these adjustments are influenced by both age and sex (Al-Wer, 2007; Trudgill, 1986). While

Jordanian and Syrian dialects are mutually intelligible, there are distinct regional variations that affect communication, with younger refugees more likely to adopt Jordanian Arabic features, while older refugees might retain more Syrian dialect traits (Zaidan & Callison-Burch, 2014). This study examines how Syrian refugees in Jordan, influenced by age and sex, navigate the integration process through the use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect, highlighting the role of Jordanian Arabic in shaping their attitudes and identity.

1.3 Syria

Syria is a country of western Asia and one of the largest Middle East countries lies between Turkey to the North, Jordan to the south, Lebanon to the West, the Occupied Palestine to the Southwest, and Iraq to the East (Imady et al., 2021). Syria has a wealthy artistic and cultural heritage, and it is a home to one of the oldest civilizations in the world (Miller, 2001). The country has a complicated and hectic history from its ancient roots through its recent political instability and the Syria civil war.

1.3.1 National Culture of Syria

Syria has wealthy and traditional ancient origins (Bryce, 2014). Damascus, the capital of country, is known as being one of the world's oldest national capitals. Many ancient empires like Babylonians, Sumerians, Phoenicians, Arameans, Persians, and Greeks have occupied Syria (Bryce, 2014). Syria was a part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 until 1918, after that France occupied Syria and officially was independent in 1944 (Darke, 2014). Hafez al-Assad became the president of Syria in 1970 and remained in control for 30 years until he died and turned Syria's governing over to his son, Bashar Assad, who is still in power (McHugo, 2006).

According to Worldmeter (2024), the population of Syria is around 24 million, 90.3% of which are Arabs, while the remaining 9.7 % for the Kurds, Armenians, and nomadic groups. At the end of the century, statistics estimated the annual population growth rate at 2,58%, with 41% of the population aged 14 or younger, 56% between 15 and 64 and 3% aged 65 and over since the mid-1960s. While 90% of all Syrians are Muslims, they are part of various groups. Around 74% are Sunni; the other 16% include Alawites, Druze, and other Muslim sects. As shown in Figure 1.1, The non-Muslim population is mainly Christian; the major group is Greek Orthodox, besides Armenian Catholics, Maronites, Armenian Orthodox, and Syrian Orthodox (Central Intelligence Agency, 2022). In Damascus, there are insignificant Jewish populations like Al Qamishli and Aleppo. The country legal system based on Islamic law, civil law and special religious courts are available too.

Arabic is the official language of Syria and is spoken by almost 90% of its population. Kurdish is the major linguistic minority (11%). People also can understand Armenian, Aramaic and Circassian languages too. Older citizens speak French, younger and medium-aged groups widely understand and speak English. Most Arabic speakers are bilingual; therefore, language variances cause few communication problems.

Despite the expansion of Syria's education system over the years, illiteracy continues to be widespread among older individuals, especially females, in urban areas. Education is free and compulsory for nine years, covering elementary education, while secondary schools offer three-year programs in scientific or literary tracks, along with technical and vocational studies (UNICEF, 2015). Arabic is the primary language of instruction, but English is taught from grade one, and French from grade seven, providing students with essential foreign language skills. Higher education is

accessible through six governmental universities, fifteen private universities, and various institutes offering undergraduate and graduate programs. Despite these educational opportunities, literacy rates show a sex disparity: 90.7% of males aged 15 and older are literate, compared to 82.2% of females (UNICEF, 2015). This gap underscores ongoing challenges, especially for women in rural or conflict-affected areas, and highlights the lingering effects of limited educational access, particularly among older Syrians (UNICEF, 2015)

