

DIALECT PREFERENCES AMONG THE SYRIAN REFUGEES IN JORDAN: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background and Purpose: Considering the scarcity of research on Syrian refugees from the sociolinguistics perspective, this research explored their reasons for dialect preferences when communicating in various domains of life in Jordan.

Methodology: The study employed a sequential mixed-methods design, which involved collecting quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire of 20 items. Qualitative data were collected using the semi-structured interviews conducted with 18 Syrian refugees. While the quantitative data analysis was done using descriptive statistics, the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews were coded and analysed thematically.

Findings: The study results showed that most Syrian refugees use the Syrian Dialect with family members, Syrian friends, colleagues at work, and Syrian neighbours. Further, the results revealed that most Syrian refugees prefer to use the Jordanian Dialect when communicating with Jordanian neighbours and friends and with Jordanians at the workplace and in educational contexts. The study revealed that the major reasons for dialect preferences among Syrian refugees are a desire for integration, close connection to their families, a sense of cultural familiarity, comfort in communication, interlocutors, and the importance of the formal context.

Contributions: By identifying the specific domains and underlying reasons for dialect preferences, the study enhances understanding of how language choices facilitate integration, maintain cultural identity, and navigate social contexts. The findings offer theoretical contributions to sociolinguistics, particularly

in the study of language and migration, while also informing policymakers, educators, and social workers on strategies to foster effective communication and social cohesion in multicultural settings.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, sociolinguistics, dialect preferences, Jordan, integration.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The civil war in Syria has forced many Syrians to flee their country and dwell in various countries, including Jordan. When people flee their homeland, they face the difficulty of adapting to a new culture in a host country that may be very different from their own (Lindner et al., 2020). The Jordanian regime has been admired for its open-border policy and humanitarian attitude towards Syrian refugees (Achilli, 2015). This is because, between 2011 and 2018, Jordan opened its borders for over 762,420 refugees to stay in Jordan. Furthermore, by February 2015, the number of Syrian refugees registered with UNHCR exceeded 600,000 (Achilli, 2015). Various aspects concerning Syrian refugees have been the focus of past studies. Some of these studies focused on the health issues of Syrian refugees (e.g., Al-Ali & Telfah, 2023; Brooks et al., 2022; El-Halabi et al., 2023), while another line of research focused on the social difficulties and barriers faced by these refugees (e.g., Alfadhli & Drury, 2018; AlMakhamreh & Hutchinson, 2018; Kisilu & Darras, 2018; Van Raemdonck, 2023). However, research on Syrian refugees' attitudes towards the Jordanian Dialect is scarce. This is the gap that our study intended to address. It is significant to investigate this emergent issue for two reasons. First, individuals' identity and attitudes towards a language have a strong impact on its status within a given community. Second, attitudes are considered to be composed of fundamental affective and cognitive elements, which are heavily affected by social systems. Specifically, the current study has addressed the following two research questions:

1. What are the domains of life (family, religious places, neighbourhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media) in which the Syrian refugees in Jordan prefer to use the Jordanian Arabic dialect?
2. What are the reasons behind Syrian refugees' preferences to use the Jordanian Arabic dialect in various domains of life?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to provide definitions of language use, language choice, and domains of life in this study for consistency and clarity. The definition of language use in this study is based on Deji-Afuye (2016), who referred to implementing rules that direct the formation of expressions in a particular language in such a way that it is suitable for a given context. To understand how language choice is used in this study, it is essential to refer to Cannava and Bodie (2017), who debated that while it is accepted that language represents emotions, language can only partially represent our emotions and, on the other hand, can impact or trigger a shift in our thought partially. Hence, language choice refers to using languages in diverse situations in life for various functions (Qawar, 2014). Georgieva (2014) maintained that language use in speech contexts, activities, and actions can help recognize societal values. Regarding this, Gal (1995) maintained that a speaker's preference between varieties is systematized, contrary to the generally accepted assumption that language use is unsystematic. Thus, it systematically relates to social interactions, occurrences, or circumstances. Hence, language choice is the proper utilization of the linguistic system of the speaker of another language or dialect's sentence, word, clause, or phrase. Further, Bentahila (1983) stated that variables related to the speaker, the relevant languages and their relations, or elements of the social setting can affect the choice of language in various domains of life. Various factors, possibly of different weights, may influence a particular dialect choice for refugees in the host country.

