



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

Reem Al Madani - Supervised by : Dr Mercedes Durham

## Background

The primary objective of this research is to examine multilingual practices on Twitter by Arabic speakers in Saudi Arabia to identify the patterns and functions of using different language varieties. 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 particularly corporations and influencers, the language choice is an important decision for the success of communicating any message.

## Research Questions

The research project aims to answer the following questions:

- What is happening linguistically in Saudi users' tweets? What are the languages and varieties 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 of the proportions of the languages and varieties used by the three groups in addition to the answers of one of the interview questions which aimed to discuss the intended language choice on Twitter with a sample of users from each group.

## Methodology

- The research uses two main methods to collect the data which are the analysis of tweets and interviewing a sample of the users.
- Twitter Data
  - Tweets were collected from the timeline of 100 public profiles (50 corporations, 30 influencers, and 20 ordinary users).
  - The total number of the tweets (i.e., updates and retweets) used for the analysis is 13,352.
- Interviews
  - The total number of interviews is 15 (7 with corporations' marketing executives, 5 with social media influencers, and 3 with ordinary users.).
  - Thematic analysis was used to code the data and identify emerging themes and patterns to develop the findings.

## Results

- There are many languages and varieties that appeared in the data which are Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Colloquial Arabic (CA), Classical Arabic, English, French, Urdu, Arabic with Latin script, English with Arabic script in addition to tweets using only Emoji.
- There is also a hybrid between MSA and CA which was described by the corporations' executives and the influencers (MSA/CA).
- The following figures focus on the three top codes that are used in the data which are MSA, CA, and English.