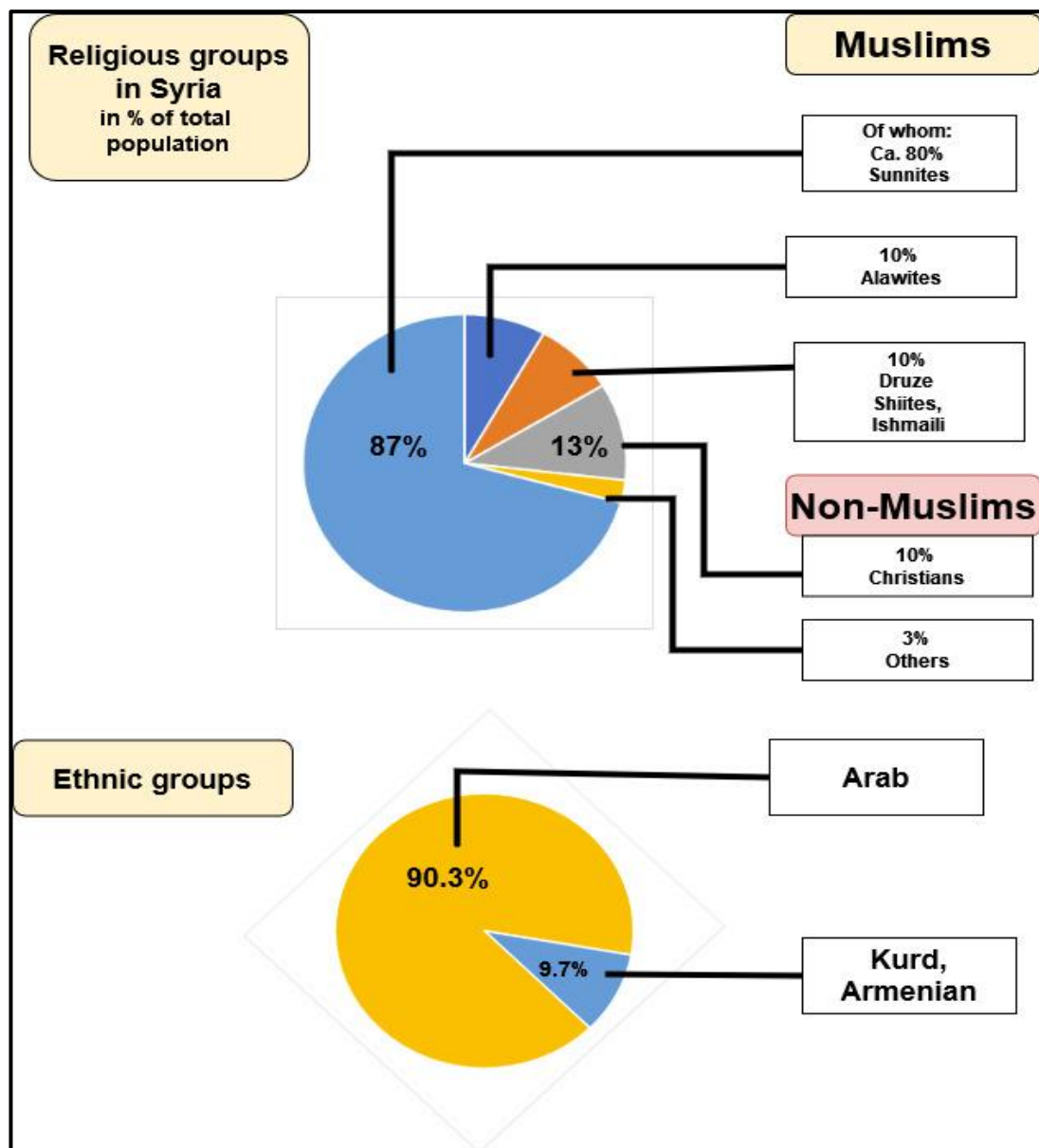


Figure 1.1 Ethnic and religious groups in Syria (CIA World factbook; 2023)

Before the revolution, the Syrian economy was centred economy on agriculture and oil. Yet, after the Syrian revolution in 2011, the Syrian economy has stood hit by extensive commercial sanctions restraining trade. The economy declined 45% by 2013 compared with pre-war levels as a result of war and international sanctions and restrictions (Timofte, 2021).

1.3.2 Syrian Refugees in Jordan

Entering its twelfth year, having tragic human toll and produced one of the worst humanitarian crises of our time, the Syrian crisis has affected negatively most Syrians, when about 11 million people were killed or displaced to neighbouring countries (Berti, 2015; Fakhri & Ibrahim, 2016). The Syrian crisis denotes the protracted conflict that commenced in 2011, initially ignited by anti-government demonstrations as part of the overarching Arab Spring movement (Ilcan, 2022). The demonstrations intensified into a civil war that encompassed various factions, including the Syrian government, opposition entities, and extremist groups. As the conflict progressed, it became increasingly intricate with the engagement of international actors and the emergence of organizations such as ISIS. The crisis created a great human suffering; over 11 million people have been killed or displaced, making it one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history. The conflict destroyed cities, leading to severe economic hardships and displacing millions of Syrians who abandoned their homes and fled the country in search of safety. Some have found refuge in neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, while others have dispersed to different parts of the world in search of safety (Zreik, 2024). The UN estimates that more than 6.1 million Syrians have been internally displaced within

Syria, and almost 5.3 million have fled to neighbouring countries, accounting for a total of 5.5 million refugees worldwide.

