



Saudi users of Arabizi on social media websites and applications: Uses, Attitudes and beliefs

Mohammad Sadon Alanazi ^{a 1} 

^a College of Languages and Translation, Department of English Language and Literature
Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

APA Citation:

Alanazi, M.S. (2022). Saudi users of Arabizi on social media websites and applications: Uses, Attitudes and beliefs. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(1), 913-934. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.228

Submission Date: 18/09/2021

Acceptance Date: 18/12/2021

Abstract

Although Arabizi (i.e. a writing code that uses Roman or Latin alphabets to express Arabic texts) has received a considerable volume of research in the past decades (e.g. Assalman and Haraq, 2014; Romaih, 2014; Alghamdi, 2018), all the previous research has accorded special attention to the uses and functions of this code among the young generation only, i.e. Arabizi users who are 27 years old or below. Unlike the past literature, the current article aims to explore the uses and functions of Arabizi among a new sample consisting of 47 Saudis (31 males vs. 43 females) who are all 28 years old or above. Using e-questionnaires and interviews, the study shows that the older generation in Saudi Arabia is not as active as the younger generation in terms of Arabizi use. However, the study demonstrates that the use of Arabizi among the older generation comes as a code-switching behavior with other languages such as Arabic and English, and it is more common on Twitter and Snapchat, with a marginal use for emails and other study and diary applications. Although the majority of the older Arabizi users are still similar to the youths in having more positive attitudes towards this code of communication, the study shows that their attitudes to Arabizi diverge on the personal and parental levels, stressing their utmost reluctance to teach Arabizi to their children.

Keywords: Arabizi; Saudi Arabia; Twitter; Reasons; Attitudes; Beliefs

1. Introduction

With the inception and advancement of technology, an array of Social Media Websites and Applications (SMW& As), such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WeChat and Tumblr, among many others, have emerged. These SMW&As gain ground rapidly and encourage users to establish their own profiles and accounts, communicate with their peers and colleagues and express their personal emotions, opinions and choices. They provide users with means of communication to construct their identities and build their own speech community (Wright and Webb, 2011). Twitter, for example, reminds the users to update their events by asking them “What is happening”, whereas Facebook encourages them to express themselves by responding to the question “What is on your mind?”

¹ Corresponding author.

E-mail address: msalanzi@imamu.edu.sa

Among the sociological ends, solidarity is therefore reinforced among the users of these SMW&As, who become more inclined to share their daily events and update their life experiences (Boyd, 2014).

In these online environments, a wide variety of spoken and written forms of languages comes into existence. These newly created forms of languages on the internet have been known as *Net-Speak*, a cover term proposed by Crystal (2006).

Net-Speak, according to Crystal (2006), displays unique properties that facilitate writing systems with a view to accelerating the pace of communication among the users, leading to the emergence of a technical internet-based lexicon. Given that most of the devices and applications did not support languages other than English in the 1990s (Allmann, 2009; Crystal, 2006; Warschauer, El Said & Zohry, 2002), Arabic-speaking users resort to a form of language where they write their messages using the Roman or Latin alphabets (Aboelezz, 2009; Alajmi, 2014; Keong, Hameed, & Abdulbaqi, 2015; Yaghan, 2008)¹. This need for expression gives rise to the emergence of *Arabizi*, a blended term of “Arabi” (cf. Arabic) and “Englizi” (cf. the Arabic translation of the word ‘English’). This blend is referred to, in other studies, as ASCIIization (Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003), Latinized Arabic (Aboelezz, 2009), Romanized Arabic (Bjørnsson, 2010), Arabish (Bianchi, 2013), or Arabtini (Alajmi, 2014).

From a practical perspective, the underlying reason behind the emergence of this writing code, i.e. Arabizi, among Arab users is to find an alternative to the non-supported formal Arabic script in the network applications (Bjørnsson, 2010; Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003). Although the SMW & As have later incorporated Arabic into their coding system, Arabizi continues to thrive as a favored writing system among the youth in particular (Black and Kiss, 2009; Lusted, 2011). It also infiltrates offline settings such as advertisements, shop signs and restaurant menus (Alghamdi, 2018). From a critical perspective, Arabizi has been negatively portrayed among both users and non-users as a poor, non-standard and impoverished code (Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003, Aboelezz, 2009, Bjørnsson, 2010 inter alia). It has been socially stigmatized as a tool of Westernization that undermines the Islamic identity and threatens Arab nationalism (Alajmi 2014, Alsabaan 2014, Alsharafi-Taim, 2014 and Srage 2014). According to Al-Hawsani (2014) and Almandhari (2014), Arabizi is a form of language that lowers the status of the Arabic language and culture in general. It has also been stated that Arabizi worsens the situation of the Arabic language and makes the Arab youth less proud of their mother tongue (Srage 2014). The Romanisation of the Arabic script has been seen as the “most extreme writing reform proposed” because it discards “the Arabic alphabet entirely, replacing it with the Latin alphabet” (Széll 2012: 5). In other words, most of the research conducted on Arabizi (e.g. Alajmi, 2014, Alsabaan, 2014, Alsharafi-Taim, 2014 and Srage, 2014) take a more biased stance regarding Arabizi uses and functions and conclude their analyses with recommendations to combat Arabizi as a deviant and undesirable code.

Despite these negative attitudes, Arabizi has grown rapidly in different countries of the Middle East, attracting a considerable volume of research (Warschauer, El Said & Zohry, 2002 and Abdel-Ghaffar et al., 2011 for Egypt; Srage, 2014 for Lebanon; Alajmi, 2014 and Alsabaan, 2014 for Kuwait; Palfreyman and Al Khalil, 2003, Bahrainwala, 2011 and Al-Hawsani, 2014 for UAE). These studies have dealt with the issue of Arabizi from various points of view. For instance, some of these studies have examined the common uses of Arabizi in different contexts (Alajmi, 2014; Almandhari, 2014). Others have investigated people’s beliefs and attitudes towards Arabizi and its users in general (Al-

¹ For instance, Arabic letters are replaced with Romanized letters as follows: a (أ), e (إ), o/u (ؤ), b (ب), t (ت), th (ث), j (ج), 7/h (ح), kh/7/5 (خ), d (د), th/d (ذ) r (ر), z (ز), s (س), sh (ش), s/9 (ص), d/dh/9/D (ض), t/6/T (ط), th/dh/6' (ظ), 3 (ع), gh/3' (غ), f (ف), q/g/9 (ق), k (ك), l (ل), m (م), n (ن), h (هـ), w (و), y/i (ي).

Hawsani, 2014; Almandhari, 2014; Alsharafi-Taim, 2014). Still, others have considered only the code-switching process that occurs between English and Arabizi (Aboelezz, 2009; Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Keong, Hameed, & Abdulbaqi, 2015) whereas another set of studies has identified the stylistic properties and functions attested among Arabizi users (Bianchi, 2012; Björnsson, 2010; Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003). In Saudi Arabia, only three studies have been undertaken to focus on the stage covered by this study: Assalman and Haraq (2014), Romaih (2014) and Alghamdi (2018). Although the first two studies have approached Arabizi with negative attitudes stressing its adverse impact on language and identity, the latter has taken a more positive attitude encouraging further exploration of this burgeoning phenomenon.

As a major limitation, all the previous studies have explored the uses of Arabizi among the young generation, i.e. respondents aged between 16 and 28 (Assalman and Haraq, 2014, Romaih, 2014 and Alghamdi, 2018). Thus, the current study aims to fill a research gap and target a mostly neglected sample, i.e. Saudi users who are 28 years old or above. The main objective is to provide a further understanding of how older Arabizi users shape the future of language, culture, religion, identity and history in Saudi Arabia. Although Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islam and Arabism, used to be an ultra-conservative state, it currently takes progressive steps post-2015, the date on which King Salman assumed office. This new status quo in Saudi Arabia is encouraging scholars to re-test the beliefs and attitudes of people who stand against this code of language.

In light of these dramatic changes, the current study predicts more tolerance and alternation in stances even among the older generation. The research questions of the study are therefore as follows.

