

# Dubbing Melodramas in the Arab World; Between the Standard Language and Colloquial Dialects

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**Abstract:** This paper addresses the phenomenon of dubbing foreign non-Arab media content, particularly melodramas, using Arabic colloquial varieties instead of the Standard language. It attempts to discover what dialect or variety is preferred most by the participants included, and if the choices made were driven by any suggested criterion. The sample is randomly formed through a mainly quantitative online questionnaire, including 279 participants from Saudi Arabia. A good number of the sample opted for the Standard language over the colloquial varieties, and when they had to choose one from the colloquial, they opted for the Syrian dialect. The strong affinity to the Turkish soap opera, which achieved its success through the Syrian dialect, seems to nourish a more positive attitude toward the Syrian dialect compared to other dialects used and provided by the study, such as the Khaleeji, Hijazi, and Egyptian dialects. However, with foreign dramas other than the Turkish, whatever the criterion behind selecting certain varieties for dubbing, the Standard comes in at first place, then the Syrian. That is, the Khaleeji with the Indian drama, and the Hijazi with Korean drama are not favoured by the participants. This latter finding is interesting, since the Khaleeji and Hijazi are the participants' own dialects (or those closest to them), yet were rejected nonetheless.

**Keywords:** Dubbing Non-arab Melodrama, Language Attitudes, Turkish Melodrama, Syrian Dialect, Standard Arabic, Arabic Colloquial Dialects, Cultural Juxtaposition

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## 1. Introduction

The scene of dubbing foreign drama in the Arab region has become very complex. The criteria for choosing certain dialects over others are not grounded on a clear or firm basis. In other words, there is no ruling criterion for why certain dialect should be used with a certain drama; neither the genre of that drama nor its culture can be definitive to the process. Although the Syrian dialect is winning the case until now, other dialects have not been completely suspended or abandoned as dubbing dialects.

Satellite TV and the leading channel groups are addressing a varied and diverse audience, which is treated as one identity when choosing a single dialect for this broad and miscellaneous audience. The Middle East extends over a large area and is comprised of many countries, each with a different dialect that sometimes is not understood entirely by others, and each has a distinct culture, ranging from extremely conservative to extremely liberal.

This paper attempts to determine the availability of a dialect that is most favourable to the audience, but the targeted audience here will be limited to include only Saudi participants. If a dialect proves to be so favourable, the scope of the paper will discuss how cultural aspects may or may not be relevant.

### 1.1. Theoretical Background

#### 1.1.1. Language, Dialect and Accent

Cysouw et al. [7] argue that there is no clear criterion that can delineate the differences between the terms “language” and “dialect” within the realm of one language. Hudson [12] defines a language variety as “a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution.”

Dialect is defined by Oxford<sup>1</sup> dictionaries as a particular

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dialect>

variety of form of language peculiar to a specific region or group of speakers; i.e., normally a variety originating from a standard language yet with particular linguistic features that characterise its speakers. A dialect can also be defined as a geographical variety of a language, spoken in a certain area, that differs in some linguistic items from other geographical varieties of the same language. These definitions can somehow bring the two terms *variety* and *dialect* to a meeting point. However, it is worth noting that according to some linguists and sociolinguists' definitions, *dialect* is an attribute linked with any non-standard variety of language, and it mostly bears negative connotations. That is, since standard languages or varieties are considered the proper forms of speaking, any other deviating variety therefore is not proper and is thus called a dialect "Meyerhoff [16]; Yule [24]".

Like *dialect*, *accent* is sometimes considered as a negative term. For example, when some linguists indicate that everyone and every nation speaks with an accent, they are attempting to eliminate the discrimination linked to certain people or nations due to their accents "e.g. see Yule, [24:240]". Yule [24] draws a simple distinction between the terms *accent* and *dialect*, indicating that *accent* refers to the description of pronunciation aspects that can identify the speaker's regional or social identity and location, while *dialect* is more comprehensive, including quirks in grammar and vocabulary.

In the context of the study, or namely in the Arab world, the common references for Arabic varieties do not make precise distinctions in terms of labelling. In other words, the way of speaking of certain people in a specific territory is named after its speakers' identity or nationality, and merely as an accent. Besides calling it as accent, or /lahja/ in Arabic, people simply say, for example, Saudis' way of speaking, or Saudis' speaking.

**1.1.2. Arabic Language, Dialects and/or Varieties**

From the Levant, across the Arabian Peninsula, to the northern Africa, or the Middle East, Arabic is used and spoken as the official language of all the countries within this area. The formal language, the written literary language, is the Standard Arabic, or *Fusha* \fūsha\ in Arabic, usually referred to as the Classical Arabic, or nowadays the Modern Standard Arabic, which is taught and learnt at schools, and used for formal speeches and at formal situations, exclusively. That is, the everyday spoken language throughout these geographically wide regions is different than the standardized language.

In Arabic, *Fusha*, Classical, or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) are the only main forms of the Standard Arabic that are concerned with structure and grammar. According to Bassiouney [26], Arabs simply refer to all different dialects or varieties as the Arabic language, and they do not make or recognize any distinction between Classical Arabic and MSA. They believe that there is only one standard language, and that it is the official language for all the countries where it is spoken.

