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CONTENTS

1

Diminutives in Najdi Arabic:
An Account of Socio - Pragmatic Variation

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Abstract

This study explores patterns of diminutive use across age and gender groups in spontaneous conversation among 36 speakers of Qassimi dialect, a variety of Najdi Arabic spoken predominately in central Saudi Arabia. The objective of the study is to compare age and gender groups based on the frequency with which they use diminutives and the pragmatic functions of diminutive usage within the groups. The results reveal that both age and gender play a significant role in determining the frequency and pragmatic functions of diminutives. More specifically, results demonstrate that older and female speakers use statistically greater numbers of diminutives than other age and gender groups. As for pragmatic functions, results show that intensification and addressing/ referring to children are the most significant functions for which age and gender groups employ diminutives.

1. Introduction

Diminutives are linguistic forms used in almost every language (Jurafsky, 1996; Bauer, 1997). Cross-linguistically, diminutives are not only used to denote dimensional smallness, but they can also carry socially motivated meanings to express a wide array of pragmatic functions, such as endearment, affection, intimacy, appreciation and even sarcasm and contempt (Travis, 2004; Mendoza, 2005, among others). This multifunctionality and the encoding of seemingly contradictory pragmatic functions contribute in making diminutives an interesting and useful linguistic device in social interaction (Badarneh, 2010).

It is important to examine the frequency of usage and the pragmatic functions of diminutives in order to understand how this linguistic device is deployed in social relations and social interactions. In her analysis of Spanish diminutives, Travis (2004: 250) argues that diminutives play a critical role in personal interactions, as they can function as a "vehicle for the expression of good feelings" (2004:250). Similarly, Mendoza (2005) suggests that the diminutive in Spanish "can be used to soften or weaken the illocutionary force of an utterance, and therefore, as a politeness marker" (2005:165). According to Wierzbika (1985), rich and productive systems of diminutives in languages, such as those found in Greek, Spanish and Italian, "seem to play a crucial role in cultures in which emotions in general and affection in particular is expected to be shown overtly" (1984:168). Dossena (1997) highlights other ways in which studying the pragmatic functions of diminutives can be useful:

An analysis of the pragmatic function of diminutives thus presents us with another aspect of the multi-faceted structure of spoken language: in speech the cohesiveness of the texture is such that even one morpheme (apparently unimportant, like a diminutive ‑ie) may shift

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

the overall balance of discourse and move its focus onto the speakers' role, the listener's perceptions, or the connotational assumptions that they both share. (p. 34)

The present study aims to explore potential differences across social factors–namely, age and gender–in the frequency and pragmatic functions of diminutive usage in the everyday speech of the speakers of the Qassimi dialect (hereafter QD), a variety of Najdi Arabic spoken primarily in the province of Qassim in central Saudi Arabia. Such a comprehensive analysis provides a clear overview of how the occurrences of diminutives correlate to speakers' age and gender.

2. Background

2.1. Diminutives across languages

In spite of the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic complexity of diminutives, linguists have long been engaged in examining and analyzing their uses and potential meanings in various languages. According to Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994), the study of diminutives dates back as far as the ancient Greek and Roman grammarians. Some previous studies have examined the uses of diminutives in a specific language, whereas other researchers expanded their focus to explore similarities in the use of diminutives cross-linguistically. Jurafsky (1996), for instance, conducted a large-scale study to systematically seek the universal tendencies in the semantics of the diminutive based on a large body of cross-linguistic research. A similar study by Bauer (1997) examined the universal meanings of diminutives in a large number of genetically related languages.

Several other studies have investigated the pragmatic functions of the diminutive. Compared with other languages, particularly Western European languages, Greek and Spanish have been the object of the

largest number of studies, as they have rich, complex and productive systems of diminutives. Sifianou (1992) has compared and contrasted the pragmatic functions of diminutives in English and Greek within Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, basing her research on data collected from contemporary Greek and English plays as well as recorded conversations. She found that diminutives are used in Greek as a positive politeness strategy to show informality and solidarity, as opposed to English, where they are used to minimize impositions. Alexopoulos (1994) reported similar findings based on a questionnaire given to 50 native Greek speakers. In Spanish, Alonso (1961) analyzed the pragmatic functions and uses of diminutives in Spanish. He observed that diminutives perform many pragmatic functions. He also observed that the meanings and effects of diminutives depend on the context, the attitudes of the participants and the speech act itself. In a recent study, Travis (2004) examined the pragmatic function of diminutives in a corpus of spontaneous conversation in Colombian Spanish. The findings added further support to claims made by Wierzbicka (1984; 1992) that frequent use of diminutives in languages such as Russian and Polish plays a valuable role in realizing the cultural goal of expressing good feelings toward others.