In this study, the term 'factors' refers to the reasons Syrian refugees choose to use the Syrian Dialect or the Jordanian dialect in various domains of life. When interaction occurs, people get to determine what language or variety they will use. Therefore, a context in which individuals have to select what language choices they will use for communication is commonly referred to as a field of language use (Fishman, 1972; Granhemat & Abdullah, 2017).

Researchers have argued that various factors can influence people's language choices. Furthermore, it has been widely identified that some of these factors are the addressee themselves (Scotton, 1982; Ullrich, 1982), the topic (Fishman, 1972), the situation (Fishman, 2020), exclusion strategy (Bamgbose, 2019; Oha, 2005), gender and age (Wolff, 2000), and socio-cultural contexts (Adegbite, 2002). Other researchers have also identified some other factors that can affect language choice. For example, factors like social status, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural and urban origin, gender, literacy level, speakers, topic, media, and formality of the situation, place have been identified as factors that can have an impact on the choice of language (Fasold, 1984; Spolsky, 1998). Bentahila (1983) posited that language choice may be influenced by factors relating to the individual speaker's (interlocutor) personal reasons, the

particular languages and their associations, or the social situation at hand. It is also likely that a combination of different variables may influence a particular choice. Further, Fasold (1984) noted that a speaker can switch between different languages in different domains in a bilingual or multilingual setting. This suggests that one can use a particular language at home or with close friends and switch to another in commerce and trade or even to a third one when dealing with government agencies.

The topic of discussion can impact language choice because different languages may have different associations, functions, or advantages for certain topics (Reddick & Chopra, 2023). For example, some languages may be more suitable for expressing emotions, humour, or politeness. On the other hand, some languages may be effective in expressing technical, academic, or legal matters. This depends on various factors, such as linguistic features, cultural norms, social contexts, and the personal preferences of the speakers. In multilingual settings or in contexts where more than one dialect is used, members of such a society may switch languages or dialects according to the topic of discussion or some other factors to achieve different communicative goals, such as showing identity, solidarity, respect, or expertise (Karanfil & Demir, 2021).

The domain of life can also affect language users' choice in the host country. Holmes and Wilson (2022) clarified that speech communities have various domains that direct and identify social life. In a speech community, the common domains include families, religion, education, work, and friendship. Each domain has unique, domain-specific aspects: addressee, context, and subject. Family members, for instance, are the primary addressees in the family domain, the setting would be the home place, and the subjects would be daily family issues. Such variables impact code choices in domains so that a certain code/variety is correlated with each domain deemed ideal for use.

Studies that have examined these issues are rare. For example, Rahman et al. (2007) examined the patterns of language choice and use in the education domain in Malaysia and examined what impacts this choice. The study focused on the patterns of language choice among University of Putra Malaysia (UPM) undergraduates, employed a structured questionnaire, and analysed the data quantitatively. The results revealed that language choice in education differs across sub-domains. It is also revealed that language competency, ethnicity, gender, and study subject influence the choice and use of language.

Concerning the presence of Syrian refugees in Jordan since 2011, various studies have focused on various issues on these refugees. The top subject areas of the large number of studies on Syrian refugees in Jordan are social sciences (e.g., Al Haddad et al., 2024; Sumadi et al.,

2023; Van Raemdonck, 2023), medicine (e.g., Abu Siam & Rubio Gómez, 2023; Al-Krenawi & Bell, 2023; Carrion-Martin et al., 2023), and arts and humanities (e.g., Alshmaseen et al., 2023; Malaeb & Wahba, 2023; Tobin et al., 2022). Yet, based on the researchers' survey of previous studies, it became apparent that previous researchers have not paid adequate attention to Syrian refugees from the sociolinguistic aspects. Further, there is a lack of studies on Syrian refugees' dialect preferences in the Jordanian context. Hence, these are the gaps that this study intended to focus on.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study used a sequential mixed methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, and the data were then incorporated into the analysis of the whole results (Ivankova et al., 2006). The quantitative phase results helped the researcher formulate the questions to be addressed in the qualitative phase. This particular research design was appropriate for our study for some reasons. First, the nature of the research questions requires collecting both data types. Second, this research design helped the researcher to examine quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data in two successive stages within a single study (Ivankova et al., 2006). Thirdly, the research issue in this study leans more towards a quantitative approach (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Given this, it is logical to initiate the research and data collection process in the quantitative phase.