All other forms of the same language are called colloquial. They differ from each other in pronunciation, and to a certain extent in vocabulary, and they can be called dialects, yet no attention is paid to grammar or structure, which concerns are exclusive to the standard languages.

To put it differently, spoken Arabic takes the shape of different various regional varieties originating from Standard Arabic, though different on the phonological and structural levels. The divisions between these varieties, which are referred to as colloquial accents in the context of the study, can be significant to the extent that they hinder intelligibility and comprehensibility. For example, the northern African dialects in general, particularly Moroccan, are reported as the most incomprehensible to people from all other Arab countries, unlike the Egyptian, which is considered to be the most intelligible and comprehensible in the Arab world. Similarly, people from the Arabian Gulf countries have no difficulty communicating with their different dialects/accents, and neither do the people from the Levant. However, delineating dialects in the Middle Eastern region and countries is not an easy task, since several diverse dialects/accents exist at the country, city, and village levels. In the following, I will attempt to present the varieties approached in this study, those mostly used in media and communicated by large numbers of certain populations or nations, referring to the regions where they are spoken. It is worth noting that there are major differences in each region or country's dialect within each category.

*Table 1. Arabic Dialects Approached in the Study.*

Arabic Varieties	Areas where they are spoken
Khaleeji (Gulf)	Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Iraq
Hijazi	The Western Region of Saudi Arabia, in cities such as Jeddah, Makkah, Madina, Taif and Yanbu.
Najdi	In Najd Area, the central dessert in Saudi Arabia, namely in the Capital city of Riyadh and its surroundings.
Levantine or 'Shami'	Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine

Other main dialects are named according to the territories where they are spoken, such as Egyptian in Egypt, Moroccan in Morocco, and Sudanese in Sudan. This is typical of almost all the varieties, including the countries mentioned in the table above—for example, Syrian in Syria and Saudi in Saudi Arabia.

**1.1.3. Language, Attitudes, and Identity**

According to Gardner [8], *attitude* is the reaction to some referent in the world based upon the individual perceptions or beliefs of the nature of this referent. Baker [5:10] views attitude as "a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour" that touches the reality of the language itself "Baker, [25]". Baker *ibid.* elaborates that both positive and negative feelings may be attached to a language situation, and they vary from favourability to 'unfavourability'.

Richards et al. [27:199] propose a comprehensive

definition for language attitudes as follows:

The attitude that speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each others' languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language.

Closely related is the construct of identity, which is defined by Jenkins [14:5] as "our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and of others (which includes us)." Bucholtz and Hall [6:586] simply put it as a "social positioning of self and other".

Pavlenko and Blackledge [18] indicate that it is not convenient to treat identity as a straightforward field for analysis, and language choice and attitudes is one area through which this construct can be approached. Cultural identity, when it is broadly employed, it includes concepts such as subcultural, national, ethnolinguistic, and racial identity, "Kim 2007: [28]".

In the relationship between language and identity, Gibson [11:1] portrays language as "a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity." Spolsky [28] asserts that language is a central feature of human identity, as people immediately make guesses about place of origin, gender, age, education level, profession when they hear someone's speech, "in Gibson, [11]".

#### **1.1.4. The History of Importing Foreign Melodrama to the Region**

Introducing dubbed drama is not a new trend to the Arab World or Middle East countries. It was first introduced in the mid-eighties, though was exclusive to "Mexican Drama", which gained huge popularity at that time, Jaafar, [13], by the biggest Middle-eastern Broadcasting Centre Group MBC, a Saudi-owned company.

The proliferation of Satellite channels in the eighties prompted the market to drastically change, and apparently through importing foreign media. According to Gamal [9], companies specialising into media services, such as voice over, dubbing and subtitling, swarmed the broadcasting market. Indeed, with the expansion of the satellite channels, Arab consumed more drama and films from beyond the Middle East, and the demand for more varied content increased. As Al-Khateeb [1] puts it, the dubbing industry in the region was massively boosted at that time. According to Spindle [19] "as televisions reached every corner of the Arab world and satellite broadcasting expanded, the search for content was on", and the search turned up for the dubbed Mexican and Brazilian soap operas.

Although the Mexican Drama, including Brazilian and Spanish melodramas, gained popularity at that time, this wave soon faded out, and some critics believe it did not have a great impact "Williams, [22]". They resort the recession of this wave to the incongruity between the dubbing language or

dialect and the totally imported foreign culture (ibid). According to MBC's director of content Badih Fattouh, in Jaafar [13], the Latin Americans, although very nice-looking hence supposedly attractive, "they do not look like us." To put it clearly, some aspects of this imported culture are in great opposition to the receivers' cultures, which are generally conservative.

Jaafar's [13] point may be well clarified by Gamal's [9] elaboration that the Mexican drama was not helped by "the predominantly female actresses featuring fair complexion, blond hair with different body language, westernized lifestyles and with more liberal attitudes to love, sex and material values."