1. What is the motivation behind the continued growth of Arabizi among Saudi users who are 28 years old or above?
2. What are the attitudes and beliefs of Saudi users who are 28 years old or above towards Arabizi?
3. What are the purposes and functions of Arabizi, and the contexts in which it arises, among Saudi users who are 28 years old or above?

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section (2) will discuss the theoretical framework within which the study is couched, whereas section (3) will address the methodology employed for data collection and analysis. The discussion of the findings will be presented in section (4), while the concluding remarks will be given in section (5).

2. Theoretical Framework

From an epistemological perspective, the present study is couched within ‘the Social Constructivist Theory’, which assumes that language plays a key role in constructing our view of the world and the interrelationship between language and identity (Burr, 2002; Paltridge, 2006). This approach handles users’ prior knowledge when they revert to Arabizi, and analyzes the social value borne or conveyed by Arabizi.

To explore the functions of Arabizi, ‘Ethnography of Communication’ (EoC), as proposed by Hymes (1979), is considered. This methodological approach seeks to highlight the functions of language forms in different natural settings. Although the Social Constructivist Theory explores the “performative” role of language and its social and cultural representations, EoC examines the linguistic “communicative” competence (Miller & Brewer, 2003) including the norms and rules that regulate the (in)appropriate speech that a speaker utters in or at a given social class or level (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). EoC is therefore relevant to the current study in that it examines the functions of Arabizi when it is employed in social media contexts and explains how communicative practices contribute to the formation of a special speech community.

Given that the current study focuses on online communication by which Arabizi users create a separate speech community, it proceeds through one particular form of EoC, which is called ‘Cyberethnography’ (Kozinets, 2009) or, as alternatively termed, ‘Virtual Ethnography’ (Hine, 2000). Cyberethnography concerns itself with the culture and nature of the digital world and it explores the linguistic behaviors, uses, and functions that take place only in the virtual world.

3. Methodology

Section (3.1) will present the participants’ demographic information whereas section (3.2) will discuss the methodology used to collect the required data and the procedures used to analyze the results. Methods of analysis are given in section (3.3).

3.1. Participants’ Information

The number of participants in this study is 74 Saudis (31 males vs. 43 females), who are active users on social media platforms and are 28 years old or above. The participants are from different provinces in the Kingdom with a high number from the Western Province (i.e. Jeddah & Mecca), Eastern Province (i.e. Dammam) and Middle Province (the Capital Riyadh), and a few cases are from Southern Province (i.e. Abha and Jizan).

While an equal number from each gender is preferable, the study has secured this option only in interviews where six interviewees have been chosen for each gender. In the e-questionnaire, however, 31 of the respondents are males (42% of the whole sample) whereas 43 are females (58%). The high rate of female users of Arabizi is predictable by virtue of females’ tendencies to seek prestige and follow trends. The total number (i.e. 74 respondents) is considered adequate for ethnographic studies. Although it is hard to reach this number without repeated distributions of the questionnaires on different social applications, a snowball approach has proved effective in recruiting the targeted sample given the likely bond between Arabizi users. Once a user knows that their peer has participated in the study, they become more willing to take part.

Consider Table 1 where respondents’ ages are listed, varying between 28 and 35 or above. As apparent from Table 1, the number of respondents increases conversely with the decrease in age. This is predictable as Arabizi is more common among younger generations.

Table 1. The Distribution of (Male and Female) Respondents’ Age

Age	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35-above
# of participants	22	12	9	15	3	6	3	4
% of participants	30%	16%	12%	20%	4%	8%	4%	6%

As for the educational variable, participants hold different degrees as follows: 11 Diplomas, 35 BAs, 13 MAs, 9 PhDs, and 6 others. These facts confirm that Arabizi users are well educated and adequately exposed to the English language. Some of them, however, do not pursue their higher studies as they are business persons or entrepreneurs. Yet, they are still inclined to use English as an avenue of prosperity in their careers.

As for the interviews, six persons have been chosen from each gender group. These interviewees have shown consent to participate and be recorded. Consider Table 2 where the information of the interviewees is presented. For privacy purposes, real names are replaced with Greek alphabet letters.

Table 2. Information of (Male and Female) Interviewees

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Education	General Information
Alpha	Male	33	BA	Married with one kid.
Beta	Male	34	PhD	Married with no kid.
Gamma	Male	38	PhD	Married with three kids.
Delta	Male	33	MA	Married with one kid.
Epsilon	Male	32	BA	A single teaching supervisor
Zeta	Male	31	BA	Married with three kids.
Eta	Female	38	PhD	Married with two kids.
Theta	Female	38	BA	Married with one kid.
Iota	Female	34	BA	A single businesswoman
Kappa	Female	39	MA	Married with three kids.
Lambda	Female	33	BA	Divorced with one kid.
Mu	Female	31	MA	Married with no kids.

As will be obvious from Table 2, the participants who are 28-30 years old are excluded from taking part in the interviews because previous studies covered the attitudes and beliefs of respondents up to 28 years old (see e.g. Alghamdi 2018). The selection of interviewees who are 30 years old or above enriches the field with new findings regarding the attitudes and beliefs of adult users towards Arabizi. The interviewees have been chosen from different backgrounds as well to ensure that different cultural views are represented.

3.2. Methods of Data Collection

As far as data collection is concerned, the study follows Alghamdi's (2018) study and uses two methods to gather the required data: (i) online questionnaires and (ii) interviews. The study implements these two methods concurrently to fill the possible gaps that may arise from a single method. As put by Bryman (1998), a mixed-method approach ensures a full understanding of the problem under study. It also guarantees the validity of the results as it combines quantitative with qualitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Quantitative data is primarily drawn from the closed questions of the e-questionnaire, while qualitative data is elicited from open-ended questions in the e-questionnaire as well as the recordings of the interviews.

Because this study is situated within the online context, an e-questionnaire has been designed and distributed among both computer and mobile users. The e-questionnaire link is posted and circulated on different websites and applications such as Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram and Whatsapp. Given that e-questionnaires are disadvantageous with respect to sampling bias, as well as the selection or identification of participants (Sue & Ritter, 2012), this study implements a snowball strategy where respondents are requested to share the e-questionnaire with their peers. This approach ensures that the members of the Arabizi speech community are adequately reached.

The questionnaire consists of 12 close- and open-ended questions (See the Appendix). Close-ended questions are designed to cover all the predictable answers that the respondents may provide. These answer options are given based on the earlier studies, and respondents are sometimes allowed to choose not only one answer but more than one in case of variation. On the other hand, open-ended questions are posed to attain further understanding of the respondents' choices of the close-ended questions. Because there is a chance that non-Saudi users may participate and disturb the sample's purposes, a nationality-related question (i.e. Are you Saudi?) is designed to exclude all the forms that answer that previous question with 'No'. In this study, 152 questionnaires have been completed, and 78 questionnaires have been disregarded, not only in those cases where there are incomplete answers,

but when the questionnaires are filled by respondents who are non-Saudi or under 28 years old or who indicate that they have never used Arabizi in their entire life.

Given that interviews are a primary source of qualitative data, face-to-face interviews have been conducted via Skype after the completion of e-questionnaires. Face-to-face interviews ensure that a broad understanding of the Arabizi phenomenon is gained via the validity and reliability of respondents' answers. Via interviews, possible gaps between online and offline contexts are minimized. While open-ended questions in the e-questionnaires provide qualitative data, respondents tend to provide few words as a response, perhaps because writing and thinking processes require more effort, hence discouraging respondents from articulating thorough remarks. Thus, the study has implemented 20-minute-long interviews to allow the respondents to express themselves more freely in speech than in writing. The interviews are semi-structured and the questions are mostly open-ended (see the questions in the Appendix).

One disadvantage of interviews follows from the fact that the female interviewees may feel stressed to meet a foreign researcher, especially a male one. To overcome this problem, female interviewees have been allowed to be in the company of a male guardian such as a husband and a brother or certain cases with their colleagues and friends if required. For female respondents, phone calls via Skype have been offered as an option in place of face-to-face video calls. Generally speaking, interviewing females has appeared not to be a serious challenge given the female respondents' age and high level of education.