3.2 Participants

As this study is a sequential mixed-methods research that involved quantitative and qualitative phases, there were two sampling stages, and in each one, a different sampling technique was used. In the quantitative phase, the respondents were 400 Syrian refugees randomly selected from many Syrian refugees in Jordan (Table 1). For the qualitative phases, 18 participants were purposively selected. Two criteria were employed for this purposive sampling: gender (male and female) and age groups (12-20 years, 21-40 years, and 41 years and above). Using crosstabs of age and gender, there were nine groups. To have an equal number of participants from each group, two participants were selected from each.

Table 1: Respondents to the questionnaire (N= 400)

Gender	Age			Total	%
	12-20	21-40	41 and above		
Female	67	67	66	200	50%
Male	66	67	67	200	50%
	133	134	133	400	

4.0 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In the first phase, data were collected using a questionnaire that included 20 items. The domains which were targeted in the questionnaire included the use of Jordanian Dialect and Syrian Dialect with immediate family and extended family members, in mosques/churches, with Jordanian and Syrian neighbours, at the markets, with friends, at the workplace, at the schools and universities, and in social media and communication. SPSS version 25 was used to compile, tabulate, and analyse the quantitative data, which included 400 responses to 20 items. Specifically, descriptive statistics were used, and the frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations of all 20 items were calculated to obtain information on 400 Syrian refugees' preferred dialects in various domains of life during their stay in Jordan.

The interviews focused on Syrian refugees' reasons for their preferred dialect in various domains of life. Inductive data analysis was used to analyse data obtained from the interviews conducted with 18 Syrian refugees based on Patton (1990) and Braun and Clarke (2006). In this analysis, themes "emerge from the data rather than being imposed on them before data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p. 306). This technique helped the researchers code all qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews. It also enabled the researchers to reveal Syrian refugees' reasons and justifications for differences in their preferred dialects in various domains of life.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Answers to Research Question One

The first research question in this study aimed at identifying Syrian refugees' preferences in using the Jordanian and Syrian Dialects in eight domains of life: family, religious places, neighbourhood, market, friends, workplace, education, and media. The results are reported in Tables 2 and 3. Based on the analysis of 400 Syrian refugees' responses to the 20 items, they primarily use the Syrian dialect within their immediate and extended family circles. This is

evident from the mean values of items 1 and 2, which fall below the "sometimes" category, indicating infrequent use of the Jordanian dialect. However, when interacting with religious figures like imams and priests, the mean values (around "sometimes") suggest occasional use of the Jordanian dialect (items 3 and 4). This suggests a potential shift in dialect choice based on the social setting, possibly out of respect for religious figures or to facilitate communication in diverse religious environments.

Interestingly, the preferred dialect for communication with neighbours shows a clear distinction. The mean value for item 5 indicates that Syrian refugees prefer the Jordanian dialect when interacting with Jordanian neighbours, likely aiming for better integration and understanding. Conversely, they primarily use the Syrian dialect with their Syrian neighbours. This suggests a tendency to maintain their native language within their community.

Table 2: Syrian refugees' dialect preference in the various domains of life

Item	Never	%	Seldom	%2	Sometimes	%3	Often	%4	Always	%5
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with my immediate family members (parents and children).	177	44%	122	31%	70	18%	13	3%	18	5%
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with my extended family members (aunts, uncles, and cousins).	149	37%	130	33%	78	20%	22	6%	21	5%
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanians at the mosque/church.	10	3%	37	9%	85	21%	113	28%	155	39%
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with the Imam/Priest at the mosque/church.	17	4%	35	9%	77	19%	125	31%	146	37%
With Jordanian neighbours, I speak the Jordanian Dialect.	9	2%	29	7%	58	15%	105	26%	199	50%
With Syrian neighbours, I speak the Jordanian Dialect.	7	2%	25	6%	71	18%	110	28%	187	47%
At the market, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian shopkeepers.	24	6%	36	9%	52	13%	98	25%	190	48%
At the market, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian shopkeepers.	30	8%	38	10%	44	11%	91	23%	197	49%
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian friends.	61	15%	71	18%	60	15%	78	20%	130	33%
I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian friends.	81	20%	74	19%	62	16%	87	22%	96	24%
At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian colleagues.	32	8%	23	6%	54	14%	61	15%	230	58%