At that time, no one would give MCA or Standard Arabic, a second thought to be the chosen dubbing dialect. Spindle [19] thinks that this choice of MCA is due to its great familiarity to its native speakers since all Arabs are exposed to it from very early ages, at their formal schooling, state television broadcasts and the Quran language. Besides, having several varieties of Arabic, opting for MCA is like a way out from the dilemma of which Arabic dialect to choose.

Recently, namely since 2008, a new era of introducing foreign soap operas to Arabs has been born when MBC introduced dubbed Turkish soap opera. This new wave started with what can be called "Turkish Drama", which became a big and "smash" hit "Jaafar, [13]". This time, MBC "took a counterintuitive decision," dubbing the Turkish content into vernacular Syrian dialect, and continued to do so till now due to the achieved success "Spindle, [19]". Some explained the success of this experiment with the huge resemblance between the Syrian and Turkish cultures. As Jaafar [13] puts it, "what is different this time around, however, is the proximity in both geography and culture of the country being used." He elaborated that, unlike the case of the Mexican drama, "Turkey is an Islamic society like us, even if they are a little more modern. Also, there's a little more freedom in their programming, so that can be sexy without being sleazy or vulgar." Furthermore, Jaafar reports Sheik Waleed Al-Ibrahim, MBC founder and chairman, as strongly supporting this viewpoint:

It has a lot to do with the cultures, which are similar. When you dub into the Syrian dialect, it's a perfect formula. Turkey and Syria are very similar in culture and even the landscape. You have many Turks who live in the borders with Syria who speak Syrian and vice versa. People here thought at first that it was a Syrian production

Similarly, Williams [22] reports Habib Batta's view, Beirut-based media critic and author of *The Beirut Report blog*, as "the Arab audience feels so much closer to Turkish culture than, say, Brazil's". Habib comments on the success of choosing the Syrian dialect for Turkish drama saying that it "made the stories "more engaging" and "the voice actors more believable"

In addition, Williams refers to the views of Abdallah Alsalmi, Middle East media analyst at BBC, who indicates that "because the characters on screen had plenty in common with Arab audiences, it was more controversial as well as

easier to relate to”

Due to the huge success of the experiment, and the decline of Arabic drama in the region at that time, mainly as a consequence of the political situation in the Mideast region since 2008 the demand for more varied media hence the dubbed imported media continued to successfully grow. Besides, on the sociocultural side, globalization or people increased openness to this interconnected world through internet and TV satellite so as to be a global citizen vastly introduces foreign media content to the region.

Therefore, the journey of importing foreign soap operas has continued to include the Indian and Korean Drama. There are now certain channels dedicated to broadcasting Bollywood productions into the Middle East, such as MBC Bollywood, CBC Drama, Zee Aflam and Zee Alwan, which all performed well and succeeded. Similarly, Korean Series, which have been a phenomenon among younger generation who are clinging to such content on-line, have entered the competition of the imported dubbed drama industry in the Mideast.

As the demand for foreign TV production has increased, questions regarding which dialect to choose for dubbing the foreign content keep arising. If the successful experiment of the Turkish Drama with the Syrian dialect has greatly succeeded, what options are available for Bollywood and Korean soap operas?

Assuming that there are inherited physical appearances similarities between Indians and people from the Arabia Gulf or “Khaleejies”, MBC took the initiative to dub Bollywood products into “Kuwaiti” dialect, the dialect of people from Kuwait, presupposing the popularity of this dialect as the Kuwaiti TV is the oldest and the most successful in the region, and also because of the above-mentioned reason.

The producers supporting this move predicted its success building upon reasons such as the broad experience of Kuwait in this field, and the long historical relationship between Kuwait and India “Mujahid[17]”. Al-Rashidy [2] claims this new trend is successful to the extent that confuses the viewer about the the identity of some actors being Indian or Kuwaiti. On the other hand, Habayeb [10] describes this move as the most eccentric one compared to all the other types of imported drama and the chosen dubbing dialects believing that the two cultures in contact, i.e. the Kuwaiti and Indian, and the attitudes and dispositions of its people, are too disparate.

Yet, a wave of criticism has described this move as lacking authenticity, discouraging, and a temporary phenomenon that is rejected by the Arab audience “Al-Rooqi, [3]”. And yes, it proved to be a temporary phenomenon as it ceased after very few attempts.

As with the Korean Drama, the first, and only, dubbed series by MBC was 꽃 전에 소년, translated as Boys before Flowers. MBC chose the Hijazi dialect, particularly its urban variety that is spoken the major cities of Jeddah, Makkah, Madina, Yanbu and Ta’if “Wikipedia [23]”. However, like the experiment of dubbing into the Kuwaiti dialect, this attempt by MBC failed and received huge criticism, displeasure and

dissatisfaction from the audience. Many voices explained that the great mismatch between the characters and the dubbing language/dialect stood as a major reason behind this flop “Alsulmi, [4]”.