To minimize the possible intensity of the interviews, friendly phone calls with the respondents have been arranged in advance so that the interviews are accomplished as casual meetings. Because the questions of the interviews are written in Standard Arabic and this might as well lead to a more formal yet less informative interview, the interview questions are addressed in an informal way with the express purpose of diminishing the impact of the formal language (Kvale, 2007). The informal and relaxed environment encourages the interviewees to share their opinions and attitudes without hesitation (Weiss, 1994; Drever, 1995).

An initial pilot study has also been carried out beforehand to ensure that the data collection instruments, the design of the questions and other issues related to timing and cost are on the right track (Bloor & Wood, 2006). E-questionnaires have been distributed among a few respondents and the interviews included two persons from each gender. Required modifications have been applied to e-questionnaires in terms of the total of questions. The old e-questionnaire has consisted of 20 questions and it has appeared more demanding, leading to the failure of respondents to complete it. A pilot run of the interview is also pretested on two respondents from each gender. This has resulted in a few alterations regarding the arrangement and the flow of the conversation.

3.3. Methods of Data Analysis

As for the methods of analysis, frequencies of responses are counted and represented in numbers and charts. Responses of quantitative data are fed into Microsoft Excel software for calculations. As for qualitative data from the e-questionnaire and the interview, a thematic analytical approach is used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Flick, 2008, 2014; Roulston, 2010; Boyatzis, 1998) where the responses, whether explicit or implicit, are classified into categories, themes and patterns before being calculated.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section will present the results obtained from both the e-questionnaire and the interview. The findings from both sources will be integrated. In other words, the responses of the e-questionnaire will be always followed up with relevant opinions from the interviewees. Section (4.1) will address the

uses of, and motivations behind, Arabizi, whereas users' attitudes and beliefs towards Arabizi will be explored in section (4.2).

4.1. Uses of Arabizi

This section aims to examine the extent of Arabizi use among the population of the internet and identify where Arabizi flourishes or shrinks the most on social media platforms. It also seeks to understand the motives, whether implicit or explicit, behind the uses of Arabizi in general.

The initial four questions in the e-questionnaire are concerned with collecting the general information of the participants such as age, gender, nationality and education. As for the fifth question, it aims to elicit information regarding the extent of Arabizi use, whether on the internet or in other offline settings. As is clear from the findings in Chart 1, an adequate number of cases have reported their constant use of Arabizi (i.e. 15% of the respondents). Similarly, 24% of the informants have claimed that they often use this code. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (i.e. 61% combined) have reported that they sometimes or rarely use Arabizi in their communications. Although the e-questionnaire provides the respondents with the option 'never' in this question as shown in the Appendix, the forms that have checked that option have been eliminated among the disregarded group for other reasons discussed above (see section 3.2). Thus, the percentage calculation does not consider the number of respondents who have selected 'never' because they have already been excluded from the sample.

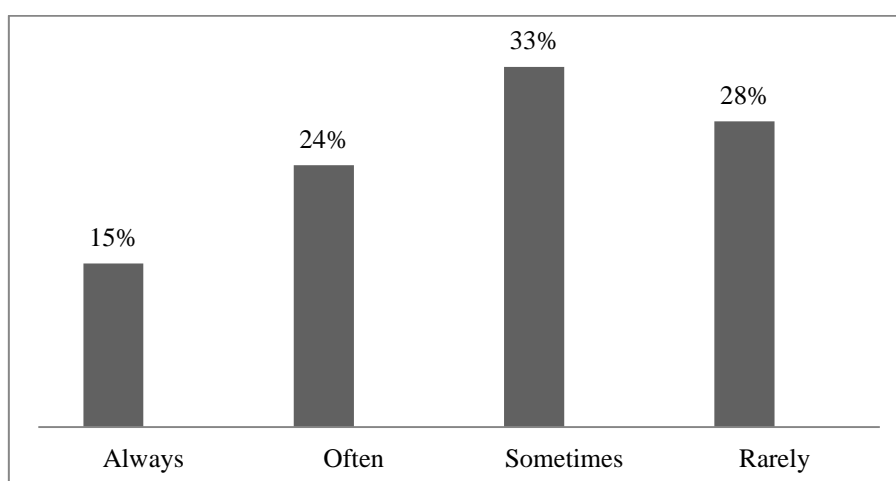


Chart 1. Responses to the Question “How often do you use Arabizi?”

Given that the study focuses on adult Arabizi users, it is probable that the number of active users diminishes in comparison to the number of young users. Previous studies claim that Arabizi is more common among the younger generation (Aboelezz, 2009; Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Keong, Hameed & Abdulbaqi, 2015 among others). Thus, it seems that the use of Arabizi is reduced as the age variable increases.

The tendency for the minimal use of Arabizi is explained via interviews, where some respondents have confirmed that they use Arabizi if need be. Zeta, a male interviewee, claims as shown in (4) that Arabic and English suffice and replace the need for the regular use of Arabizi. Eta, a 38-year-old female interviewee, adopts the same position that Arabizi is not important to her, and there is no group of speakers who only understands Arabizi.

4. Zeta (31 years): *“I do not feel forced to use Arabizi for what is worth. As long as I deliver my message via any code, that is more than enough. My aim is to communicate.”*

5. Eta (38 years): “Arabizi users must understand Arabic and English when they are used. It is fine to use Arabizi, but I do not think I have to use it every time and everywhere. It is not a language at all. There is no purpose of using it every time as if nobody will understand me unless I use it.”

The sixth question plans to assemble information regarding the SMW & As where the respondents use Arabizi the most. It seeks to identify the most popular website(s) for Arabizi in Saudi Arabia. The respondents are given many options plus the chance to choose more than one answer and provide other missing choices when needed. As apparent from Chart 2, nearly no respondents have reported the use of Arabizi in emails. The majority of the respondents tend to employ Arabizi on social media sites and chatting applications. As for social media applications, Twitter is the most attractive hub for Arabizi users (51 responses, 68% of the sample) followed by Snapchat (42 responses, 56% of the respondents). Both Instagram and Facebook have scored an equal number of responses (i.e. 37 for each, 50%).

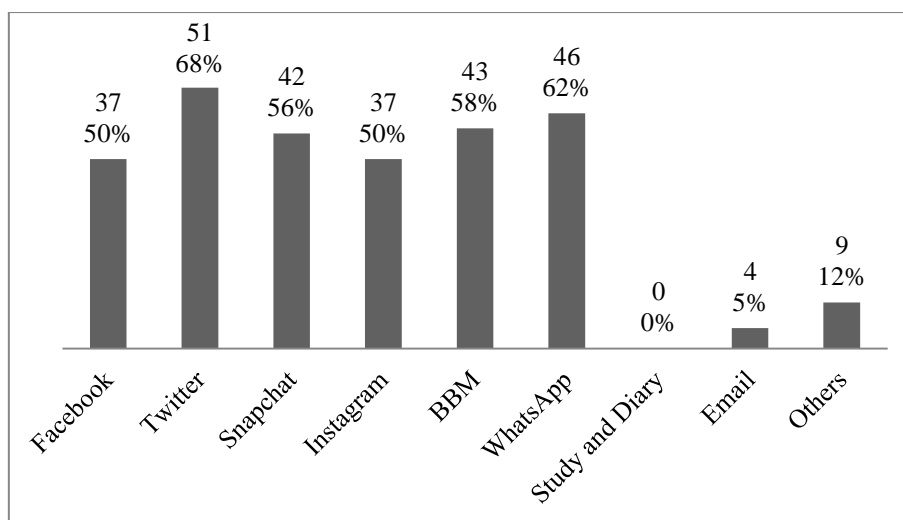


Chart 2. Number of Respondents to the Statement “I use Arabizi on the following websites and applications”

As for chatting applications, 46 respondents (i.e. 62%) have reported their use of Whatsapp, while a roughly similar number (i.e. 43, 58%) have referred to their use of BlackBerry Messenger (BBM). Only four respondents have mentioned their use of Arabizi in emails, and no respondents have employed Arabizi for studies or diaries. The non-use of Arabizi in studies and diaries may be attributed to the fact that it is primarily used in a technical setting where pen and paper are not required. Also, it might be the case that the sample only consists of respondents who are above 28 years old, who have already finished school and universities and do not need Arabizi for studying. Although nine respondents have selected the option “Others”, the majority have not specified the exact setting whether online or offline. One respondent, nonetheless, has mentioned Azar, while another respondent has reported a couple of other choices such as Telegram, Path and Saraha.com.