Within the morphopragmatic literature on diminutives across languages, Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994) can be singled out for its importance. In their in-depth study, the researchers thoroughly surveyed and analyzed the pragmatic meanings of diminutives in Italian, German and English. Additional support for Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi's argument comes from Travis (2004) and her analysis of the diminutive use in Colombian Spanish, wherein the two central uses of diminutives, "child" and "small," were found to account for only a small percentage of the total number of instances (2004: 254).

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

2.2. Diminutives in Arabic

Diminutivization is a highly productive process in Classical Arabic. In his review of the famous Arabic linguist Sibawaih's analysis of the diminutive in Arabic, Fayez (1990: 83—85) states that diminutives in Classical Arabic essentially denote smallness in size (kitab "book" > kuttayyib) or in quantity (waraqat "papers" > wurrayqqaat). They can also be used to express shortness of distance (fawq "over" > fuwayq) or of time (qabl "before" > qubayl "shortly before"). Diminutives are also used for expressing connotative meanings, such as endearment (bint "girl" > bunayyah "dear daughter,"), mercy or sympathy (miskin "poor" > musaykin, "contempt,"; sayif "sword" > suyayf "not much of a sword"), and even enhancement (malik "king" > mulayk "a great king").

The use of the diminutive in modern Arabic dialects has been investigated in very few studies. Some of these studies are not exclusively focused on the diminutive; rather, they address the diminutive within a general description of a specific dialect. Other studies have focused on the morphological formation of diminutives in Arabic dialects (e.g., Johnstone, 1973; Fayez, 1991; Masliyah, 1997; Watson, 2006). To my knowledge, only two studies have attempted to investigate the pragmatics of Arabic diminutives as utilized in contemporary colloquial Arabic dialects. Nakshbandi (1996) compared the uses and structures of diminutives in Classical Arabic with those found in Urban Hijazi Arabic. He found that diminutives are rarely used in Urban Hijazi Arabic and are used for a limited set of connotative meanings. Nakshbandi attributed the rarity of diminutives in Urban Hijazi Arabic to the possibility of expressing the concept of diminution through other structures, such as adjectives and periphrastic forms. In a recent study, Badarneh (2010) investigated the pragmatic functions of diminutives in colloquial Jordanian Arabic. Analysis of naturally occurring conversation revealed that diminutives

are pragmatically employed to express a pejorative attitude, show affection and endearment, intensify the speaker's emotions, hedge an utterance, minimize imposition, show modesty and avoid bragging, and assert intimacy in joking situations.

Diminutives in Najdi Arabic frequently occur in everyday conversation. The use of diminutives is often noted in informal day-to-day interactions. As in Classical Arabic, diminutives are used in Najdi Arabic for a variety of semantic and pragmatic functions. However, no previous study has described or analyzed the various possible meanings and functions of diminutive use. The existing research related to Najdi Arabic is descriptive in nature, focusing mainly on the phonological, morphological and lexical characteristics of this dialect of Arabic (cf. Ingham, 1994; Prochazka, 1988; Al-Sweel, 1987, 1990).

As in many other varieties of Arabic, the diminutive forms are most commonly used with nouns and adjectives. Similar to the usage observed in San'ani Arabic (Watson, 2006) and Eastern Arabian dialects (Holes, 2004), diminutive verbs are used in Najdi Arabic. Numerals can also be diminutivized (specifically one and two, as in wahid "one" > wiheed "one-DIM" and thinteen "two" > thuyntteen "two-DIM").

2.3. Diminutives and gender

Gender differences in language use have been a focus of attention since the 1970s (e.g., Lakoff, 1975; West and Zimmerman, 1983; Tannen, 1990). However, despite the frequent use of diminutives in many languages, a relatively small number of studies have examined the distribution of diminutive use in terms of social variables such as gender and age.