Due to the unprecedented success of the Syrian dialect, over the other discussed options, the dubbing groups decided to try the same dialect with the other imported drama, namely the Indian and Korean, irrespective of considering elements of physical appearances of cultural similitudes. Also, Egyptian producers, believe that Egypt with its very long and broad history in the field across the region and the role it has and is playing as the leading and pioneering country of media and art industry should play a part in the dubbing process. Being so since very long time ago, producers expect the experiment to be fruitful particularly as the Egyptian dialect is so familiar and favourable to Arab audience in general. Thus, appeared to the stage new Bollywood, Turkish and Mexican soap opera dubbed with the Egyptian dialect.

## 1.2. Research Questions, Hypotheses, and Objectives

The paper draws on the theory of the match between the imported culture and the culture of the dubbing dialect as a factor needed for the success of the dubbing process. It mainly focuses on the successful Syrian dialect as a criterion that may or may not validate that theory. That is, if this dialect proves to be favourable with other drama than the Turkish, this common theory might be invalid.

In the same line of thought, the paper considers the physical features similarities between the people of the imported drama and those of the dialect used in the dubbing process. As the Khaleeji dialects, namely Kuwaiti, are included, the purported supposition of the physical similarities between Indians and people from the Arabian Gulf can be tested, with other cultural aspects in mind.

In addition, including Hijazi and Khaleeji dialects relate to issues of identity since the participants represent a sample of communities to which these dialects belong. That is, the participants’ attitude towards their ‘own’ dialects, can be discussed from the identity angle.

The study employs the following hypotheses for exploring the validity of adopted theory:

- The Syrian dialect is favoured and preferred as a dubbing dialect exclusively for the Turkish drama due to cultural and physical accord and similarities between the nations of the two countries; Syria and Turkey.

- A dubbing dialect is favourable when there is cultural and physical accord between the nation of the dubbing dialect and that of the region from which the imported drama produced.

- Saudis prefer their spoken varieties over others’ varieties for dubbing foreign drama.

### 1.2.1. Objectives of the Study

- (1) To indirectly examine whether there is a relationship between the drama imported and the selected dubbing dialect in terms of physical likenesses sociocultural closeness.

- (2) To identify the most likable and preferable colloquial dubbing dialect to Saudi audience.
- (3) To investigate the participants attitudes towards Syrian, Saudi, and Khaleeji dialects for dubbing foreign drama.

### 1.2.2. Questions Based on the Study Hypotheses and Objectives

1- Do cultural juxtaposition and people's physical features resemblances play a role as factor in dubbing process success?

2-What dialect do Saudis prefer the most as a dubbing dialect for foreign melodramas in general?

3-Do Saudis prefer a specific dubbing dialect for certain foreign melodramas?

4-Do Saudis hold positive attitudes towards their dialect or other "Khaleeji" dialects as dubbing dialects for foreign drama?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. The Study Design

This study is quantitatively oriented, following probability sampling, specifically simple random sampling as it targets a large group of populations and aims at surveying a large number of this population who are randomly selected. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie [20], in such a survey, every member of the population can participate and can be determined. Teddlie and Yu [21] indicate that samples of these surveys seek to achieve representativeness, which they define as "the degree to which the sample accurately represents the entire population."

The paper depends upon online data collection tool, namely *google drive* survey or questionnaire, believing it is the most feasible and practical. Nowadays, online surveys have utterly replaced traditional paper-and-pencil questionnaires that are time consuming and not cost effective. What have helped spreading this trend are the advantages of online tools in terms of ease of design, distribution, and analysis. When a researcher uses a website to collect real-time data, the data is stored in a form that can easily be analysed statistically "Lefever et al [15]". Unlike the traditional methods of administrating questionnaires that require physically visits to the field where the targeted participants belong, or posting the papers to their destinations, online forms can be widely, quickly and easily distributed using the form link. Indeed, this tool offers several helpful options and features that make processing, exporting, and sharing the collected data a very easy task to achieve. Researchers nowadays can access large, diverse and global population and collect huge amounts of data "Carbonaro and Bainbridge, [29]; in Lefever et al [15]".

The first questions in the questionnaire aim to collect biographical data about the participants, including age category, qualifications, gender, nationality. Follows are general contingency questions in the area being investigated, i.e. foreign drama and dubbing process in general. Then, and gradually, the remainder of the questions, in line with the

research objectives, identifies specific dialects with specific types of drama. An optional space is left for the participants to explain any reasons behind their choices. Likert Scale is used to support the previous questionnaire direct questions, i.e. as a supplement to examining the participants' attitudes towards the dialects and type of dramas discussed. The last part of the form is an open space aiming to collect qualitative data that may be incorporated in the analysis and discussion.

### 2.2. Participants

As indicated earlier, the study followed a random sampling method that allows all members of population to participate. The sample included 279 Saudi participants; 219 of them are females.

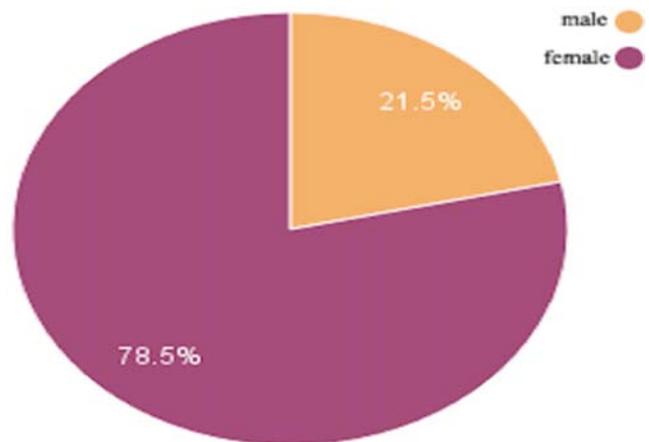


Figure 1. Distribution of Participants According to Gender.