At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian colleagues.	33	8%	31	8%	35	9%	47	12%	254	64%
At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian customers/clients.	37	9%	25	6%	46	12%	56	14%	236	59%
At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian customers/clients.	31	8%	30	8%	33	8%	48	12%	258	65%
At schools/ universities, I use the Jordanian Dialect with teachers/lecturers.	12	3%	16	4%	64	16%	122	31%	186	47%
At schools/universities, I use the Jordanian Dialect with School / University staff (canteen staff, clerks, school/university attendants, librarian, etc).	6	2%	22	6%	51	13%	141	35%	180	45%
I like listening to songs in the Jordanian Dialect.	10	3%	28	7%	86	22%	118	30%	158	40%
I like listening to Radio stations/programs in the Jordanian Dialect.	8	2%	24	6%	79	20%	114	29%	175	44%
I like to watch television programs in the Jordanian Dialect.	8	2%	21	5%	83	21%	122	31%	166	42%
I like to use the Jordanian Dialect on social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.	10	3%	23	6%	73	18%	117	29%	177	44%

A similar pattern emerges in the workplace. The mean values for items related to colleagues indicate that Syrian refugees predominantly use the dialect their colleagues speak, Jordanian with Jordanians, and Syrian with Syrians (items 6 and 7). This pattern also extends to customer interaction, with a preference for the Jordanian dialect when dealing with Jordanian customers and the Syrian dialect for Syrian customers (items 8 and 9). This highlights their adaptability and willingness to adjust their communication style based on the interlocutor's background.

The use of dialects in educational contexts follows a similar trend. The mean values for items 10 and 11 suggest that Syrian refugees primarily rely on the Jordanian dialect when interacting with teachers and non-academic staff at universities and schools. This could be attributed to their desire to effectively navigate the educational system and bridge the language gap between them and the educational institutions.

However, the scenario differs when it comes to media consumption. The mean values for items 15, 16, and 17 indicate a strong preference for the Syrian dialect when listening to songs, radio, and watching television programs. This suggests a potential desire to maintain cultural connection and identity through media consumption in their native dialect. Finally, item 20 reveals a preference for the Jordanian dialect on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. This could be driven by a desire to connect with a wider Jordanian audience or reflect the prevalent language used on these platforms.

Table 3: Means and standard deviations of Syrian refugees' dialect preference in the various domains of life

	Item	Mean	Std. Dev
1	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with my immediate family members (parents and children).	1.93	1.073
2	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with my extended family members (aunts, uncles, and cousins).	2.09	1.12
3	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanians at the mosque/church.	3.92	1.091
4	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with the Imam/Priest at the mosque/church	3.87	1.13
5	With Jordanian neighbours, I speak the Jordanian Dialect.	4.14	1.057
6	With Syrian neighbours, I speak the Jordanian Dialect.	4.11	1.021
7	At the market, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian shopkeepers.	3.99	1.228
8	At the market, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian shopkeepers.	3.97	1.289
9	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian friends.	3.36	1.468
10	I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian friends.	3.11	1.472
11	At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian colleagues.	4.09	1.287
12	At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian colleagues.	4.15	1.326
13	At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian customers/clients.	4.07	1.337
14	At the workplace, I speak the Jordanian Dialect with Syrian customers/clients.	4.18	1.303
15	At schools/universities, I use the Jordanian Dialect with teachers/lecturers.	4.26	0.941
16	At schools/universities, I use the Jordanian Dialect with School / University staff (canteen staff, clerks, school/university attendants, librarian, etc).	4.17	0.952
17	I like listening to songs in the Jordanian Dialect.	1.93	1.073
18	I like listening to Radio stations/programs in the Jordanian Dialect.	2.09	1.12
19	I like to watch television programs in the Jordanian Dialect.	3.92	1.091
20	I like to use the Jordanian Dialect on social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.	3.87	1.13

Hence, the means and standard deviations of the 20 items can demonstrate that Syrian refugees in Jordan exhibit an adaptable approach to dialect choice, influenced by various social contexts. They primarily use the Syrian dialect within their close social circles and for media consumption. They readily switch to the Jordanian dialect when interacting with Jordanians in various settings, demonstrating a willingness to integrate and adapt to their new environment.