For example, based on data drawn from informal conversations among young educated Greek speakers, Daltas (1985) concluded that women use diminutives more than men, plausibly as the result

of women's greater involvement with children. Similarly, in surveying Russian speakers' perception of the use of diminutives, Andrews (1999) reported that Russian speakers, regardless of their age and gender, believe that women, specifically mothers and grandmothers, use diminutive forms more than men. However, by examining the quantity of common lexical items the Russian participants heard, Andrews found that men and women use diminutives at a similar level of frequency if the quantity level of discrete utterances is taken into account. Furthermore, women are more likely to use diminutives with a more broadly defined range of interlocutors than men. Andrews also concluded that age plays a less significant role in determining the use of diminutives than does the gender of the participants.

Mskri-Tsilipakou (2003) analyzed Greek diminutive use quantitatively and qualitatively and found that, contra the conventional wisdom in Greek society, men were heavier users of diminutives than women. Additionally, further analysis of the collected data revealed that women tended to use more favorable and fewer unfavorable diminutivization practices in same-sex interactions than did men–a finding that could explain why women are perceived as heavy users of diminutives in Greek society (p. 717). Mskri-Tsilipakou also found that women refrained more from the use of pejorative diminutives compared with men. To explain gender differences in the use of diminutives, Mskri-Tsilipakou claimed that women use diminutives more because they carry gender expectations, particularly in affectionate woman-to-woman interactions. Men, on the other hand, tend to use diminutives because they use Greek culture rather than gender specifically to mark in-group social solidarity and to establish a familiar, cooperative and friendly context.

Despite the rich semantic and pragmatic force of diminutives in many languages, only a few studies to date have explored the pragmatic variation patterns in the use of diminutives, particularly in languages with productive systems of diminutivization, such as Arabic, Greek, Spanish, Russian and Italian.   Furthermore, very few studies have addressed social variation in the frequency level of diminutive use, although they report the widespread use of diminutives in female speech and in speech about or addressed to children (Daltas, 1985 in Greek; Andrews, 1999 in Russian).   However, none of these studies have been comparative (Daltas, 1985), and none have used naturally occurring data (Andrews, 1999).   Compared with studies of sociolinguistic variation, there is a dearth of research studies investigating pragmatic variation not only in Arabic but also across most languages (Schneider & Barron, 2005; Barron & Schneider, 2009).   What remains unexamined is the effect of regional and social factors, such as region, ethnic background, age and gender, on not only the realization strategies of a particular speech act but also the pragmatic functions of different morphological, lexical and even phonological features in a given language.   For example, in Arabic pragmatics, most available studies are within interlanguage pragmatics and focus on the speech-act realization strategies of Arab learners of English compared to those employed by native speakers (cf. Al-Shalawi, 1997; Al-Ammar, 2000; Nelson, Carson, Al-Batal, & El-Bakery, 2002; Umar, 2004; Al-Kahtani, 2005).   Other studies have focused on speech act performance in different Arabic varieties (cf. Farghal & Al-Khatib, 2001; Al-Khatib, 2006; Nureddeen, 2007).   However, there is little if any extant literature examining the effect of different social factors on pragmatic variation in Arabic varieties.   To address this gap in the literature of pragmatics, Schneider & Barron (2005) have proposed the establishment of variational pragmatics (VP) as a subfield of pragmatics;

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

it would promote a better understanding of the possible correlations between macro-social factors and the use of language in action. This newly established area of study aims to combine the fields of pragmatics and modern dialectology in order to explore the effect of social factors on the pragmatic use of language. Commenting on the general lack of attention paid to variational pragmatics, Barron (2005) noted that "the investigation of macro-social variation has continued to take a back seat in pragmatic research in general." Consequently, Barron continued, "there has remained an underlying assumption that variation relative to such macro-social factors does not exist" (2005:522)

Based on the gaps in the existing literature, the present study investigates patterns of variation across age and gender groups in terms of the frequency and pragmatic functions of diminutive use in everyday conversation. More specifically, the current study has three objectives: (1) to provide a basic quantitative description of the use of diminutives in QD, (2) to investigate the distribution patterns of diminutive use across age and gender groups and (3) to analyze quantitatively the effects of age and gender on the frequency of diminutive use and its pragmatic functions.

3. Method
3.1. Participants

A total of 36 speakers participated in the present study. Each speaker was required to meet the sampling criteria of having been born and raised in Buraydah, the capital of Qassim province, central Saudi Arabia. As shown in Table 1, participants were divided by age into three predetermined groups: younger (10 participants), between the ages of 18 and 25; middle-aged (13 participants), between the ages of 30 and 45; and older (13 participants), over the age of 50 years. They were selected

randomly from different families based on the author's personal contacts. All were educated at least to the age of 18. With respect to gender, participants were divided evenly: 18 men and 18 women.