There are five age categories provided in the questionnaire. Most of the respondents are aged from 18-25, representing 40% of the sample, whereas 74 and 68 of them respectively belong to 30-40 and 25-30 age categories.

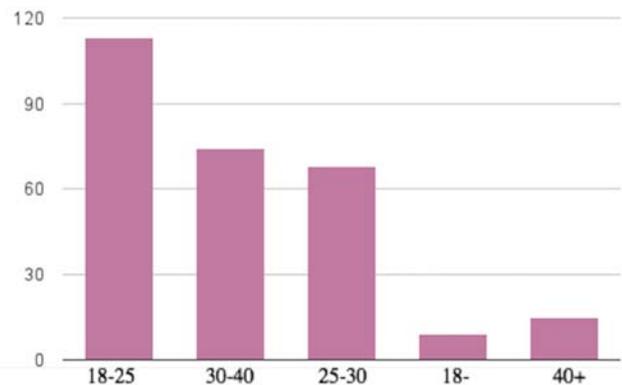


Figure 2. Distribution of Participants According to Age.

The majority of the participants (197) are qualified with Bachelor degrees, 39 finished high school level, 20 continued higher education to MA degrees and 5 to PhD

More than half of the participants (65.6%) indicated that they do watch foreign drama dubbed into Arabic.

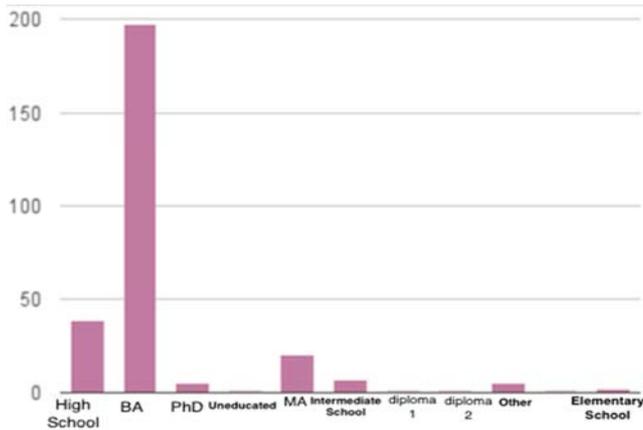


Figure 3. Distribution of Participants According to Degree/Qualification.

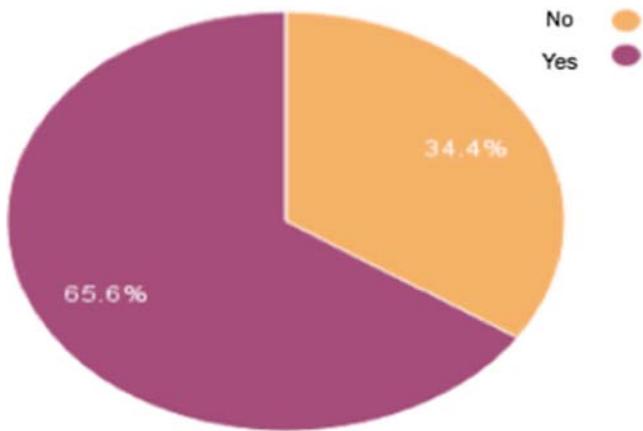


Figure 4. Percentage of Participants Watching Dubbed Foreign Drama.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Favorite Melodrama and Dubbing Language/Dialect

Among the options introduced to the participants, Turkish drama is evidently the most preferred non-Arab drama as indicated by 62% of the participants, outweighing the Indian, Mexican and Korean drama, which were chosen by 11.3%, 6.8%, and 6.2% of the participants, respectively.

There has always been a debate over which language to follow in dubbing non-Arab drama; standard “*Fusha*” or colloquial. The result obtained by this study seem to validate the subsistence that debate as the votes for both options, standard and colloquial, are quite convergent, with only 9.6% difference leaning towards the colloquial.

Although the quantitative data shows no significant difference between the standard and colloquial Arabic, and although the higher percentage goes towards the colloquial in this data, the other qualitative side of data can indicate the opposite. Of the 32 participants’ left comments, 20 expressed a strong clinging to *fusha* over any other colloquial dialects. These participants justify their opinion with reason related to the standard Arabic status and prestige; that is to support its supremacy, prevalence, and dominance. Another reason provided is related to the matter of intelligibility, indicating that being the formal common language, it is understood and

intelligible more than dialects specific to certain Arab communities or nationalities.