One may argue that the choice of Twitter as the most common application for Arabizi might be due to the predominance of Twitter in Saudi Arabia (Alghamdi 2018). According to Statistica.com (see <https://bit.ly/385irg4>), Saudi Arabia is ranked first across the globe in terms of Twitter users. The SocialClinic.com website (see <https://bit.ly/3D7yB76>) also highlights that Saudi Arabia is home to more than half of the active Twitter users in the Arab world, producing around 50 million tweets a month. Gamma, a male 38-year-old interviewee, reports in (6) that his daily use of Twitter is due to the presence of personalities, VIPs, doctors, intellectuals on this platform. Alpha, a 33-year-old male, also indicates that Twitter is more common in Saudi Arabia whereas Facebook is used by Arabs elsewhere.

6. Gamma (38 years): “I follow many accounts on Twitter on a daily basis because all accounts are verified. You can find all the big names there, including intellectuals, writers, doctors, and big personalities. Even the king is present only on Twitter.”

7. Alpha (33 years): “I do not check on my Facebook account. Facebook is for Egyptians. We use Twitter more in Saudi Arabia. Twitter is short [in content] and less cluttered.”

As for Instagram (50% of the respondents), it is more common among females than males. As manifested in (8), the 33-year-old female interviewee, Lambda, confirms her affiliation to Instagram, underscoring the rapidly rising growth of local businesses and enterprises on Instagram compared to other applications. In fact, Instagram has been reported as an application for advertisement and e-commerce in previous studies such as Almuhaimeed (2014) and Saiidi (2015). As for instant messaging applications, another female respondent, Eta, states that she uses Arabizi on BBM more than her other devices. She is an older user of BBM and she is still active on it at present.

8. Lambda (33 years): “Most of my friends are on Instagram. I like it because it displays pictures only and less talk, and there are a lot of offers and sales.”

Eta (38 years): “I have been using BBM since 2010. It started with no Arabic script and I used Arabizi then. It was a device before it becomes an application. I like BBM because it has more privacy restrictions and rules.”

The seventh question is designed to gain insight into the users’ switching between different codes: Arabic, English and Arabizi. Arabizi presupposes that users have sufficient knowledge of both Arabic and English scripts. Chart 3 demonstrates the results where only the percentages of the respondents are given.

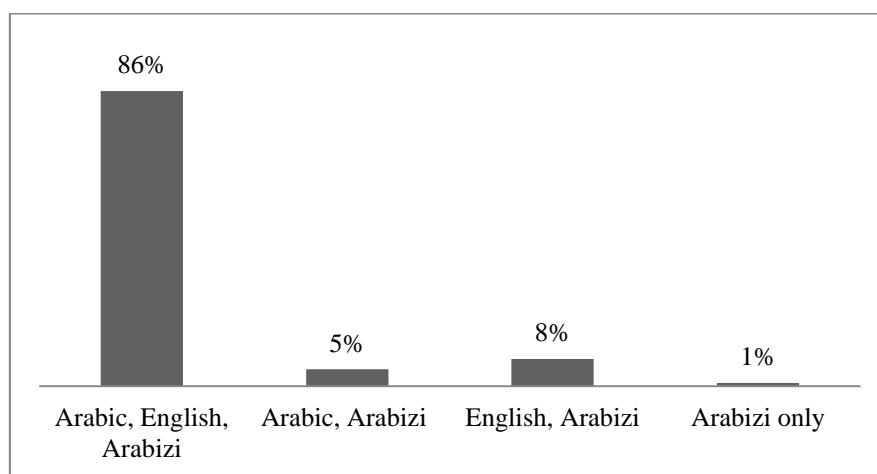


Chart 3. Percentages of Respondents to the Question “In my writing, I use the following writing systems”.

It is obvious from Chart 3 that the majority of the respondents (i.e. 86%) employ all three codes simultaneously. This is a predictable result given that Arabizi cannot evolve without the understanding of both Arabic and English (Aboelezz, 2009; Alajmi, 2014; Keong, Hameed & Abdulbaqi, 2015; Yaghan, 2008). The second-highest choice (English and Arabizi) has been chosen by 8% of the respondents, and it is an understandable option given that the users do not need to switch keyboards when they write in both codes. Those respondents who use Arabic and Arabizi constitute 5% of the study sample, whereas only 1% of the respondents have claimed that they use Arabizi exclusively.

To understand the practical uses of these codes, the respondents have been asked to answer a follow-up open-ended question. This question (i.e. When do you use Arabic, English or Arabizi?) aims to explore the situations where the respondents write in each code, and elicits information regarding

the exclusive uses of Arabizi with respect to the other codes. Given that different answers have been provided, these responses have been categorized and summarized as follows. For Arabic, the majority of the respondents have reported that they use Arabic with their parents and family members (13%), with Arabic-speaking people and friends in general (64%), in formal settings such as government and educational spheres (19%), and various other (including irrelevant) answers (4%). In contrast, English is primarily used with non-Arabs (84%) or in schools, universities and foreign government procedures (11%). Around 5% of the respondents have provided other uncategorized or immaterial answers. As for Arabizi, respondents have claimed that they use it in informal settings such as social media websites (65%) or with friends and peers who use Arabizi (31%). The remaining respondents (i.e. 4%) have provided other unclear reasons for using Arabizi. One respondent, for instance, has claimed that she uses Arabizi in the press, which is an unexpected environment unless she means the social press, which is non-existent as well. In summary, the respondents justify their choices based on the addressees and the environments where each code should be used.

Interviews also provide further corroborative data on codeswitching between Arabic, English and Arabizi. As shown in (10), the 33-year-old male interviewee, Delta, associates his use of each code with the addressee. He claims that sometimes when a person writes to him in a code, he cannot reply in another code. Following the same line of reasoning, the female 38-year-old interviewee, Theta, justifies her choices as in (11), adding that the topic plays a role as well in the uses. For example, Quranic verses cannot be written in Arabizi at all.

9. Delta (33 years): *“It depends on the addressee. I cannot use Arabizi with my father, for example. He will never understand me. He might be offended as well. I use Arabic only with my parents or brothers who have never been exposed to Arabizi. As for English, I use it with English-speaking friends. I use Arabizi rarely. I do not use it on purpose, but I respond to those who use it with me. I guess that they want me to respond in the same language.”*

10. Theta (38 years): *“I write to my friends who know Arabizi in Arabizi. My friends who write in Arabic or English, I write to them in Arabic or English. The situation decides which code I should use. It does not require a lot of thinking. You can guess the appropriate code easily. If you are addressed with one code, you will respond to it via the same code. If a friend wrote to me in English, I respond to her in English. If I respond in Arabic, it means that I do not know English and I am uncomfortable with using English. Also, the topic determines where I use Arabizi. For example, if I am writing verses from the Quran, I must use Arabic script. Arabizi means I disdain the Quran. Imagine that I am doing this. This is so bad.”*

The eighth question is the most important as it explores the motivations behind Arabizi use. Respondents are exposed to common options and they are allowed to choose more than one answer. They are also given the chance to elaborate and provide other missing choices. Chart 4 presents the main findings of this question.