Table 1. The distribution of participants by age and gender.

	Old (>55)	Middle-Aged (30—45)	Young (18—25)	TOTAL
Men	6	7	5	18
Women	7	6	5	18
Total	13	13	10	36

3.2. *Data collection*

The data for this study were drawn from a corpus of 36 informal conversations collected by the author between March 2007 and September 2008. The length of each conversation was between 30 and 45 minutes; the total duration of all of the conversations was approximately 24 hours. The procedure for the data collection was simple: the author visited the participants in their homes and recorded spontaneous conversations with them as well as their friends and/or family members (up to four participants in each conversation). Participants were asked to engage in a conversation about a variety of topics, including daily activities, family history, narration of personal experiences and stories of past and present Buraydah.

3.3. *Coding*

The collected data were transcribed by a research assistant, a native of QD, and then verified by the author to ensure accuracy. For the quantitative analysis, all instances of diminutivized words in the transcripts were extracted and coded for (1) the age and gender group of the speaker and (2) the pragmatic function for which it was used in the conversation.

As noted by King and Melzi (2004:242), it is difficult to infer exact pragmatic functions or intentions, such as those mentioned in the literature reviewed above (e.g., endearment and affection, pp.3-7), for every instance of diminutive use. Thus, I adopted a broad classification of diminutive realizations by taking into consideration the sequential context of an utterance, the temporal development of the interaction and its paralinguistic and, importantly, prosodic features. Furthermore, the author is a native of QD and thus familiar with local social relations and social interactions, which helped in identifying and analyzing the potential pragmatic purpose of diminutive usage. The following four codes were adopted as broad classifications of pragmatic functions for diminutive use:

3.3.1. Addressing/referring to children

As observed in many cultural contexts in the world (cf. Travis, 2004; Badarneh, 2010; Sifiano, 1992; Andrews, 1999; King and Meliz, 2004), using diminutives in addressing and referring to children in QD combines the two elements of affection and small size. In particular, speakers attempt to use diminutives to express good feelings toward children by showing endearment, empathy and sympathy, as well as to highlight the fact that the addressee/referent is a child. This includes the use of diminutivized forms of children's names, terms of endearment, and adjectives and nouns related to the addressee. In Najdi society, such

uses are frequently limited to persons closely related to children, including relatives and friends. The example below in (1) illustrates how children are referred to by diminutivized forms of their first names and how things related to the children (e.g., toys) are also diminutivized.

(1) [Mother talking about her own young child]

  Ya zein Ahaymed wi liaibatu

  It is good Ahmad-DIM and his toys-DIM

  "I like my boy Ahmad-DIM and his toys-DIM."

3.3.2. Pejoration

In this pragmatic function, the speaker uses diminutives to show a negative evaluation and attitude toward the referent. This includes the use of diminutivized forms of the referent's name, shape, and belongings, as well as common nouns and adjectives that describe the addressee or referent. The following example shows how this function is used in NA:

(2) [A man criticizing another man]

Ant wi 3igiilik ma ta3rif tedir ha sharikah

You headband-DIM no know lead this company

"You wearing headband-DIM don't know how to lead this company."

3.3.3. Intensification

Diminutives in QD are often pragmatically employed to amplify the speaker's positive attitudes and emotions toward the addressee or referent. In such usage, the meaning expressed by the diminutive is an expression of endearment, intimacy and affection; it sometimes extends to showing sympathy and compassion toward the addressee/referent. In some cases, it can be used to communicate the speaker's sense of appreciation of and admiration for something the addressee/referent has.It occurs often with proper names, terms of endearment, and fictive

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

kin terms. It can be used in addressing or referring to both adults and children. This intensifying function of the diminutive can be observed in the following example:

(3) [A woman talking to her daughter about a house that she just has seen]

  Wa Allah inu Beeit Helu

  By God it is house-DIM nice

  "It's a nice house-DIM."