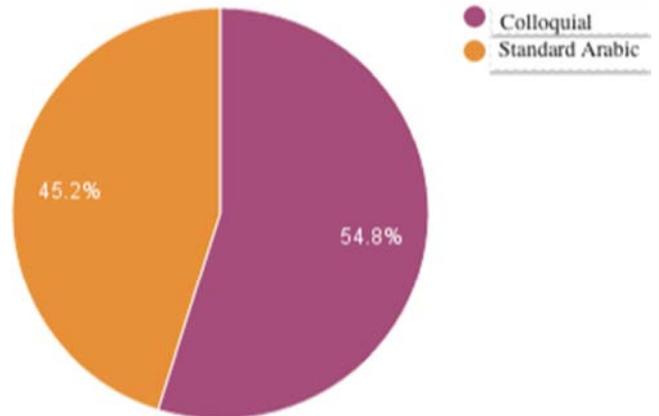


Figure 5. Standard vs. Colloquial Arabic for Dubbing Purposes.

“*Fusha*; to strongly support it in order to be predominant”

“Arabic Standard Language is the most suitable because it is shared by all, and in order to help preserving it as a language recited by coming future generations”

“*Fusha* should be adopted for all kinds of dubbing because it is the main mother tongue”

“why I chose *Fusha* is because our children recite what they hear and this way we are helping making it easily acceptable and widespread”

“*Fusha* is better and the most understood among all other language”

“*Fusha* is the most appropriate in Arabizing any foreign drama”

“I prefer *Fusha* since there is a strong tendency by the new generation to watch these series so we help develop and improve their Arabic language”

One participant, sharing the same view, but puts it differently from attitudes perspective. That is, choosing *Fusha* is not because of only supporting the language, but to overcome negative attitudes linked with certain specific dialects:

“I might not like the Kuwaiti dialect so I will get bored and will not watch the series for this reason, the rule is the Syrian for the Syrian drama, and Kuwaiti for Kuwaiti drama”

That said, a quite good size of the left comments reveals a positive attitude to translation and subtitling over dubbing, for reasons such preserving the product authenticity.

#### 3.2. Specific Dialects and Certain Melodramas

Generally, the best Arabized melodrama for the participants is the Turkish as indicated by 62% of them. Only 11.3%, 6.4%, and 6.8% of the participants favor the other three types, i.e. the Indian, Korean, and Mexican drama, respectively.

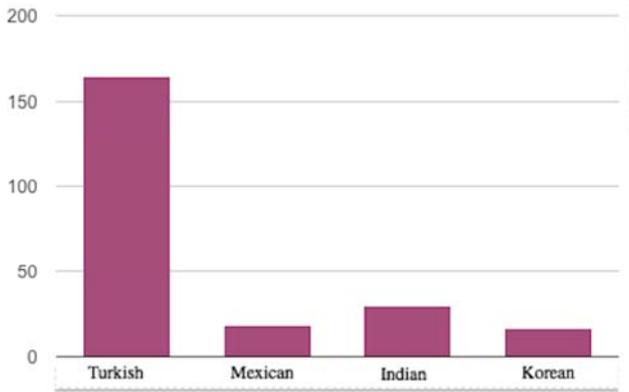


Figure 6. The most Watched Foreign Drama.

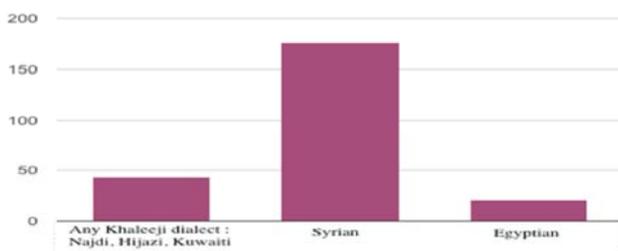


Figure 7. The Most Preferred Colloquial Dubbing Dialect.

66.7% of the participants opt for the Syrian Arabic as the best colloquial dialect used for dubbing foreign drama in general.

The Syrian dialect as the most suitable for Turkish drama is an opinion revealed by 65.6% of the participants; besides, 70.7% agree upon this opinion as they choose the three agreement options of the provided Likert scale.

However, this dialect seems not to suit other types of

drama, namely the Indian, Korean, and Mexican as only 19.6%, 10%, 12.2% prefer it as a dubbing language for these certain drama types, respectively.

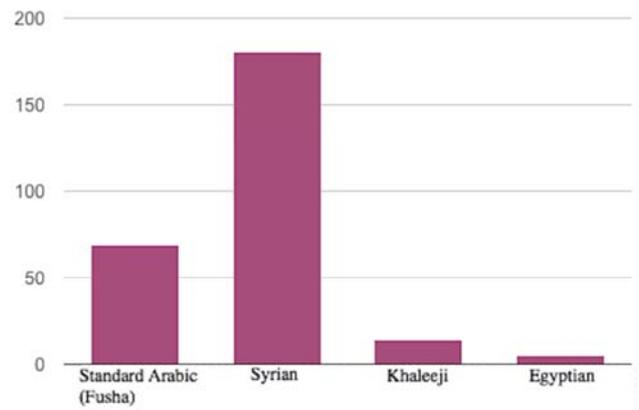


Figure 8. The Most Preferred Dialect for the Turkish Drama.