Between the years 2011 and 2018, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan welcomed over 762,420 Syrian refugees, indicative of the nation's steadfast commitment to humanitarian assistance and its constructive rapport with displaced populations. This substantial influx of refugees highlights Jordan's readiness to provide refuge, notwithstanding the considerable pressure it exerts on the nation's resources and infrastructure. The presence of these refugees within Jordan also reflects the country's political stability, as it has consistently played a pivotal role in the region, sustaining relatively amicable relations with neighbouring states and international organizations.

Among the refugees residing in Jordan, 83% have established their homes in urban locales, thereby assimilating into local communities and enhancing the labour market, while the remaining 17% inhabit three principal refugee camps: Zaatari, Azraq, and the Emirati Jordanian Camp. These camps were initially instituted to furnish shelter and fundamental services to the displaced individuals; however, a significant number of refugees have chosen urban living due to superior access to employment, educational opportunities, and healthcare services. Nonetheless, residing in these camps continues to pose considerable challenges, such as overcrowding, restricted access to essential services, and a deficiency in long-term sustainability. The decision regarding settlement illustrates the refugees' aspiration for autonomy and improved prospects, even within the limitations imposed by an arduous and frequently precarious environment (UNHCR, 2019). About 93% of Syrian refugees are estimated to be under the line of poverty in Jordan (Zademach et al., 2019).

The Jordanian regime has been admired for its open-border policy and humanitarian attitude to Syrian refugees (Achilli, 2015). Since the beginning of the crisis, Jordan has admitted an enormous number of Syrian refugees. Jordan currently accommodates more than 1.3 million Syrians, including 655 thousand registered refugees, who face vulnerability as they have consumed their savings, possessions, and resources. Many of these refugees are struggling to meet basic needs, such as food, healthcare, and housing, due to limited economic opportunities and the protracted nature of their displacement. As a result, the refugees rely heavily on humanitarian aid, while the host communities also experience increased pressure on public services and infrastructure, exacerbating social and economic challenges (De Bel-Air, 2016). Jordan's financial state and capability to deliver worth facilities has been seriously affected by providing Syrian civil war refugees with substantial needs and confirming their access to significant community services, such as health, education, public services and water (UNHCR, 2017).

Total Registered Syrian Refugees JSON

Location name	Source	Data date	Population
Amman Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	29.6% 199,204
Mafraq Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	25.1% 168,792
Irbid Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	20.3% 136,279
Zarqa Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	14.6% 98,483
Balqa Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	2.7% 17,978
Madaba Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	2.0% 13,438
Jarash Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	1.4% 9,295
Karak Govenorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	1.3% 8,532
Maan Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	1.2% 8,352
Ajlun Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	1.0% 6,435
Aqaba Governorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	0.6% 3,814
Tafilah Govenorate	UNHCR	31 Dec 2021	0.3% 1,705

Figure 1.2 Distribution of Syrian refugees in Jordan (UNCHR, 2021)

More than 209 schools were established to operate double shifts in host communities and 45 schools to provide education to refugee children in camps (UNHCR, 2017). To be enrolled in public schools, Syrian children must be registered with the UNHCR and hold a Ministry of Interior service card.

Jordanian Government with the support of UN agencies and NGOs have supported vulnerable Jordanians and Syrian refugees on health-related problems. Primary, secondary and some specialized health care services are available to all registered Syrian refugees at the new subsidized prices at Public Health Centres and Governmental Hospitals (UNHCR, 2018). Taking the necessary interventions to address the health needs of Syrian refugees includes responding to the immediate health requirements of new arrivals and facilitating their access to comprehensive primary care, as well as essential secondary and specialized medical services. Particular attention is given to war-related injuries and severe medical and surgical conditions, along with the direct and indirect provision of comprehensive emergency obstetric and newborn services (UNHCR, 2017).

Jordan has implemented a coordination mechanism with UNHCR and legal aid providers to provide free of charge protection services and perform the needed measures to ensure that Syrian refugees are holding all necessary documents. Three Jordanian organizations (Arab Renaissance for Democracy and Development (ARDD), Justice Centre for Legal Aid (JCLA), and Tamkeen) coordinated to integrate frontline community facilitators who are supported by a team of project staff and lawyers.