3.3.4. Pragmatic hedging

Diminutives are sometimes recruited in QD to function as pragmatic hedges by weakening the illocutionary force of an utterance, especially speech acts such as requests, offers and commands. In such cases, the diminutive acts as a negative politeness marker by minimizing imposition on the hearer. Similar to usages found in a number of languages, the use of diminutives as a hedging device extends in QD to encode the speaker's downplaying of his or her own material possessions, achievements and characteristics in order to show modesty and avoid self-praise and bragging. The next example (4) illustrates the use of a diminutive (wiriqah 'document') as a pragmatic hedge to lessen the imposition in a request.

(4) [A man requesting that his friend translate a document in Arabic]

  3indi wiriqah widi tetrajimaha lil injelizi

  Have document-DIM like translate to English

  "I have a document-DIM that I would like you to translate into English."

3.4. *Data analysis*

  As suggested by Melzi and King (2003: 291), the total number of diminutives used by each speaker depends largely on the total amount of talk–namely, the number of words used in each conversation (i.e., the

greater the number of words used by a speaker, the greater the chance the speaker has to diminutivize words). As a consequence, percentages rather than frequencies were used as the main unit of analysis in order to make diminutive use quantitatively comparable for each speaker. However, because not all words in QD can be diminutivized, quantitative analyses were conducted based on the mean percentage of diminutives over the total number of diminutivizable words produced by each speaker. To calculate the total number of diminutivizable words in the data, the author and the research assistant reviewed the transcripts and identified all of the words that they believed to be diminutivizable in QD. A final list of diminutivizable tokens was thus obtained.

To show the relative contributions of age and gender (the independent variables) to the overall variability in frequency of diminutive use (the dependent variable), a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on mean percentages of total diminutive use by all speakers. A post hoc test was also used to determine differences among the age groups. As for discerning the possible age and gender effects on diminutives' pragmatic functions, a two-way analysis of multivariate MANOVA was conducted based on mean percentages of the total diminutivizable words used. Because there was more than one independent variable (the pragmatic functions: addressing/referring to children, intensifying, pejoration and pragmatic hedging), MANOVA was used because of its ability to reduce Type I error and to determine the effects of multiple independent variables on several dependent variables simultaneously. When there was a significant overall effect for a variable, Tukey post hoc comparisons were conducted for that variable to identify where the difference lay, adjusting for multiple tests.

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

4. Findings

5.1. *Frequency of diminutive use*

A total of 698 diminutives were extracted and recorded from the corpus, with a mean of 19 diminutives (SD = 12.29, range 4—49) per conversation. The mean frequency of diminutives equaled 3% of all diminutivizable words in QD. This usage seems low given the number of participants and the length of their conversations. Because no previous studies have examined QD quantitatively, however, it is difficult to conclude that the current usage of diminutives is lower than might have been expected. Figure 1 exhibits the mean percentages of the frequency of diminutive use by age and gender groups.

Table 2. ANOVA results for diminutives use by age and gender groups

Source of Variance	DF	F	p <
Age Group	2,30	22.347	0.003
Gender	1,30	32.617	0.002
Age x Gender	2,30	5.157	0.005

Significant effects and interactions ($p < .05$) are presented in bold

Results of the two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are presented above in Table 2. The findings clearly indicate that both age and gender groups have significant main effects on the frequency of diminutive use (age group: $F_{(2, 30)} = 59.951$, $p < .003$; gender: $F_{(1, 30)} = 87.500$, $p < .002$). That is, for age groups, older speakers used a significantly greater percentage of diminutives than did middle-aged speakers (M = 4.0, SD = 1.77), and middle-aged speakers used a significantly greater percentage of diminutives than younger speakers (M = 2.6, SD = 2.62), regardless

of the speakers' gender (see Figure 1). Similarly, the main effect of gender revealed that women used a significantly greater percentage of diminutives (M = 3.8, SD =1.8) than men (M = 1.68, SD = .70). The interaction effect was also significant, $F_{(2, 30)}$ = 5.157, $p < .005$, indicating that the age effect was greater when speakers were older. A Tukey post hoc test showed that all age groups were significantly different from each other ($p < .002$—.008). Simple main effects analysis showed that females used diminutives significantly more than males when they were elderly or middle-aged, but there were no differences between genders when the speakers were young ($p = .285$).
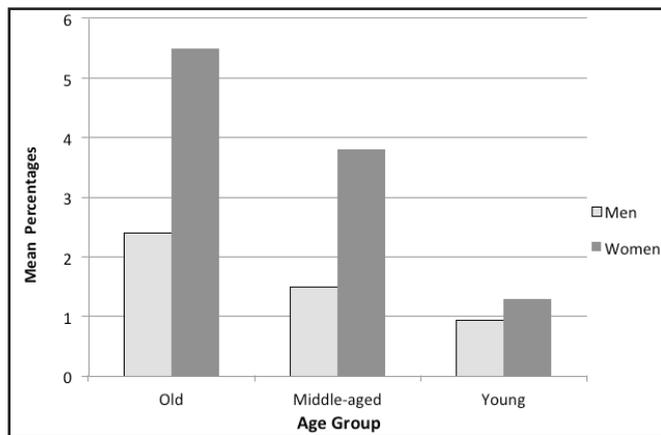
Figure 1. Mean percentages for the frequency of diminutive use by age and gender groups.