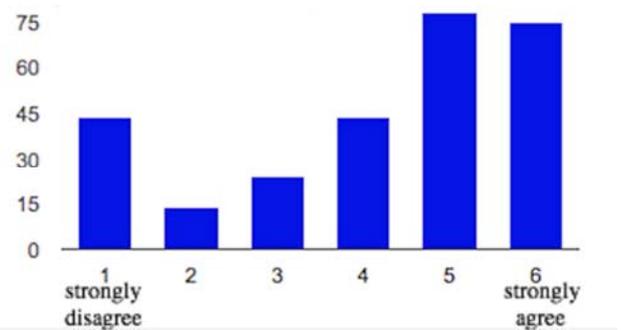


Figure 9. The Participants Attitudes towards the Syrian Dialect for Dubbing the Turkish Drama.

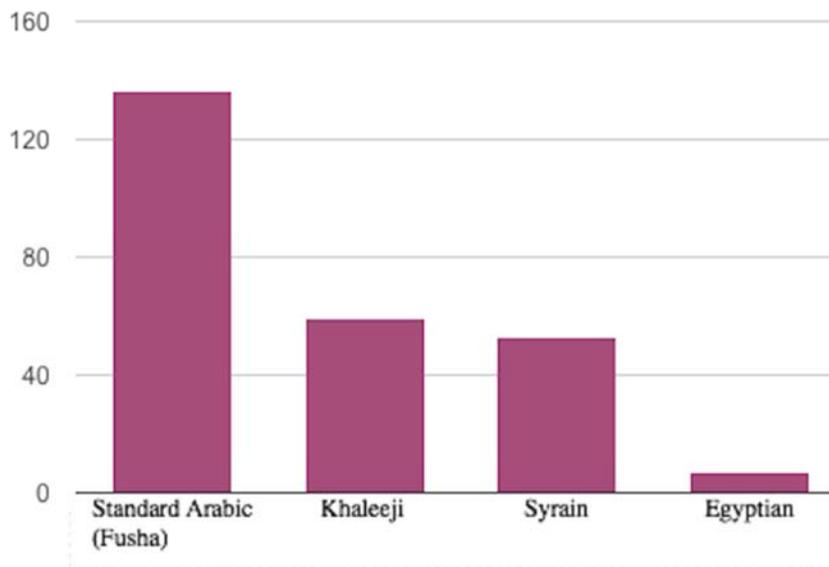


Figure 10. The Most Preferred Dialect for the Indian Drama.

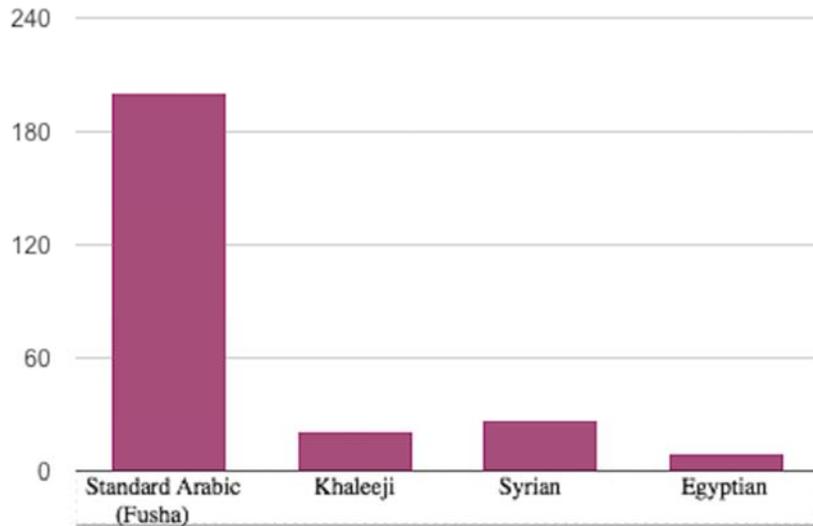


Figure 11. The Most Preferred Dialect for the Korean Drama.

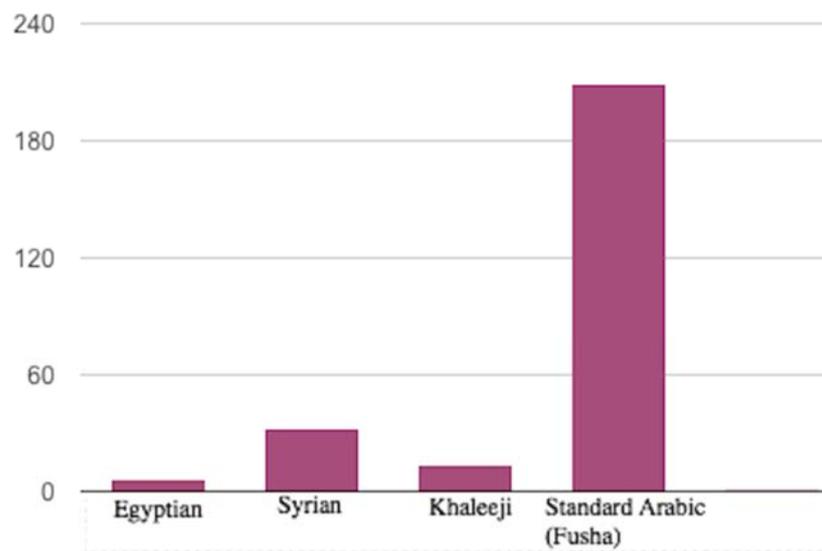


Figure 12. The Most Preferred Dialect for the Mexican Drama.