Jordan worked to economically empower Syrian refugees to support their ability and support Jordan broader economic development strategies, this includes

access to jobs in host communities, offering them over 120,000 work permits to work in construction and agricultural system without being sponsored (UNHCR, 2019). Another form of aid provided by UNCHR is the Cash Assistance which will help families to pay rent and purchase food. UNHCR offered the cash assistance through existing banking systems where registered refugees can withdraw cash from an automated teller machine (ATM).

In 2014, the regular influx amount has gradually reduced as the Jordanian government restricted refugees' admission. Constraints are increased as the arrival of Syrian refugees begin to stress the country's already burdened structure and little resources (Achilli, 2015). Moreover, negative reactions from locals towards Syrians restrains the Jordanian government, in its capacity, to respond to the refugee crisis. As host-community pressures rise, Jordanians requested their government to limit the influx of Syrian refugees. Jordanian representatives decided that primary political welfares to accommodate Syrian refugees have to be reduced as growing Syrian presence in the country may threaten national security (Francis, 2015).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Sociolinguistic studies indicated that when languages are used in communication, the strong language dominates, hence, substituting the weaker language, or both languages are used together in diglossically (Fishman, 1989). However, immigrant languages in some cases, like in English and Indian in America, Australia, and Canada, are dominated by hosts' language (Washbrook et al., 2012). Whereas, Gsir et al. (2015) pointed out that in the case of French and Arabic, the host language, which is French, may be dominated by the Arab immigrants' language who migrate to France. A third option is applicable if both host and immigrant language in

various domains are used in parallel. An example of diglossic use is among Palestinian Arabs where two contacting languages, Arabic and Hebrew are used extensively by Palestinian Arabs who study and work in Israel (Dekel & Brosh, 2012).

Scholars in various studies believe that linguistic attitudes could motivate ethnic minorities to maintain their language or use the language of host country (e.g., Abou-Khalil et al., 2019; Clyne, 2003; Kovacs Rac & Halupka-Rešetar, 2018; Letsholo, 2009; Riagain, 2008; Saidat, 2018). Studies on Syrian refugees in Jordan vary in their coverage of various perspectives. Some of these perspectives include Syrian refugees' demographics, education, health issues, and psychosocial well-being (e.g., Al-Shatanawi et al., 2023; Fallah et al., 2019; Krafft et al., 2018). However, from the perspective of sociolinguistics, studies on the Syrian refugees have not adequately considered Syrian refugee's attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect, the dialect of the host country. This is the first gap the current study intended to address.

Further, researchers have shown that certain factors, such as age, sex, length of stay, and social interaction, are believed to influence refugees' attitudes towards the language of the host country (Azizi et al., 2024; Baker, 2011; Chmarkh, 2021). For example, the age groups and sexes of Syrian refugees are varied, and these variables have been found to significantly influence language behaviours of communities of speakers differently. This implies that different age groups and sexes within the refugees can exhibit varied linguistic behaviours, including attitudes. Regarding this, Coupland et al. (2014) claimed that age is the sociolinguistics field's underdeveloped social dimension because, despite its significance in every person's life, age has only been considered in relation to children's bilingualism and education, despite the fact that, language is unarguably central to the lived experience of age and ageing, and age is as impactful a dimension of social identity like sex, race or class. However, there is

a dearth of studies on the effect of these variables on Syrian refugees' attitudes the Jordanian Arabic. This is the second gap that the current study intended to address. It then becomes important to consider the age and sex variables in this study in order to uncover how these factors influence refugees' use and attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect. Sociolinguistic variation examines how language varies and develops in communities of speakers (Britain & Trudgill, 2005).

Considering the importance of factors affecting perceptions and attitudes towards the language of the host country, studies have considered age and sex as two important factors. According to Benítez Fernández (2023), sex and age are significant variables in linguistic variation. It has been observed that studies have considered sex difference among immigrants (Bernhard & Bernhard, 2022). Yet, insufficient attention has been given to sex issues in language attitudes among the Syrian refugees in Jordan. Further, the field of sociolinguistics has suffered greatly from a lack of research-based understanding of the nature of the sex influence in attitudes toward the learnt and used languages. Besides, research on the importance of refugees' length of stay in a host country in shaping their attitudes towards the language or dialect of the host country.