5.2. *Pragmatic functions*

Figure 2 plots the mean values of diminutives' pragmatic functions by age and gender groups. As mentioned earlier, to determine age and gender effects on diminutives' pragmatic functions, a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted based on the speakers' mean percentage of pragmatic functions–addressing/referring to

Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

children, intensification, pejoration and pragmatic hedging–from the total number of diminutivizable words. As presented in Table 3, all of the multivariate tests (here, Wilks' lambdas) yielded significant main effects for both age, $F_{(5, 54)} = 10.65$, $p < .002$, and gender groups, $F_{(5, 27)} = 34.57$, $p < .003$, suggesting that the mean percentages for age and gender across the four pragmatic functions had at least one vector pairing that produced a significant effect. The interaction between age and gender groups was also significant, $F_{(5, 54)} = 3.64$, $p < .002$.
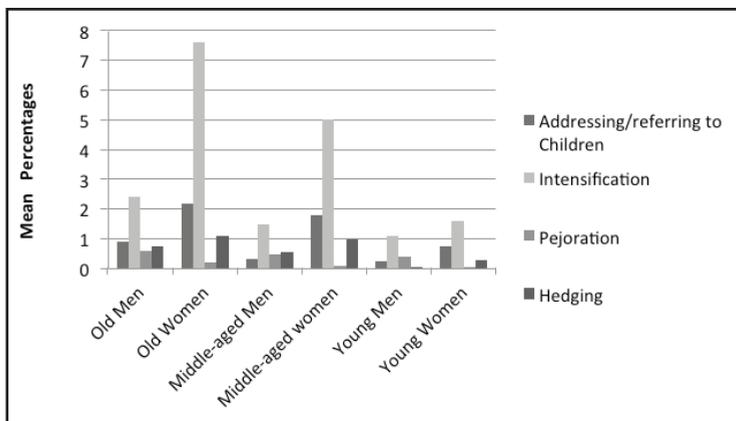
Figure 2. Mean percentages of the pragmatic functions of diminutives by age and gender groups.

Given that the results for the independent variables, age and gender, had significant main effects, the results of each of the dependent variables needed to be examined. Thus, a series of univariate ANOVAs were conducted to determine the significance of between-subjects effects. The data in Table 4 suggest that there are significant differences among age groups in terms of their mean percentages for using diminutives for the functions of addressing/referring to children, intensifying and pragmatic hedging, but no significant differences among age groups in pejoration ($p < .394$). Furthermore, ANOVA tests revealed that there were

significant differences between gender groups for only two pragmatic functions: (1) addressing/referring to children and (2) intensifying. An investigation of interaction results showed that the differences among age and gender groups are statistically significant only for the function of intensification.

Table 3. MANOVA results for the diminutives' pragmatic functions by age and gender groups

Source of Variance	A	DF	F	p <
Age Group	.15	5,54	10.650	0.002
Gender	.16	5,27	34.571	0.003
Age x Gender	.42	5,54	3.639	0.002

Significant effects and interactions (p < .05) are presented in bold.

Table 4. Significant between-subjects univariate ANOVA tests

Source of Variance	Function	DF	MS	F
Age Group	Addressing/referring to children	2,30	3.108	9.780
	Intensification	2,30	36.963	32.607
	Pragmatic hedging	2,30	1.844	9.924
Gender	Addressing/referring to children	1,30	10.956	34.479
	Intensification	1,30	81.705	72.078
Age x Gender	Intensification	2,30	16.337	14.412

All significance at p < .001.