### Corporations

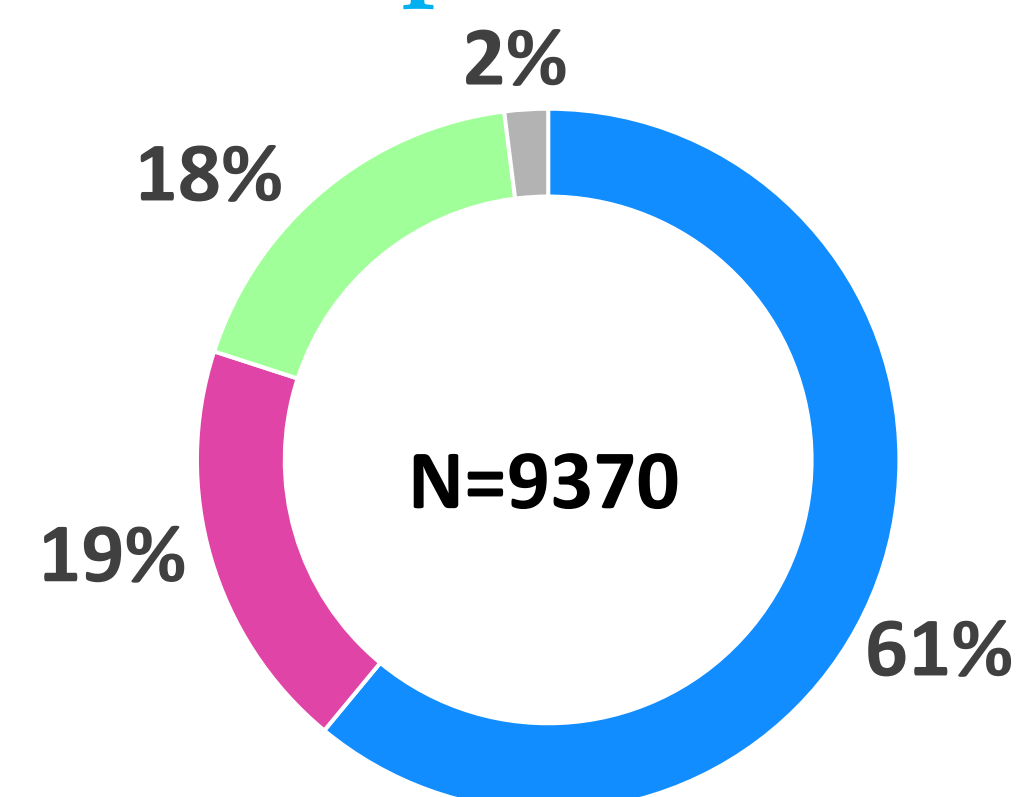


Figure .1 Proportion of languages and varieties in corporations' tweets

### Influencers

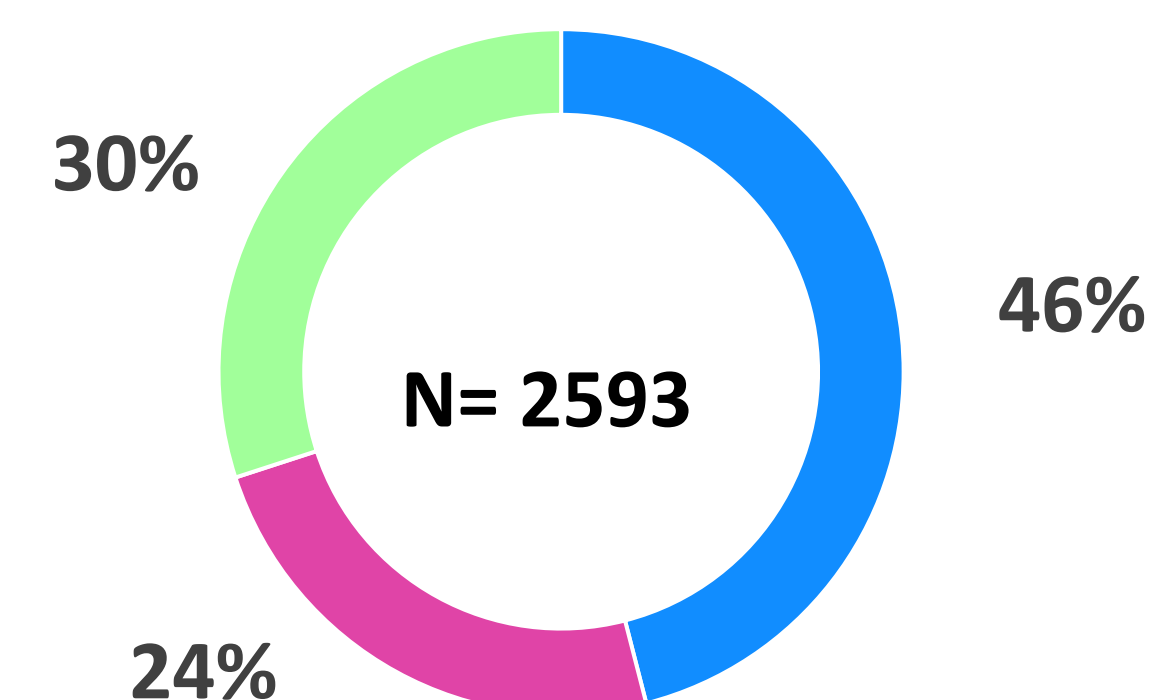