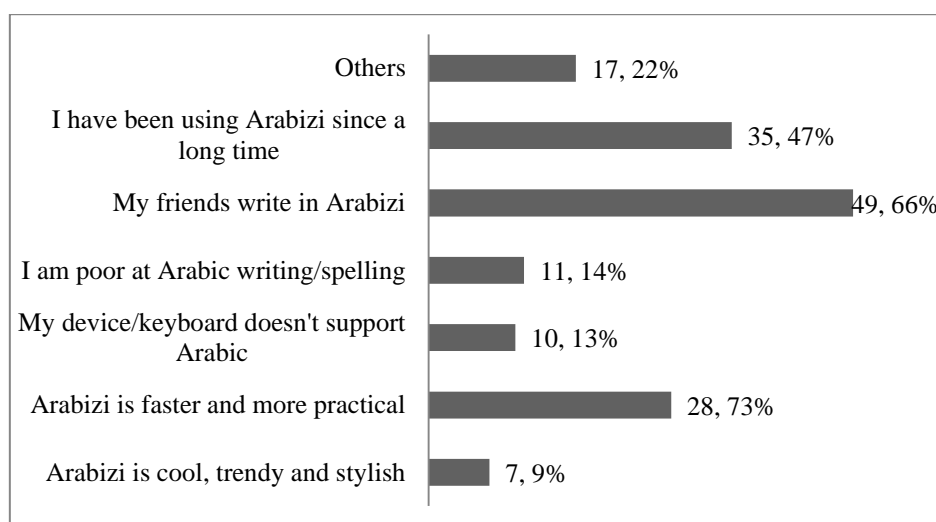


Chart 4. Number of Respondents to Question “Why do you use Arabizi?”

As evident from the results, only 7 respondents (9% of the whole sample) use Arabizi because it is cool, trendy and stylish. These results are contrary to the earlier studies which find that youths prefer Arabizi for fashionable reasons (Palfreyman and Al Khalil 2003, Bahrainwala 2011 and Al-Hawsani 2014). In the current study, adults tend to use Arabizi only when necessary. The 31-year-old interviewee, Zeta, confirms this saying that he never thinks of Arabizi as a stylish code. The same response is drawn from Lambda, the 33-year-old female interviewee, in (13).

11. Zeta (31 years): *“I never use Arabizi because it is stylish and cool. I only use it when I have to.”*

12. Lambda (33 years): *“When I really need to use Arabizi, I use it. I do not use it without any purposes, like because it is so cool.”*

The least chosen option is the claim that their devices/keyboards do not support Arabic. This option is predictable given that all the devices nowadays support the Arabic script (Aboelezz, 2009; Al-Khatib & Sabbah, 2008; Keong, Hameed & Abdulbaqi, 2015). However, the 34-year-old interviewee, Beta, comments specifically on this point. He maintains that when he was an overseas scholarship student, none of the PCs in the university library supported the Arabic script, and he had to write in Arabizi most of the time.

13. Beta (34 years): *“I used to use Arabizi a lot when I was a scholarship student in the US. All the keyboards in the library were in English. The PCs are not supported with Arabic at all. I had to use Arabizi.”*

As for the writing and spelling abilities, 11 respondents (14% of the sample) have selected that option, perhaps along with other options. When all the interviewees have been questioned about this option, nobody has acknowledged that they are using Arabizi for their inefficiencies in Arabic grammar or spelling. In fact, grammar has nothing to do with Arabizi, because Arabizi does not hide grammatical mistakes at all. Grammatical errors can be observed irrespective of the writing code, but spelling mistakes can be alleviated under Arabizi (Alghamdi 2018). In any case, no interviewee has confessed to this option. It seems that most interviewees are well educated in Arabic, or making spelling mistakes is less common among them or is still more tolerable to them than the recourse to Arabizi itself.

Around 28 respondents (73% of the sample) have chosen the option that stresses the swiftness and practicality of Arabizi. Iota, who is a 34-year-old businesswoman, highlights in (15) the practicality of the Arabizi code. She claims that switching between different keyboards on the device is a hassle and

makes her less inclined to use Arabic. Alpha, a male 33-year-old, reiterates the same point as in (16), underlining the technical issues that arise from keyboard switching. Iota and Alpha's justifications are in line with that of Abu-Absi (1986), who argues that Arabizi emerges due to the convolution and complication of the Arabic letters which require, unlike English ones, separate forms when they appear in isolation or initial, medial and final positions.

14. Iota (34 years): *"Sometimes, I write in English. At that moment, it is better for me to use the same English keyboard when I want to say something in Arabic. It is really faster in this situation. Sometimes, you need to add one Arabic word within the whole English texts, should I switch the whole calligraphy for this single word?"*

15. Alpha (33 years): *"It takes a little bit of time to switch to Arabic if you are on the English keyboard. Also, there is an aesthetic part here. Writing in Arabic within the English phrases yields technical problems with alignments. The English text will shift to the right. I also memorize the English keyboard, and I can more easily figure out where the letters are located."*

The majority of respondents have reported that they use Arabizi because their friends use it (i.e. 66%) and because they have been using it for a long time (i.e. 47%). These motivations confirm that Arabizi thrives in a speech community whose members use a certain code on a regular basis. Gamma in (17), for instance, points out that he only uses Arabizi among Arabizi users. The same message is delivered in (18) by Kappa who claims that her friends put pressure on her to use Arabizi. For the sake of the friendship, she then avoids criticizing friends who use Arabizi but keeps responding in their preferred code. This position is in accordance with Boyd's (2014) results, which show that internet languages take shape when users interact with their peers to reinforce identity and show solidarity as an inter-group separate from the whole community.

16. Gamma (38 years): *"I use Arabizi and the first reason is my friends. They write to me in Arabizi and I cannot imagine myself responding to them in Arabic. Sometimes, I write in Arabizi in a funny way. I want to interact with them in what they want."*

17. Kappa (39 years): *"I should always reiterate that the situation dictates on you what you do. If your friends are sending messages to you in Arabizi, there is a kind of pressure on you to respond in the same script. If you chose a different script, it would either mean that you look down on their choices or you are not professional at friendly communication."*

Seventeen respondents have added other motivations behind their use of Arabizi. Nine respondents have claimed that they use it when the addressee understands Arabic but cannot read the convoluted Arabic script. For instance, a couple of respondents have referred to the Islamic phrases that cannot be read by newly converted Muslims and need to be written in the English script such as *Asalamu 3laikum* 'Peace be upon you', *Al7amdullilah* 'Praise be to Allah', *Bismillah Alra7mani ira7im* 'In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful', *mashallah* 'God bless you' and the like. The incorporation of numbers within the English script indicates that there is a strange sound that needs to be considered in pronunciation. Beta, one of the interviewees, claims in (19) that he was using Arabizi in teaching some American Muslims how to pronounce the Quranic verses.

18. Beta (34 years): *"Arabizi was helpful for me when I was teaching Muslims how to pronounce the Quran at the mosque. We used to have Quranic circles. I used to text some inquirers with the proper pronunciation using Arabizi."*

Three respondents have mentioned that they use Arabizi to exclude others such as family members from reading their text messages or their posts on SMW&As. The interviewee Mu in (17) elaborates on this issue, claiming that Arabizi is advantageous to exclude family members from reading her private messages because it is a difficult code for the readers who are not adequately exposed to it. Eta's justification correlates with Alshwuairekh's (2014) findings that Arabizi is a tool to keep users protected against the older generation's judgments.

19. Mu (31 year): *“When I write to my friends about a serious issue, I write in Arabizi just in case my phone is within the reach of my brothers. Once they see the messages from afar in Arabizi, they think it is English and they become discouraged from trying to decipher the content, even though it can be easily deciphered. It is very hard to read Arabizi if you are not used to it.”*

Two respondents have also claimed that they use Arabizi when they have devices that are not supported with Arabic. Three respondents have provided different answers: (i) when they write usernames for the social media websites, (ii) only for Islamic greetings, and (iii) for abbreviations when there is no space.

Besides the options in the e-questionnaire, the interviewees have provided other reasons for Arabizi use. Some interviewees have listed more than one reason. Most of the interviewees have reinforced the need for Arabizi use in their communication with the non-Arabic readership, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. Five interviewees have mentioned that Arabizi helps in excluding authoritarian family members, parents and spouses from reading their messages and posts, and an equal number of interviewees have acknowledged the difficulty of switching from one keyboard to another. One interviewee has claimed that Arabizi helps her in expressing herself freely when she talks about taboo topics. Finally, two interviewees (Iota being one of them) have argued that Arabizi is a good aid in improving their English language.