To provide further insight into the specific mean differences with significant ANOVAs, t-tests to compare the individual means were conducted. In addition, a Tukey correction for multiple comparisons was applied to prevent alpha inflation at this level of the analysis. Additionally,

Dr. Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

simultaneous 95% confidence intervals were computed to provide further insight into the variability of possible mean differences among the observed groups. Results indicated that the largest mean difference could be found between older female and younger male speakers in performing the intensification function, with a mean difference of − 6.49, whereas the smallest significant difference was between older and younger speakers in performing the function of pragmatic hedging (.78).

5. Discussion

The first aim of the present study was to provide a basic description of diminutive use in QD. The results showed that diminutives are used by all speakers in their everyday conversations, accounting for 3% of all diminutivizable words produced by each speaker. This provides evidence of the widespread use of this complex linguistic form by speakers from different ages and gender. The results also revealed that diminutives are used for a variety of pragmatic functions. Such a finding confirms the previous studies reviewed above that emphasize the multifunctional pragmatic nature and value of diminutives, particularly in social interactional settings such as informal conversations, where interlocutors often rely on diminutives in expressing their emotions and attitudes toward others and things.

The second aim of this study was to explore variations in the frequency of diminutive use among age and gender groups. Results revealed that both age and gender have a significant role in determining the frequency of diminutives by participants. Specifically, the results demonstrated that there are significant differences among age and gender groups, with older and female speakers using statistically more frequent diminutives than other age and gender groups. These results are in contrast to Andrews's (1999) hypothesis that age has less effect

than gender on diminutive use. In addition, the present results confirm previous works (e.g., Daltas, 1985; Andrews, 1999) and contradict Makri-Tsilipakou's (2003) findings in Greek by providing evidence that women use more diminutives than men do. Though the present study is not intended to explain the differences between gender groups in their use of diminutives, there are some instances in the present data that can partly explain women's higher frequency of diminutives. For example, in analyzing some instances of diminutives, I noticed that women, particularly older women, often used a series of diminutives in a single utterance to communicate their affection for a referent. Such usage is never employed by men in the current data nor in my informal observations of diminutive use in QA. Example (5) below illustrates this usage, where an older woman uses a series of diminutives to express positive emotions toward another older woman.

(5) [An older woman description passionately another older woman]
Umhim Ta3mih 3jyez beydha Hlaywah ha alkabeer xfayfif damah Mother-their sweet old woman-DIM white-DIM small-DIM cute-DIM Their mother is a sweet old woman-DIM white-DIM small-DIM cute-DIM.

The analysis of the data across age groups showed that middle-aged and younger speakers gradually decreased their diminutive use compared with older speakers. This may suggest that there is a linguistic change in progress in the use of diminutives in QD. It is plausible to explain this shift as a consequence of a change in the younger generations' perceptions of and attitudes toward diminutives. However, these suggestions remain speculative, and further investigation is needed to determine the effect of speakers' perceptions and attitudes on diminutive use.

The final aim was to perform a quantitative analysis of the effects of age and gender on diminutives' pragmatic functions. The results revealed that both age and gender had a significant effect on the pragmatic functions of speakers' diminutives. The results also showed that intensification and addressing/referring to children are the two functions for which age and gender groups employ diminutives most often. Such a finding accords with the observations mentioned in the literature (e.g., Travis, 2004, Sifianou, 1992) that diminutives are used very frequently for these two functions. Furthermore, this finding adds further explanation for women's (particularly older women's) higher frequency of diminutive use, as illustrated above, in communicating their positive feelings. The relatively low usage of pejorative diminutives may be attributed to the fact that the present data drawn from informal conversations do not involve situations that trigger and promote the use of such usages. Furthermore, the data do not support Makri-Tsilipakou's (2003) results concerning men's greater use of pejorative diminutives compared with women.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have investigated age and gender patterns of diminutive use in naturally occurring conversations between speakers of QD. In particular, I have described and quantitatively analyzed how age and gender can affect diminutive use, focusing on two issues: frequency of use and the pragmatic functions of diminutives. The statistical analysis of the results provided evidence that diminutive use varies significantly according to the age and gender of the speakers in both the frequency of use and the pragmatic functions for which diminutives are employed.

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of works in variational pragmatics that shed light on the impact of social factors on

language use (Barron and Schneider, 2009; Pichler, 2000; Dickerson, 2009; among others). Nevertheless, the present results are limited to the sample speech of the participants. Therefore, I cannot claim that these patterns represent the social and cultural diversity in Central Saudi Arabia. Similarly, my explanations for the differences in data are generalizations that would not necessarily hold for all social and cultural groups in QD or for other varieties of Arabic in Saudi Arabia.