5.2 Answers to Research Question Two

5.2.1 Dialect Preferences with Family Members

Most participants pointed out that they prefer the Syrian Dialect to communicate with all family members to show a strong attachment to their cultural and linguistic heritage. They can also maintain a sense of identity and connection with their roots in Syria using their dialect. Additionally, the participants showed that they use the Syrian Dialect among family members to preserve their identities. Further, through using their dialect with family members, Syrian refugees can maintain a connection with their heritage, history, and community. Syrian refugees' use of their dialect can also be a way to provide them with a sense of belonging and continuity amidst a new environment in Jordan. The participants also showed they could feel familiar and comfortable using their dialect. This is essential, considering they have left their home country and moved to a new context. Excerpt One below clearly reflects this finding.

Excerpt One; Interviewee: Manal

Researcher:

Why don't you use the Jordanian dialect since you have been residing in Jordan for 8 years?

Manal:

Because it is our Syrian dialect

Researcher: Do you think it makes a difference if you use the Jordanian dialect?

Manal:

It makes no difference. But I have used the Syrian dialect since I was born, and all my family uses the Syrian dialect. I will not change it just because I came to Jordan.

5.2.2 Dialect Preferences in Religious Places

The analysis of the interviews revealed that the dialect chosen for spiritual practices at religious sites plays a significant role for most respondents. Refugees often use their native dialect to participate in religious ceremonies, recite prayers, or engage in rituals, particularly when the congregation consists of Syrian refugees. This dialect usage allows them to connect with other

Syrians deeper and more meaningfully. However, they switch to the Jordanian dialect when interacting with Jordanians at religious places. Jamal articulated this in his responses, as illustrated in Excerpt Two below.

Excerpt Two; Interviewee: Jamal

The researcher:

Why do you use the Syrian dialect with the Syrians and the Jordanian dialect with the Jordanians?

Jamal:

Because I like to use both dialects. Also, I want to avoid forgetting the original dialect, my primary dialect. Our dialect is closer to the northern Jordanian dialect, and there is no significant difference between the two dialects; there are minor differences even between the north and Amman.

5.2.3 Dialect Preferences with Neighbours

Most interview participants preferred using the Jordanian Dialect when communicating with Jordanian neighbours, while they tended to rely on the Syrian Dialect when communicating with Syrian neighbours. This pattern is exemplified in Excerpt Three, where Samiah mentions using both dialects depending on her neighbours. She explains that the nationality of her neighbours influences her choice of dialect: she uses the Syrian Dialect with Syrian neighbours and the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian neighbours. This behaviour can be attributed to their displacement from their home regions, which has led them to seek comfort and familiarity. Using their dialects fosters a sense of belonging and helps them maintain their cultural identity within the local Jordanian community.

Excerpt Three; Interviewee: Samiah

Researcher:

What about your neighbours? Whether you are Jordanian or Syrian, what dialect do you use with them?

Samiah:

I use both dialects.

Researcher:

Does this mean you use the Jordanian dialect with the Jordanian and the Syrian dialect with Syrians?

Samiah:

Yes.

5.2.4 Dialect Preferences at The Market

Concerning the dialect they use at the market, most participants showed they prefer the Jordanian Dialect at the market and when shopping for personal reasons. For example, in Excerpt Four, Majed pointed out that he depends on the Jordanian Dialect at the market because it is easier to communicate with shopkeepers. However, Akram, in another interview, gave a personal reason when he stated that he preferred the Jordanian dialect because he did not want to reveal his identity to the Jordanian shopkeepers. He added that if his identity is revealed to the shopkeeper, it might cause the shopkeeper to increase the prices of the items he wanted to buy.

Excerpt Four; Interviewee: Majed

Researcher:

What about the market? What dialect do you use in the market?

Majed:

Jordanian dialect

Researcher:

Always?

Majed:

Yes, I always use the Jordanian dialect in the market.

Researcher:

Why is the Jordanian dialect always used in the market?

Majed:

For ease of communication and for the shopkeeper to understand what I want easily.

5.2.5 Dialect Preferences with Friends

Most interview participants reported using both Jordanian and Syrian dialects. They explained that using the Syrian dialect with Syrian friends is easy and ensures mutual understanding. This choice facilitates effective communication within the refugee community, fostering solidarity and support. Sharing the same dialect and cultural background enhances comfort and efficiency in communication among Syrian refugees. On the other hand, some participants showed that they use the Jordanian dialect with Jordanian friends due to its effectiveness in communication. This choice reflects their understanding of the importance of learning the host country's dialect for integration and long-term settlement. Gradual proficiency in the Jordanian dialect can lead to a successful transition. Excerpt Five can be a good representative example.