20. Iota (34 year): *“My phone is all in English. You cannot find an Arabic word in it whatsoever. I am doing this because keeping an English mind and attitude helps in improving my language. I do not want to forget English at all. When I really need to write in Arabic, I use my other phone, or I simply go online to websites that provide virtual Arabic script keyboard.”*

In conclusion, friendship and habit formation are behind the use of Arabizi among the older generation first and foremost. The majority tend to use Arabizi because they are members of a speech community or because they use Arabizi habitually. The practicality and swiftness of Arabizi ranks third. Although the fear of misspelling in Arabic is reported by 11 respondents, no interviewees have confirmed this motivation. The weakest motivations for Arabizi use is that it is cool, trendy and stylish or because devices and keyboards do not support Arabic. Other key reasons that have been mentioned besides the e-questionnaire close-ended questions are to facilitate communication with non-Arabic readers and to exclude Arabic readers from the discussion. In light of these options, it is evident that older users tend to revert to Arabizi only when they cannot use other codes.

4.2. The Attitudes and Beliefs towards Arabizi

This section aims to examine the attitudes and beliefs that Arabizi users hold towards their writing system. Four questions are designed to draw this information from the participants. The possible answers to the first two questions include three choices: positive, neutral and negative, whereas the other two are yes-no questions. The first question is concerned with the public view of Arabizi and the Arabizi users' awareness of this view. The second question is a direct question about Arabizi users' attitudes towards Arabizi. To ensure that the respondents' answers will reflect on their behaviors in the future, two yes-no questions are raised: the first question asks whether the respondents will continue using Arabizi and the second question is regarding whether or not they will teach it to their children. All these close-ended questions are followed with an open-ended question asking why they chose their given answers.

Question 9 seeks to understand the users' awareness of the general attitude towards Arabizi. The respondents are asked about how the university, schools, the media and the press portray Arabizi. This question demonstrates that Arabizi users are generally aware of the status of their writing code. The results of this question are illustrated in Chart 5.

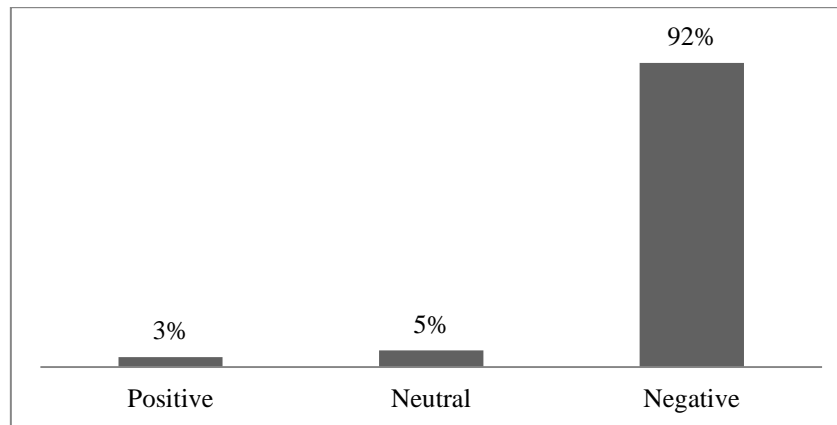


Chart 5. Percentages of Responses of the Universities, Schools, the Media and the Public towards Arabizi.

The findings show that the majority of the respondents are conscious of the negative public image of Arabizi. Many respondents have provided reasons behind this negative image. The justifications vary between (i) the public's fear that Arabizi undermines Islam and the Arabic language (86%), the view of Arabizi as a poor and bad language in itself (12%) and other reasons (2%). As for the interviewees, they have reached a consensus that Arabizi is negatively portrayed everywhere (100%). As illustrated in (22), the 38-year-old male interviewee, Gamma, ascribes the negative depiction of Arabizi to the strong affiliation of the people to their Islamic and Arab heritage. As for the 33-year-old female interviewee, Iota, she emphasizes in (23) that this negative view of Arabizi arises from people's ignorance of the use of Arabizi as a necessary code on a few occasions.

21. Gamma (38 years): *"We are Muslims and Arabs. We have been learning at school that we should be always proud of our Islam. Also, Arabic is the language of the Quran, and any attempt to replace it or rival it is considered westernization. Thus, people will surely reject any code that undermines these things."*

22. Iota (33 years): *"People look at Arabizi negatively, but: do not accept any judgement from anyone unless they understand why we use Arabizi. The human being is always an enemy of what he/she is ignorant of. Some people think that we are using Arabizi and abandoning Arabic. We do not abandon Arabic forever. We are still talking in Arabic but in a different style. We only use Arabizi when Arabic becomes very formal."*

The most appropriate follow-up question at the moment targets the respondents' personal views of Arabizi amid this acknowledgment of the public opinion. Despite the negativity, respondents tend to maintain their positive attitudes towards Arabizi, as shown in Chart 6.

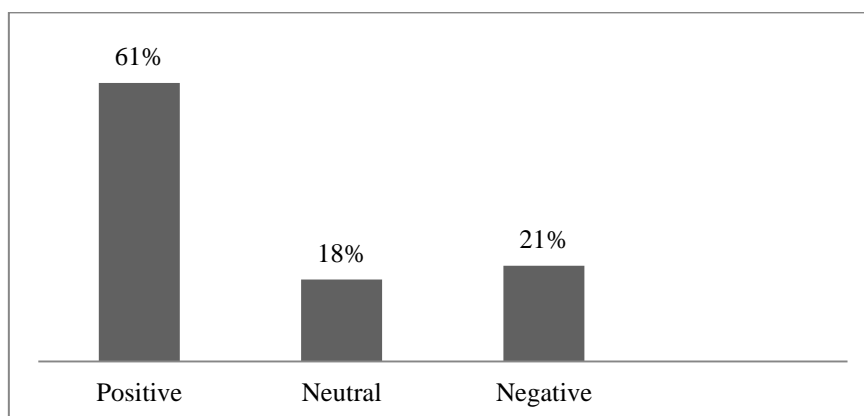


Chart 6. Percentages of Responses to the Personal Views of Arabizi Users towards Arabizi

The results in Chart 6 show that 21% of the respondents still take a negative stance towards Arabizi whereas 18% view it from a neutral perspective. These results are in contrast to previous studies (Palfreyman & Khalil, 2003, Björnsson, 2010, Bianchi, 2012, Assalman and Haraq, 2014, Romaih 2014). They support Alghamdi's (2018) findings, however. Respondents who portray Arabizi positively indicate that (i) Arabizi does not affect Islam or Arabic (43%), (ii) it is very helpful in communication (29%) and (iii) it is only used when needed (28%). The negative attitude is generally justified by the detrimental effects of Arabizi on Arabic and Islam (81%) and the nature of Arabizi as an impoverished language (19%). The respondents with neutral positions claim that Arabizi may not exercise a serious influence on Arabic (100%).

Similarly, and as noticed by Alghamdi (2018), our interviewees differ in their perspective between positive (66%, 8 persons), neutral (25%, 3) and negative (8%, 1 person). As apparent from (24), Epsilon, a 32-year-old interviewee, points out that Arabizi should not be misunderstood, affirming that the need for Arabizi is behind his constant use thereof. The 38-year-old female interviewee, Eta, says in (22) that she views Arabizi more neutrally, and it should not be given a positive or a negative appraisal.

23. Epsilon (32 years): *“I will say ‘positive’ because it helps me in many aspects of my writing. For example, can I write my username in Arabic in an English-supported website like Twitter? No, if Arabizi is useful here, why should I see it negatively when it is useful and effective. Also, I cannot see how Arabizi affects my Arabic language at all. The non-use of Arabic does not mean that it is collapsing!”*

24. Eta (38 years): *“If I look at Arabizi negatively, then I should not use it at all. If I look at it positively, then I should use it every day. I cannot do these. I will take a neutral stance.”*

Alpha is the only male interviewee who portrays Arabizi negatively because it affects his linguistic abilities.