In the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan, language maintenance and shift of these group of refugees is a great interest from sociolinguistic perspective as in their effort to be accepted by their host, there is a likelihood of them losing their language through shift as well as their identity. Refugees tend to feel side-lined and stigmatized, hence increasing the risk of them shifting from using their own dialect to the use of their host country's dialect with the purpose of ensuring a better future at a new place during difficult times (Abou-Khalil et al., 2019).

It is also important to note that the status of refugee is different from that of a migrant because immigrants' intention may be to live and establish life in the receiving

community for a defined time or permanently. A refugee stays in the host community for a period which is usually determined by the situation in his/her country and may return to their countries when the situation gets better. For example, Gürsoy and Ertaşoğlu (2019) have recently pointed out that there are no specific theories regarding the second language acquisition process of refugees, because they are considered together with all immigrants although their experiences distinguish them from other groups. As such, a refugee who still thinks of returning to his home country at any time, may not see a dire need to abandon his/her social, cultural and language background since his/her stay is just for a moment. This then raises the question of whether the length of stay may affect refugees' attitudes towards the dialect of the host country. This is the third gap the study intended to address. The fourth gap is that there is a lack of studies on the influence of Syrian refugees' duration of stay in Jordan on their attitude towards and use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect.

This study investigates Syrian refugees' attitudes toward the Jordanian Arabic dialect, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the sociolinguistic dynamics at play in Jordan's multicultural landscape. While existing research has primarily examined the general characteristics of Levantine dialects, there is a notable lack of targeted studies that explore how these dialects impact the lived experiences of refugees, particularly concerning social integration and identity formation.

Although both Jordanian and Syrian Arabic are classified as Levantine dialects, they exhibit differences in lexis and meaning. This research posits that these dialectal variations can have significant implications for communication, cultural identity, and perceptions of belonging among Syrian refugees. Previous studies have often overlooked differences in language attitudes, focusing instead on broad comparisons that fail to capture the complexities of individual experiences.

To illustrate that Jordanian and Syrian Arabic, while both classified as Levantine dialects, exhibit differences in lexis and meaning, several approaches can be employed. First, specific examples of lexical differences can highlight these variations. For instance, in Jordanian Arabic, the term for "bread" is "*khubz*," whereas in some Syrian dialects, it is commonly referred to as "*aish*." Another example is the word for "potato"; Jordanians typically use "*batata*," while in some parts of Syria, it might also be "*batata*", but local variations such as "*batata*" may arise, reflecting regional preferences.

In addition to lexical distinctions, contextual usage can demonstrate how certain terms carry different meanings or connotations in each dialect. For example, the word "*baba*" means "*father*" in both dialects but may have different implications based on context; in Jordanian culture, "*baba*" can be used affectionately or formally, while in Syria, it might be more frequently used informally among friends, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, idiomatic expressions can also highlight these differences; for instance, the Jordanian expression "*yalla*" (let's go) is widely used in both dialects, but in Syrian Arabic, it might be paired with phrases like "*yalla bina*" (let's go together), which has a specific social context reflecting Syrian communal culture.

Phonetic variations further underscore the differences between Jordanian and Syrian Arabic. For example, the pronunciation of the letter "*qaf*" often differs, with Jordanians generally pronouncing it as a glottal stop (ʔ) in many areas, while some Syrians pronounce it as a hard "g" sound. This can lead to misunderstandings or alter the meanings of specific words. Additionally, grammatical structures may differ; for instance, the formation of the future tense can vary, with Jordanians frequently using "*rah*" before the verb (e.g., "*rah akol*" for "I will eat"), while some Syrians might use

"bididi" (e.g., "bididi akol"), meaning "I want to eat," indicating a different aspect of intention and futurity.

Despite the mutual intelligibility of Jordanian and Syrian Arabic as Levantine dialects, subtle lexical, phonetic, and pragmatic differences can present challenges for Syrian refugees in daily life, particularly in settings like healthcare, education, and employment. For example, variations in terminology may lead to misunderstandings with medical staff, affecting the quality of care, or hinder children's adaptation in schools where local expressions dominate. While basic communication is possible, integration requires more than comprehension; dialectal differences can influence refugees' sense of belonging, perceptions of identity, and how they are viewed by Jordanian society.