Despite this study's limitations, the use of naturally occurring data and the inclusion of quantitative analyses are strengths that bolster the validity of the patterns identified and the conclusions drawn from these patterns.

Moreover, there are other social and cultural factors that may contribute to speakers' variation in diminutives use. This study, therefore, opens the door for future research to investigate and broaden our understanding of the effects of other macro-social factors, such as region, social class and education, and micro-social factors, including power, distance and other situational factors, on the use of diminutives at a variety of levels of analysis using a range of data. For example, an interesting topic for a future study may involve comparing and contrasting the use of diminutives in a number of regions and varieties of Arabic spoken in Saudi Arabia according to speakers' level of education. Much research also remains to be conducted on topics such as power and distance and how they affect the selection and pragmatic function of diminutive usage in different interactional settings.

التصغير في اللهجة النجدية
دراسة في التباين الإجتماعي والبراغماتي

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الملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة لإستكشاف أنماط التفاوت والتباين في استخدام أدوات التصغير في اللهجة القصيمية- إحدى فروع اللهجة النجدية- لمجموعات من (٣٦) فرد مختلفة في العمر والجنس في حديثهم اليومي والعفوي ، وكان الغرض من هذه الدراسة تحديداً هو مقارنة نسب استخدام أدوات التصغير، والغرض البراغماتي لتلك الأدوات، ومدى ارتباط ذلك بعمر وجنس المتحدث. وقام الباحث بتحليل المعلومات باستخدام برنامج "SPSS" مستخرجاً التكرارات والنسب المئوية ، واختبارت التباين (ANOVA) و (MANOVA) .

ولقد بينت الدراسة في نتائجها وجود تأثير مهم لعمر وجنس المتحدث في تحديد نسب استخدام أدوات التصغير والغرض البراغماتي لها ، وتحديداً أظهرت النتائج أن المتحدثين الأكبر سناً والنساء هم الأكثر استخداماً لأدوات التصغير بالمقارنة بمجموعات العمر والجنس الأخرى. وفيما يتعلق بالتفاوت في الغرض البراغماتي ، أشارت النتائج إلى أن التأكيد ومخاطبة الأطفال والإشارة إليهم هي أكثر الأغراض البراغماتية استخداماً لأدوات التصغير من قبل أفراد العينة .

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Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

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Dr.Yousef Ibrahim al-Rojaie

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تنويه :

نعيد نشر الملخص الإنجليزي للباحث الأستاذ الدكتور عبدالله عبدالرحمن البريدي حيث ورد خطأً مطبعياً في اسمه باللغة الإنجليزية بالعدد الأول للمجلة .

2

Exploring Some Dimensions of Prejudice as a Neglected Phenomenon in the Arab Administrative Environment

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Abstract

The research problem stems from the fact that there is no exploration of the prejudice phenomenon in the Arab Administrative Environment, resulting in a lack of understanding of this phenomenon, as well as not to develop administrative capabilities to deal with it effectively. This may lead to escalate the prejudice problem and increase its negative effects on the efficiency, effectiveness and quality management in contemporary organizations. The research problem has been precisely formulated as following: What is the nature of prejudice in the investigated organization (a Saudi Arabian university) and what are the most prominent causes, treatments and implications, according to the opinions of its employees?. The key aim of the study is to contribute to gain a deeper understanding of the prejudice phenomenon, from a managerial perspective, through exploring some of its dimensions in Arab administrative organizations in general, and Saudi Arabian administrative organizations in particular. The importance of the study is in its empirical contribution via bridging a part of the gap in the literature, specifically in the field of organizational behavior. This study employed a mixed or hybrid research, using qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the quantitative research, the sample was 929 male and female students. In the qualitative research, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted. The study indicated the existence of the prejudice phenomenon in the organization examined in various forms. Such a finding confirmed the significance of not underestimating the existence of the phenomenon in order to avoid, as possible, its negative effects in organizations. Therefore, the study highlighted the need to address this phenomenon in a scientific manner and to include it within the agenda of research in management, to develop a comprehensive treatment of the prejudice disease and to reduce it institutionally and systematically from a managerial perspective.

Key Words: Prejudice - Social Prejudice - Regional Prejudice - Economic Prejudice - Managerial Thought - Organizational Behaviour.