26. Alpha (33 years): *“My answer is negative because it may have an effect on my mother tongue. Because Arabizi is strange, it must leave little influence on my language in a way that I do not notice.”*

Respondents have also been furnished with two yes-no questions. The first question examines whether they will resume their use of Arabizi or not. The results are laid out in Chart 7, where 85% of the respondents say “yes” whereas 15% say “no”.

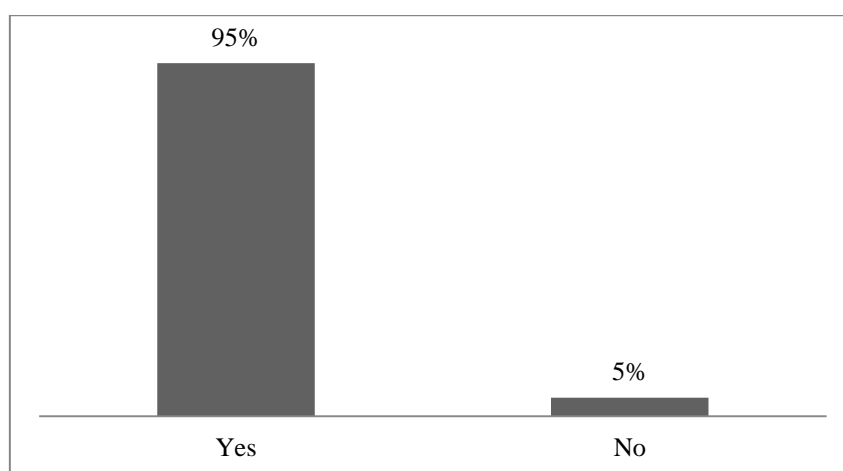


Chart 7. Percentages of Responses to ‘Do you plan to continue using Arabizi?’

The general justification of the respondents who insist on using Arabizi is that they are used to it, or Arabizi is very useful and non-problematic, and some other reason(s). Those respondents who have decided not to use Arabizi tend to claim that it is very harmful and it undermines Islam and Arabic. As for the interviewees, they all decide to resume their use of Arabizi. For example, the 33-year-old male interviewee, Delta, argues in (27) that once you use it, you cannot stop. The 38-year-old female interviewee, Theta, on the other hand, says that Arabizi is not very harmful, and she does not want to say “no” as if she is committing wrongdoing.

27. Delta (33 years): *“I cannot stop using it when it is very helpful and I am used to it. Once you use it, you cannot stop it. There are many situations where you will have to use it. I cannot guarantee that I will stop.”*

28. Theta (38 years): *“I wrote using Arabizi all my life, and I am now accustomed to it. If I said “no”, it means I will never need it in the coming years. This is not true. There must be a need for it one day. So, of course, I will keep using it.”*

The last question relates to the parental teaching of Arabizi to their children. The question aims to explore how far these negative and positive attitudes might go in an educational direction. The respondents are asked whether they will teach their children Arabizi. Chart 8 summarizes the answers, where 85% say “no” whereas 15% say “yes”.

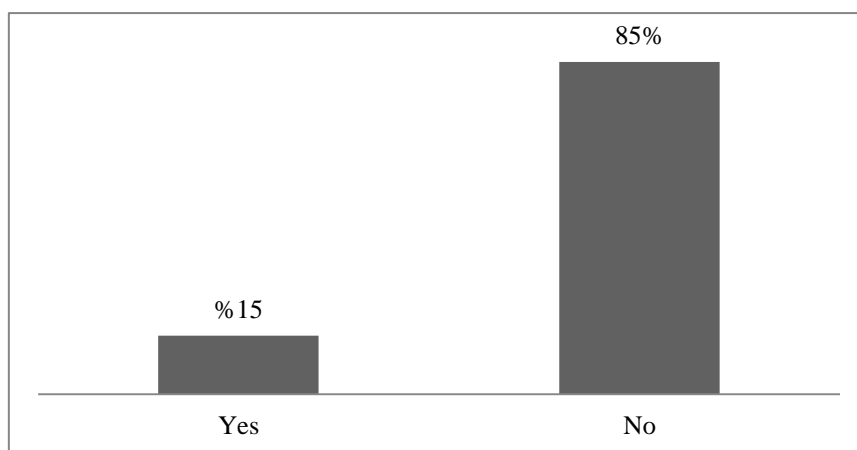


Chart 8. Percentages of Responses to ‘Do you plan to teach Arabizi to your children?’

Although the majority of the respondents view Arabizi positively (61%, see Chart 6), 85% of the sample still show reluctance to teach their kids Arabizi, as shown in Chart 8. The respondents have mostly justified their answers by saying that their children do not need Arabizi in the same way they need Arabic and English. The same answers related to the negative attitudes towards Arabizi as a threat to the Islamic and Arab identity have still been given. The same results are corroborated by the interviewees whose answers are “no” (83%, 10 interviewees) and “yes” (17%, 2 interviewees). As evident from (29), one male interviewee argues that Arabizi is not a language that needs to be formally taught to children. He claims that his refusal is not because of Arabizi but because children do not need to learn it as a language. Arabic and English suffice and must precede Arabizi. A female interviewee, Kappa, looks at Arabizi from a different perspective in (30). She claims that there is no problem in teaching Arabizi to her three kids in case they may need it in the future when they communicate with their peers.

29. Beta (38 years): “If my kids learn Arabic and English, they can learn Arabizi easily by themselves. I will not teach my kids Arabizi before Arabic and English as if Arabizi is a language and needs to be understood before other languages.”

30. Kappa (39 years): “I will not feel forced to teach my kids Arabizi because it is not important. However, if my kids fail to understand the numbers within the Arabizi text, I can teach them, just for their life.”

In short, although the majority of the respondents have viewed Arabizi positively, 85% of the sample still shows an unwillingness to teach their kids Arabizi. This indicates that Arabizi users’ attitudes towards this code diverge on a personal and parental level.

5. Conclusion

Although previous studies have investigated the uses, attitudes and beliefs towards Arabizi among the youth in particular (Assalman and Haraq, 2014, Romaih, 2014, Alghamdi, 2018 among others), this study targets Arabizi users who are 28 years old and above. The results of the current study contradict all the previous literature which shows a negative attitude towards Arabizi and which stresses its adverse impact on language and identity (Aboelezz, 2009; Alajmi, 2014; Keong, Hameed, & Abdulbaqi, 2015; Yaghan, 2008), and supports Alghamdi (2018), who uncovers more positivity among Arabizi users overall.

Using e-questionnaires and interviews, the current study shows that Arabizi users who are 28 years old or above are not as active as the younger generation in terms of Arabizi use, stressing that Arabizi is still a trendy and youthful form of language. The use of Arabizi among this particular sample comes as a code-switching behavior with other languages such as Arabic and English, and it is more common on Twitter and Snapchat, with a marginal use, if not non-use, for emails and/or on other studies and diary applications. This study demonstrates that our respondents feel more encouraged to use Arabizi for its practicality and their friendship with other Arabizi users. A few respondents report that they use Arabizi for its stylistic weight and/or their ignorance of Arabic grammar and spelling. Despite their recognition of the widespread negative view of Arabizi in universities, schools, mosques and the public media, the majority of the respondents are still similar to the youths in having more positive attitudes towards this code of communication. However, their attitudes to Arabizi seem to diverge on the personal and parental levels, stressing their reluctance to teach Arabizi to their children.

References

- Abdel-Ghaffar, N., Elshamly, N., Farrag, M., & Muhammed, R. (2011). *Summary of Arabizi or Romanization: The dilemma of writing Arabic texts* [Paper presentation]. Jil Jadid Conference, Austin, TX.
- Aboelezz, M. (2009). *Latinized Arabic and connections to bilingual ability* [Paper presentation]. Lancaster University Postgraduate Conference in Linguistics and Language Teaching, Lancaster, UK.
- Abu-Absi, S. (1986). The modernization of Arabic: Problems and prospects. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28(3), 337-348.
- Alajmi, S. (2014). *Alarabtini: Alkitabah belarabiyah belahrof allatinnyah* [Latinised Arabic: Writing Arabic with Latin alphabet] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol 414 alhadithah* [Arab youths’ language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 7-26). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.