Excerpt Five; Interviewee: Musa

Researcher:

What dialect do you use with your friends, whether they are Syrians or Jordanians?

Musa:

I always use the Syrian dialect with my Syrian friends, and with my Jordanian friends, I often use the Jordanian dialect.

Researcher:

Why would you do that?

Musa:

I use the Syrian dialect with the Syrians because it is the dialect we use as Syrians. As for my Jordanian friends, I usually use the Jordanian dialect to make understanding easier. There are Syrian words and terms they do not understand or find difficult to understand, so I prefer to use the Jordanian dialect.

5.2.6 Dialect Preferences at Workplace

Most participants pointed out that they use the Jordanian Dialect when communicating with people at the workplace. This is clear in the two representative excerpts given below. As reflected in Excerpt Six, when Faridah was asked about the Dialect she prefers to use at the market, she pointed out that she prefers to use the Jordanian Dialect. The interview focused on her reasons for this preference. As shown in the excerpt, she stated that she used the Jordanian Dialect, considering that she had been in Jordan for nine years and had been using the Jordanian Dialect. Considering her age, which is 18 years old, her long stay in Jordan enabled her to pick the Jordanian Dialect and familiarise herself with it.

Excerpt Six; Interviewee: Faridah

Researcher:

In the marketplace, do you also use the Jordanian dialect?

Faridah:

Yes, the Jordanian dialect only.

Researcher:

Have you never used the Syrian dialect?

Faridah:

Only if there are Syrians do I use the Syrian dialect with them. But often, I use the Jordanian dialect.

Researcher:

Why do you use the Jordanian dialect in the market?

Faridah:

As I told you, I have been in Jordan for almost nine years, and when I came to the country, I was almost 9 years old. I have acquired the dialect by socializing with society and in school, as well as by socializing with Jordanian colleagues and teachers. When I meet any Jordanian, I will use the Jordanian dialect immediately, spontaneously, and without intention.

5.2.7 Dialect Preferences in Educational Contexts

The interviews revealed that some participants only use the Jordanian Dialect in schools or universities, while others declared that they prefer to use both dialects. Those who mentioned that they use the Jordanian dialect reasoned that highlighting that the Jordanian dialect makes it easier to communicate with teachers at schools or lecturers in universities. A representative excerpt is Excerpt Seven, in which Musa shows that he prefers the Jordanian Dialect. The interview with Hassan showed that he prefers to use the Syrian and Jordanian Dialects. This shows that the Syrian refugees can switch between the two dialects based on whom they are speaking. Some participants pointed out that they use both dialects, taking into account the dialect with whom they communicate. Thus, using a dialect with a person who uses the same dialect would be better and make communication easier.

Excerpt Seven; Interviewee: Musa

Researcher:

What dialect do you use with teachers, the principal or administrative staff in school?

Musa:

Jordanian only

Researcher:

Why only the Jordanian Dialect?

Musa:

It is easier to communicate when I use the Jordanian dialect in class. The teacher did not understand me when I used the Syrian dialect.

5.2.8 Dialect Preferences in the Social Media

The interviews also explored the dialect preferences of Syrian refugees when using social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, as well as when watching TV programs and movies. Consistent with their preferences in other communication settings, most participants use the dialect of the person they are communicating with. For instance, they use the Jordanian dialect with Jordanians and the Syrian dialect with Syrians. When asked about their reasons for

this preference, many mentioned choosing the dialect that ensures mutual understanding with their communication partners. This is evident in the following excerpt from the interviews, highlighting that Syrian refugees tend to respond in the same dialect as the one used in the messages they receive. However, their preferences differ regarding watching TV programs or dramas. In these contexts, most participants preferred programs or dramas in the Syrian dialect.

Excerpt Eight; Interviewee: Abdulmajeed

Researcher:

Do you listen to songs, watch TV programs and series, and use social media?

Abdulmajeed:

Yes, of course.

Researcher:

And what dialect do you use the most?

Abdulmajeed:

If I want to send or write posts or messages, I use a dialect the other person can understand.

Research:

You use the Jordanian dialect with the Jordanians and Syria with the Syrians.

Abdulmajeed:

I use dialects that the other side can understand regardless.

Researcher:

What about TV programs and series? Would you rather watch The Syrian or Jordanian drama?

Abdulmajeed:

Syrian, of course.

Researcher:

Is it because it is closer to your dialect? Or do you not understand Jordanian drama? Or is there another reason?

