

The Role of Digital Multilingual Patterns & Functions on Branding and Self-Branding: An Investigation of Practices by Saudi Users on Twitter

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Background

Corporations and social media influencers thrive to build creative social media strategies and they increasingly realise the impact of tweeted news, publicized 'likes', and shared and uploaded content, and they encourage their followers to share their opinions, pictures, and videos related to the brand or person (Puschmann and Hagelmoser 2015). This online presence is an important requirement for any business, especially for branding and public relations (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

The use of the different language varieties in digital communication, especially on a widely public platform such as Twitter, is not spontaneous and involves awareness and self-consciousness before posting it to the public. In the case of corporations and influencers, the language choice is an important decision for the success of communicating any message.

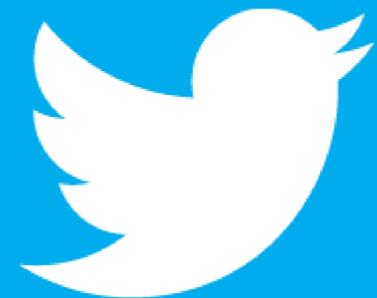
As users have different types of audience among their followers, this may complicate their language choice online. Marwick and Boyd (2011) discuss the concept of Context Collapse, which is the process by which various offline networks with different sociodemographics and types of relations are virtually co-presented in virtual space. Different Twitter users such as corporations, influencers, and ordinary users all have different kinds of followers that they need to present themselves to in different ways and this affects their language choice.

Research Questions

The research project aims to answer the following questions:

- What is happening linguistically in Saudi users' tweets? What are the codes that are used?
- What are the functions of the codes used on Twitter?
- How are the different groups (i.e. corporations, influencers, and ordinary users) using the different language choices in relation to the functions?
- What are the patterns of communication used by the different groups (i.e. corporations, influencers, and ordinary users) for branding and self-branding?

The results presented in this poster is a summary from the quantitative analysis of the corporations only.



Methodology

Twitter Data:

- Tweets were collected from the timeline of 100 public profiles
- The data was collected during the period between November 2017 and May 2018 through TAGS, one of the Search API tools, and Podargos.
- Half of the accounts are for corporations (50%) and the other half is divided between famous social media influencers (30%) and ordinary users (20%).
- The total number of the analysed tweets for the corporations only is 9370 tweets.
- Coding was done manually for the languages, emotions, and functions of the tweets.

Analytical Framework:

- The present study adopts the methodological framework of Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) presented by Herring (2004) for observing, coding, and interpreting data, supplemented by a quantitative analysis.
- The primary focus of the research design is to explore phenomena and to use qualitative interpretations to assist the quantitative analysis. The results of these two approaches are then integrated during the interpretation of the findings.

Results

- The languages shown in Fig. 1 below represent mainly monolingual tweets but in a multilingual discourse space as they coexist on the same platform or even on the same timeline (Androutsopoulos, 2013).
- The category (MIX) represent instances of code-switching and code-mixing within the same tweet.



Fig.1 Main Languages Used in Corporations Tweets



Fig.2 Functions in Corporations Tweets

- The following figures demonstrate an example on how the languages are used differently based on the main function of the tweet..

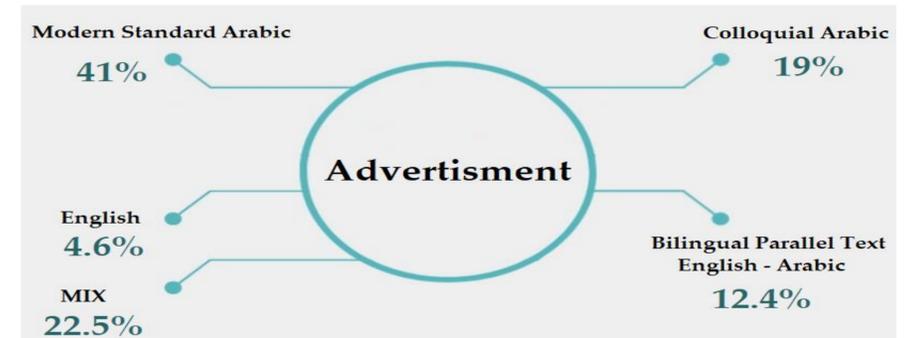


Fig.3 Languages Used in Advertisements

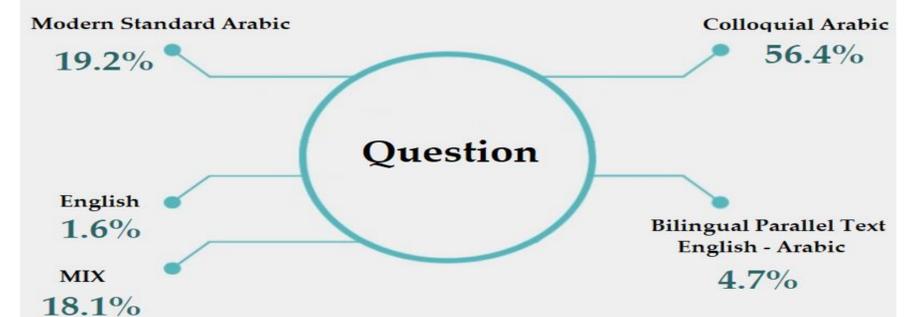


Fig.4 Languages Used in Questions

Next Steps

- The same analysis of the languages will be applied to the tweets collected from the social media influencers and ordinary users accounts. Then, a comparison of how the three different groups communicate with their audience will be discussed.
- Interviews were conducted with executives from the corporations, influencers, and ordinary users to understand the motivations. The results will also be incorporated with the analysis.

References

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