- Alghamdi, H. (2018). *Arabizi: An Exploration the Use of the Contemporary Youth Netspeak on Social Networking Sites in Saudi Arabia* [Doctoral Dissertation]. University of Canberra.
- Alshwuairekh, S. (2014). *Thaherat alarabizi* [The Arabizi phenomenon] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 27-30). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Al-Hawsani, N. (2014). *Araa'a talibat almarhalah althanaweeah fi estekhdam al-arabizi fi dawlat alemarat alarabyah almotahedah* [Female high school students' opinions about the use of Arabizi in the UAE] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 261-284). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Al-Khatib, M., & Sabbah, E. (2008). Language choice in mobile text messages among Jordanian university students. *SKY Journal of Linguistics*, 21, 37-65.
- Bianchi, R. (2012). Glocal Arabic online: The case of 3arabizi. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 2(4), 483-503.
- Allmann, K. (2009). Arabic language use online: Social, political, and technological dimensions of multilingual Internet communication. *The Monitor*, 1, 61-76.
- Almandhari, R. (2014). *Mostawa estekhdam alarabizi lada alshabab alomani fi mawaqea altawasol alejtemaey* [How much Arabizi is used by Omani youth on social networking sites] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 205-234). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Alsabaan, L. (2014). *Alashkal alloghawyyah le alrasayel alelektronyyah enda alshabab* [Linguistic varieties of youth text messages] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 59-86). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Alsharafi-Taim, M. (2014). *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 399-435). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Assalman, A., & Haraq, F. (2014). *Alarabizi men manthoor hasooby* [Arabizi from a computational view] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 47-58). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). *Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies*, Social Research Update.
- Bahrainwala, L. (2011). *You say Hello, I say mar7aba: Exploring the digi-speak that powered the Arab revolution* [Unpublished MA thesis]. Michigan State University.
- Bianchi, R. (2013). *Arab English: The case of 3arabizi/Arabish*. Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar.
- Bjørnsson, J. (2010). *Egyptian Romanized Arabic: A study of selected features from communication among Egyptian youth on Facebook* [Unpublished MA thesis]. University of Oslo.
- Black, I., & Kiss, J. (2009). Facebook launches Arabic version, *The Guardian*.

- Bloor, M., & Wood, F. (2006). *Keywords in qualitative methods: A vocabulary of research concepts*. SAGE.
- Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*, SAGE.
- Boyd, D. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*, Yale University Press.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (1998). Quantitative and qualitative research strategies in knowing the social world. In T. May & M. Williams (Eds.), *Knowing the social world* (pp. 138–157). Open University Press.
- Burr, V. (2002). *An introduction to social constructionism*, Routledge.
- Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). SAGE.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the Internet* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Drever, E. (1995). *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research: a teacher's guide*. Scottish Council for Research in Education.
- Flick, U. (2008). *Designing qualitative research*, SAGE.
- Flick, U. (2014). *An introduction to qualitative research*, SAGE.
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*, SAGE.
- Hymes, D. (1979). On communicative competence. In K. Johnson & C. Brumfit (Eds.), *The communicative approach to language teaching* (pp. 53-73). Oxford University Press.
- Keong, Y., Hameed, O., & Abdulbaqi, I. (2015). The use of Arabizi in English texting by Arab postgraduate students at UKM. *The English Literature Journal*, 2(2), 281-288.
- Kozinets, R. (2009). *Netnography: Doing ethnographic research online*, SAGE.
- Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing Interviews*, SAGE.
- Lusted, M. (2011). *Social networking: MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter*, ABDO.
- Miller, R., & Brewer, J. (2003). *The A-Z of social research: A dictionary of key social science research concepts*, SAGE.
- Palfreyman, D., & Al Khalil, M. (2003). A Funky language for teenzz to use: Representing Gulf Arabic in instant messaging. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 9(1), 1-24.
- Paltridge, B. (2006). *Discourse analysis: An introduction*, Continuum.
- Romaih, M. (2014). *Thaqafat tagheer alloghah lada shabab alaalam alaraby wa atharaha alaa alhawyyah althaqafyyah* [The culture of language change and its effects on Arab youth cultural identity] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 235-260). Riyadh: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center for the Arabic Language.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*, SAGE.
- Saiidi, U. (2015). One way Instagram could crush Twitter in 2 years, *CNBC*.

- Srage, N. (2014). *Alarabizi: derasat halaah min lobnan* [Arabizi: A case study from Lebanon] *Loghat alshabab alaraby fi wasayel altawasol alhadithah* [Arab youths' language in new social media] (Vol. 1, pp. 105-150). Riyadh: King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Center For The Arabic Language.
- Sue, V., & Ritter, L. (2012). *Conducting online surveys* (2nd ed.), SAGE.
- Széll, M. (2012). *Westernizing Arabic: Attempts to "simplify" the Arabic script*. Tipográfiai Diákkonferencia.
- Warschauer, M., El Said, G., & Zohry, A. (2002). Language choice online: Globalization and identity in Egypt. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 7(4), 1-38.
- Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*, Free Press.
- Wright, K., & Webb, L. (2011). *Computer-mediated communication in personal relationships*, Peter Lang.
- Yaghan, M. (2008). Arabizi: A contemporary style of Arabic slang. *Design Issues*, 24(2), 39- 52.

AUTHOR BIODATA

Mohammad Alanazi, Assistant Professor of Translation Studies from Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University. I work currently as director general of King Abdullah Institute for Translation and Arabization. My research interests include translation and interpretation studies, computational linguistics & NLP.

Appendix

A. The E-Questionnaire

Dear Respondent,

Arabizi, in this study, means the writing of Arabic words using English letters such as "sa7" and "3ali". This study aims to explore the beliefs and attitudes of Arabizi users and non-users on social media outlets. It also examines the functions and purposes that users use Arabizi for.

You have the right to participate and withdraw from the questionnaire at any time without any further commitments.

1. Age:

- 27-below
- 28
- 29
- 30
- 31
- 32
- 33
- 34
- 35-above

2. Gender

- Male
- Female

3. Nationality

- Saudi
- Non-Saudi

4. Education

- Diploma
- BA
- MA
- PhD
- Others

5. How often do you use Arabizi?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

6. I use Arabizi in the following websites/applications:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Instagram
- BBM
- WhatsApp
- Emails
- Study and Diary
- Others: Mention them.

7. In my writing, I use the following writing codes:

- Arabizi, Arabic and English
- Arabizi and Arabic
- Arabizi and English
- Arabizi only

When and where do you use the following codes:

- Arabic

.....

- English

.....

- Arabizi

.....

8. Why do you use Arabizi? (you can choose more than one answer).

- Arabizi is cool, trendy and stylish.
- Arabizi is faster and more practical.
- My device/keyboard does not support Arabic.
- I am poor at Arabic writing/spelling.
- All my friends write in Arabizi.
- I have been using Arabizi since a long time
- Others: Mention them

9. What are the attitudes of universities, schools, the media and the public towards Arabizi?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Why:

10. What attitude do you have regarding Arabizi and its users?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

Why:

11. Do you plan to continue using Arabizi? Why or why not?

- Yes
- No

Why:

12. Do you plan to teach Arabizi to your children? Why or why not?

- Yes
- No

Why:

B. The Interview Questions

1. When did you first use Arabizi? How old were you? Why did you start using it?
2. Do you code switch between Arabic, English and Arabizi? When do you use each code? Why do you use each code?
3. What do others think of Arabizi and why do you think that? What do you think of them? What do you think of Arabizi in general? What is your attitude towards it? Why?
4. Are you planning to use Arabizi in the future? Why? Are you going to teach it to your kids?