Figure .2. Proportion of languages and varieties in influencers' tweets

### Ordinary

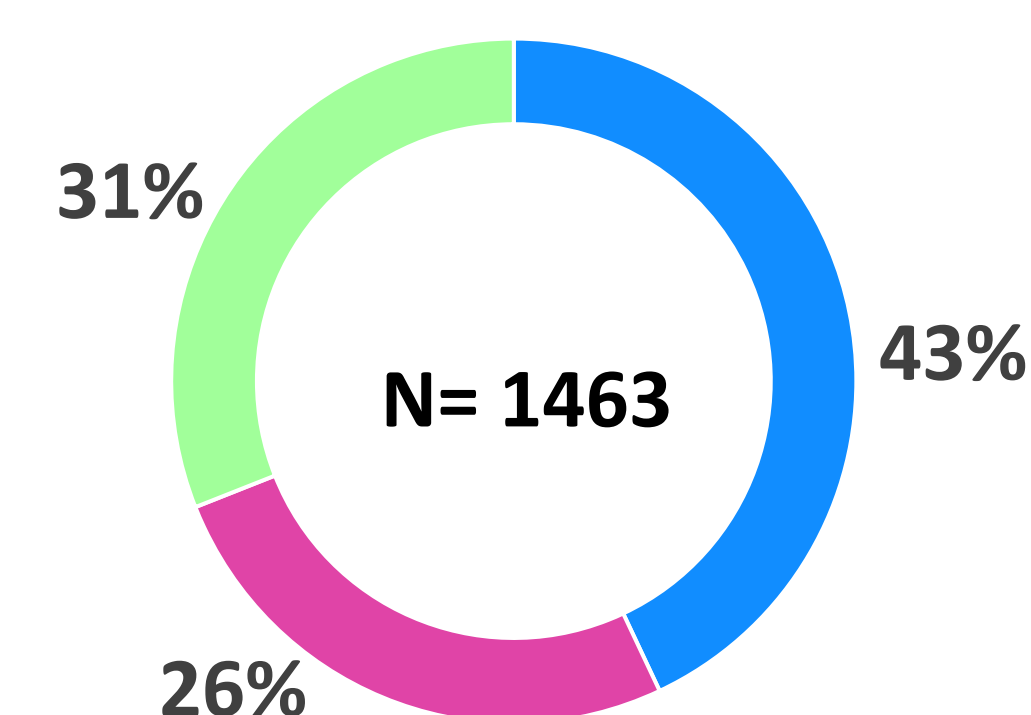


Figure .3. Proportion of languages and varieties in ordinary users' tweets

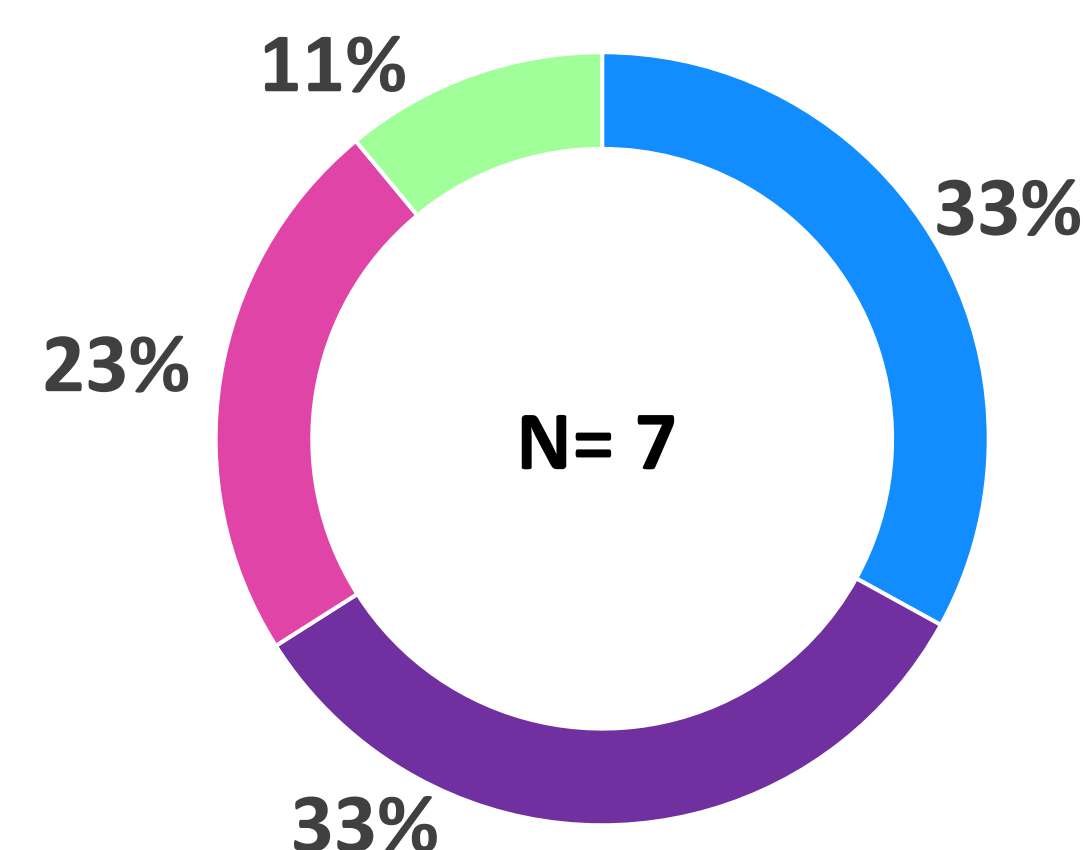