Abdulmajeed:

I understand the Jordanian dialect, and I do not find it difficult, but the Syrian drama has more than one dialect, and there is a lot of diversity; that is why I love the Syrian drama, honestly.

6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 Syrian Refugees' Preferred Dialect in Life Domains

The results indicated that Syrian refugees preferred using the Syrian Dialect with family members, which could be attributed to a desire to preserve their culture and identity. Using their own dialect may help them maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage.

Additionally, using their dialect with family members could facilitate the expression of complex emotions, serving as a better outlet for shared experiences. Furthermore, maintaining family bonds, especially during gatherings or social activities involving extended family, might also contribute to this preference.

The study highlights a balancing trend between preserving Syrian identity through the use of the Syrian Dialect within families and with Syrian friends and neighbours and integrating into Jordanian society using the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanians in various domains. These findings are similar to those reported by Rahman et al. (2007). This aligns with the notion of language choice as being based on group identity and the communicative function, as proposed by Fishman (1972).

In religious places, Syrian refugees tend to prefer using the Jordanian Dialect. This preference could be linked to their attitudes towards the Jordanian Dialect and their goal of successful integration into Jordanian society. When communicating with neighbours, Syrian refugees' dialect preferences varied depending on whether the neighbours were Jordanians or Syrians. They expressed that they use the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian neighbours and the Syrian Dialect with Syrian neighbours. This could indicate a high interest in integration with the Jordanian community while preserving their identity. Using the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian friends and neighbours might facilitate smoother communication and help them understand Jordanian culture better. It could also provide them with support in daily life and help them handle day-to-day tasks more easily.

In the workplace, Syrian refugees preferred using the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian colleagues and customers, while they used it with Syrian colleagues and customers. This preference might be driven by a desire to excel in their jobs, leading to better job opportunities and economic development in Jordan. It could also contribute to better communication and interpersonal relationships, ultimately creating a positive work environment.

Regarding dialect preference in the media, Syrian refugees tended to prefer songs and radio stations in their Syrian dialect, which could provide them with a sense of comfort and connection to their culture. However, they used the Jordanian Dialect more when watching TV shows or using social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Using the Jordanian Dialect on social media could help them communicate with locals, stay informed about current events, and enhance their social integration in Jordanian society.

This study investigated the dialect preferences of Syrian refugees in Jordan across various domains of life, revealing a complex interplay between language, identity, and integration (Gumperz, 1982). Further, the findings contribute to the existing scholarship on

language use in refugee communities by demonstrating how refugees strategically adapt their dialect choices based on the interlocutor (Baker, 2011), setting (Holmes & Hazen, 2013), and topic (Karanfil & Demir, 2021).

In summary, Syrian refugees in Jordan exhibited differences in dialect use, adapting the dialect they use based on the context and the people they are communicating with. Their preferences balance preserving their cultural identity and integrating into Jordanian society, highlighting the complex interplay between language, identity, and social integration in the context of forced migration.

6.2 Reasons for Syrian Refugees' Preferred Dialect

The semi-structured interviews with 18 refugees revealed different choices driven by sociocultural factors, practicality, and a desire for connection. Within families, Syrian refugees preferred the Syrian Dialect, which reflects their need to maintain their heritage and manage displacement trauma. However, religious settings present a shift. With fellow Syrians, they use the Syrian Dialect for comfort and community while switching to the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanians for ease of communication. These findings support the notion that socio-cultural factors and practicality influence dialect choice. For instance, using the Syrian Dialect in religious settings with fellow Syrians might provide comfort and a sense of community (Alshmaseen et al., 2023). Conversely, using the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian colleagues at work is essential for professional success. This is similar to the argument of Cannava and Bodie (2017).

The study also showed that navigating daily life presents an important approach for Syrian refugees. Concerning this, Syrian refugees preferred the Syrian Dialect with fellow Syrians in the neighbourhood, building a support network and fostering cultural connections. On the other hand, the Jordanian Dialect was the Syrian refugees' preference when they communicated with their Jordanian neighbours to facilitate communication and reduce isolation. Similarly, in the marketplace, the Jordanian Dialect becomes the preferred choice with shopkeepers, aiming for fair pricing, positive interactions, and access to local knowledge.