Hence, the use of Jordanian Arabic may signal acceptance or alignment with the host community, while maintaining Syrian Arabic might be seen as cultural resistance. Factors such as age, sex, and duration of stay further complicate these dynamics, with younger refugees often adopting Jordanian Arabic to integrate with peers, while older individuals may prioritize preserving their native dialect. Women, due to societal roles, may exhibit distinct attitudes, highlighting the sociolinguistic tensions of adaptation. This study addresses these complexities, investigating how dialectal attitudes and usage among Syrian refugees in Jordan impact their integration experiences, identity formation, and daily interactions.

This study addresses this oversight by critically examining how attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect are shaped by factors such as aspirations for social integration, cultural heritage, and identity. By moving beyond merely identifying a research gap, this research seeks to elucidate the broader social implications of dialectal attitudes, highlighting their role in facilitating or hindering

effective communication and fostering a sense of belonging within the host community. Through this approach, the study aims to contribute some valuable insights to the fields of sociolinguistics and refugee studies, underscoring the significance of dialectal research in understanding the integration experiences of Syrian refugees in Jordan.

Thus, taking into account the gaps established in the previous paragraphs, the current study intended to examine Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect and how this attitude is affected by age, sex, and length of stay. Further, the study analysed Syrian refugees' use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect and how this use can differ across age, sex and length of stay in Jordan. In short, the current study addresses a crucial concern of sociolinguists and dialectologists: when individuals move to a place where people communicate in a dialect other than their native dialect, what factors can affect their attitudes towards the dialect of the host country.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study looks into the Syrians' attitude towards Jordanian Arabic in order to uncover whether Syrian refugees adopted Jordanian Arabic dialects through melting or choose to maintain their own native dialectal identity as they start living in a new place (Jordan) as war refugees. This study aims to achieve the following five research objectives:

1. To examine Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic dialect.
2. To analyse how Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect differ across their ages, sexes, and duration of stay in Jordan.

3. To identify the domains (family, religious places, neighbourhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media) in which Syrian refugees use the Jordanian Arabic Dialect.
4. To analyse how Syrian refugees' use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect differ across their ages, sexes, and duration of stay in Jordan.
5. To identify the reasons behind Syrian refugees' use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect in various domains of life.

1.6 Research Questions

To accomplish the above-mentioned objectives, this study attempts to answer the following five questions.

1. What are Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect?
2. How do Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect differ across their ages, sexes, and duration of stay in Jordan?
3. What are the domains of life (family, religious places, neighbourhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media) in which Syrian refugees use the Jordanian Arabic Dialect?
4. How do Syrian refugees' use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect differ across their ages, sexes, and duration of stay in Jordan?
5. What are the reasons behind Syrian refugees' use of the Jordanian Arabic Dialect in various domains of life?

1.7 Significance of the Study

Investigating the attitudes of Syrian refugees towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect yields significant insights for a diverse array of stakeholders, encompassing

policymakers, the Jordanian government, Syrian refugees, and academic researchers. For the benefit of policymakers and the Jordanian government, the outcomes of this research can provide essential data regarding the linguistic hurdles encountered by Syrian refugees, particularly in their efforts to acclimatize to the dialect prevalent within the host community. Such revelations can guide the formulation of specialized programs and policies aimed at facilitating the more effective integration of Syrian refugees into Jordanian society, mitigating dialect-related stigmas, and fostering a sense of inclusivity within the broader Jordanian cultural framework. This consideration is particularly critical in urban environments, where the majority of refugees are concentrated and where social and linguistic exchanges occur with heightened frequency.

For Syrian refugees, this study highlights the pivotal role dialect plays in shaping identity, belonging, and integration into Jordanian society. Understanding their attitudes towards the Jordanian Arabic Dialect sheds light on the tension between maintaining their native linguistic identity and adapting to the host country's dialect to fit in socially and culturally. Such knowledge is crucial for designing community-based initiatives and support systems that respect refugees' linguistic heritage while promoting social cohesion and inclusivity. By addressing these complex dynamics, the study offers practical pathways for empowering refugees to navigate the sociolinguistic challenges of displacement.

From a research perspective, this study addresses a significant gap in sociolinguistic literature by focusing on the linguistic adaptation of Syrian civil war refugees. While prior studies have explored the linguistic experiences of minorities in the Middle East, they have not examined the specific sociolinguistic challenges faced by Syrian refugees (e.g., Al-Khatib, 2001; Al-Khatib & Al-Ali, 2005; Kittaneh, 2009;