Figure .4 Languages and varieties used on the accounts as stated by corporations' interviews

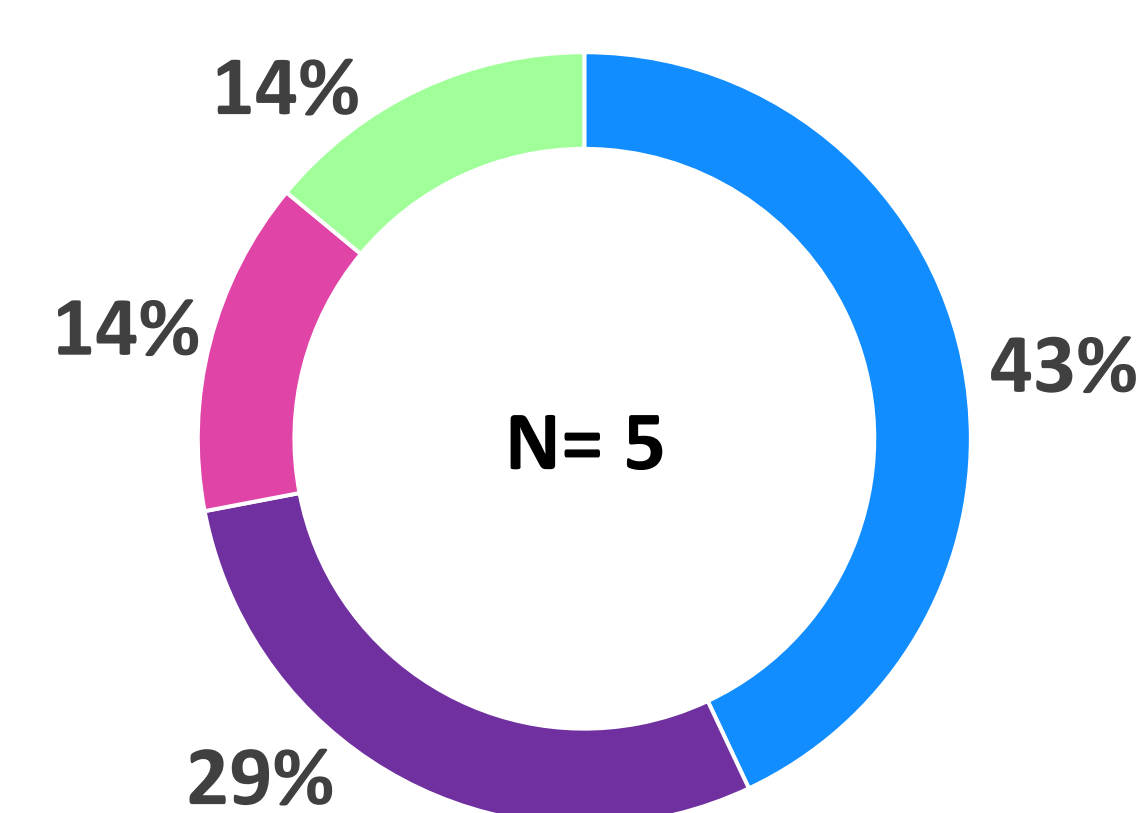


Figure 5. Languages and varieties used on the accounts as stated by influencers' interviews