Friendship was found to be one of the factors that influence dialect choices among Syrian refugees. The Syrian Dialect is used with Syrian friends to maintain cultural identity and a sense of belonging in their new environment. When interacting with Jordanian friends, the Jordanian Dialect dominates Syrian refugees' preference to avoid misunderstandings and promote inclusivity. In the workplace, integration takes precedence, making the Jordanian Dialect the preferred choice for professional success and confidence building.

In educational contexts, some refugees use only the Jordanian Dialect for ease of communication with Jordanian teachers, while others use both dialects. This highlights the complex nature of navigating a new educational system and the desire to improve integration. Social media reflects a similar pattern. With fellow Syrians on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp, the Syrian Dialect allows for social and cultural support. However, Syrian refugees switch to the Jordanian Dialect for effective communication when interacting with Jordanians. Interestingly, when watching television, the Jordanian Dialect takes precedence. This can be interpreted as a strategy to learn new vocabulary, understand local expressions, and ultimately, integrate culturally.

Understanding these dialect preferences is crucial for informing policy and support programs that are designed to facilitate the integration of refugees (Van Raemdonck, 2023). This includes developing resources and educational materials that cater to the diverse language needs of refugees in different domains, such as language courses in both dialects and workshops on the importance of understanding local communication styles (Sumadi et al., 2023).

In summary, this study unveils the multifaceted nature of Syrian refugees' dialect choices. Their preferences are shaped by their desire to maintain cultural identity, navigate their new environment effectively, and achieve successful integration.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Syrian refugees have a peculiar dialect preference approach. The study concludes that the Syrian refugees in Jordan adopt a delicate balance between preserving their cultural identity and integrating into Jordanian society. This became obvious as the study shows that the Syrian refugees in Jordan use their dialect with family members to show a deep-rooted desire to maintain their cultural ties and to express complex emotions within a familiar context. On the other hand, the study demonstrated that Syrian refugees are inclined towards the Jordanian Dialect when communicating with Jordanians in religious places and when interacting with their Jordanian colleagues and customers. This practice can reflect a strategic adaptation by the Syrian refugees to target successful integration and economic advancement.

A combination of sociocultural factors, practicality, and a desire for connection influences the dialect preferences exhibited by Syrian refugees in Jordan. Within families, the preference for the Syrian Dialect reflects a need to maintain cultural heritage and manage displacement trauma. On the other hand, in religious settings, using the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanians demonstrates a practical approach for ease of communication. This highlights the

complex interplay between socio-cultural factors and practical considerations in dialect choice among Syrian refugees.

The study also reveals the importance of navigating daily life in shaping dialect preferences. Syrian refugees use the Syrian Dialect with fellow Syrians in the neighbourhood to build support networks and foster cultural connections while opting for the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian neighbours to facilitate communication and reduce isolation. Similarly, the use of the Jordanian Dialect in the marketplace aims for fair pricing, positive interactions, and access to local knowledge.

Friendship also plays a significant role in influencing dialect choices among Syrian refugees. Using the Syrian Dialect with Syrian friends helps maintain cultural identity and a sense of belonging. In contrast, the preference for the Jordanian Dialect with Jordanian friends promotes inclusivity and avoids misunderstandings. In the workplace, the choice of the Jordanian Dialect reflects a desire for professional success and confidence building.

Educational contexts and social media present additional complexities in dialect choice among Syrian refugees. While some refugees use only the Jordanian Dialect in educational settings for easy communication with Jordanian teachers, others use both dialects to improve integration. Similarly, on social media platforms, the Syrian Dialect allows social and cultural support with fellow Syrians, while the Jordanian Dialect facilitates communication with Jordanians.

This study contributes to understanding language dynamics in refugee communities, illustrating how group identity and communicative needs influence language choices. By recognizing and respecting these dialect preferences, policymakers and service providers can better support the social integration and well-being of Syrian refugees in Jordan. However, the study has some limitations, particularly regarding its sample, which was limited to Syrian refugees in Amman. Future research could explore how these preferences evolve and impact broader societal integration processes. Understanding these dialect preferences is crucial for informing policies and support programs that facilitate the integration of refugees. This includes developing resources and educational materials that cater to the diverse language needs of refugees in different domains, such as language courses in both dialects and workshops on the importance of understanding local communication styles. Future research should include refugees from other regions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of dialect preferences and integration dynamics among Syrian refugees in the country. Larger-scale quantitative studies can examine the factors influencing dialect preferences and their

impact on integration outcomes. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to track changes in dialect use over time.

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