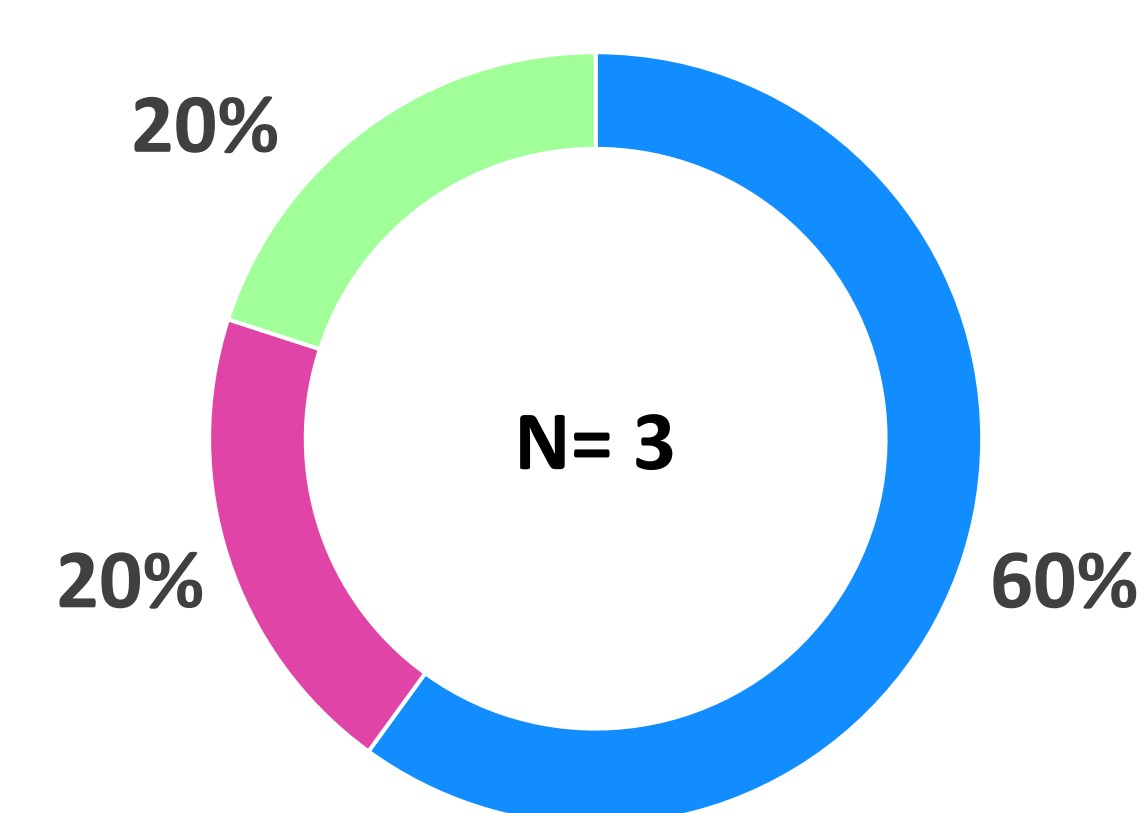


Figure 6. Languages and varieties used on the accounts as stated by ordinary users' interviews

■ Modern Standard Arabic ■ Modern Standard Arabic - Colloquial Arabic ■ English ■ Colloquial Arabic ■ Other

## Conclusion

It is not surprising that MSA is the most used code in the data, considering that it is the official language in Saudi Arabia. However, the results also imply that regardless of all the language affordances available to the users on Twitter, MSA still dominates Saudi Twitter as the preferred variety for the communication of the different types of users.

## Further Reading

- Abdulkafi, A. 2016. Modern Arabic sociolinguistics: diglossia, code-switching, attitudes and identity. New York: Routledge.
- Androutsopoulos, J. 2015. Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 19(2), pp. 185-205.
- Lee, C. 2017. Multilingualism online. London
- Marwick, A. and Boyd, D. 2011. I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society* 13(1), pp. 114-133. doi: 10.1177/1461444810365313