On the scale, 44.1%, 19%, 10.4% of the participants *strongly disagree*, *disagree* and *slightly disagree* with the statement that states the Syrian dialect as the most fitting dialect for dubbing the Indian drama.

Regarding the Indian drama, 49.1% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement that indicates the Khaleeji, Saudi or Kuwaiti, dialect as the best dubbing dialect for this type of drama.

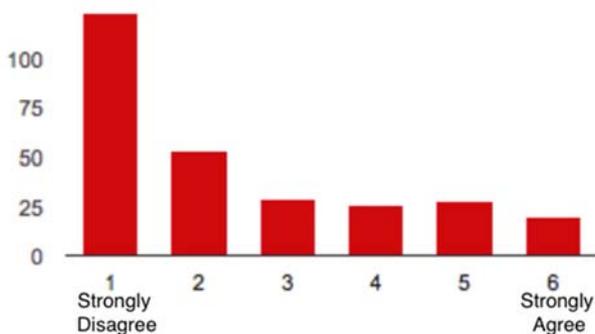


Figure 13. The Participants' Attitudes towards the Syrian Dialect for Dubbing the Indian Drama.

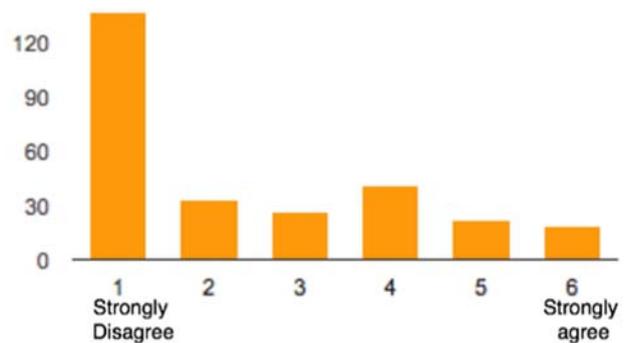


Figure 14. The Participants' Attitudes towards the Khaleeji/Kuwaiti Dialect/s for Dubbing the Indian Drama.

Apparently, the only colloquial dialect that is chosen as a

dubbing language is the Syrian and exclusively with Turkish drama. Some participants left some comments and reasons justifying their opinion under this particular questionnaire item. They are as follows:

‘Because the Syrian is “sweet” and understandable’

‘I like it, just like that’

‘I think I prefer it because I am used to it’

‘For the similarities between their features, our aptitude to understand it, and the match between their speaking and appearances’

‘I think the ‘Shami’ is too familiar to us and that’s why you may find the majority preferring it’

‘the Syrian, I think it is the closest to the viewer’s heart due to its accent smoothness and intelligibility’

‘Apart from language, the Syrian atmosphere is too close to the Turkish, thus I believe the Syrian dialect is most appropriate for the Turkish drama’

‘The Syrian dialect is undisputedly the best’

As it is clearly indicated from the quotes or comments, the participants show a strong positive attitude towards the Syrian dialect. Their reasons can be summarized to include; the familiarity and intelligibility of the dialect to the participants, the smoothness of its sounds, and the great proximity between the drama shown and the dialect, which at the same time can stand as an agent behind the two previous reasons. Thus, it can be said, the cultural and physical resemblances between the Turks and Syrians help promoting the acceptance of this drama with the chosen dialect.

For the rest of the foreign drama, Standard Arabic – *Fusha*- seems to be the most favored and preferred language as indicated by 50.7%, 74.2%, and 77.5% in relation to the Indian, Korean, and Mexican drama. The data obtained from the agreement/disagreement scale supports this finding as 72.3% and 71.7% agree with this statement in terms of the Korean and Mexican drama, with varying degrees though.

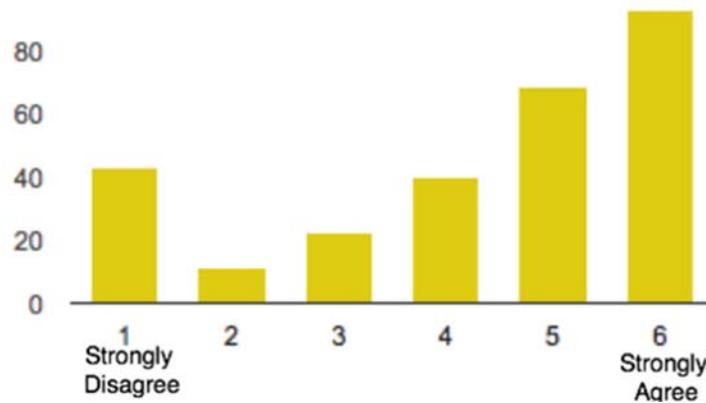


Figure 15. The Participants’ Attitudes towards the Standard Arabic for Dubbing the Korean Drama.

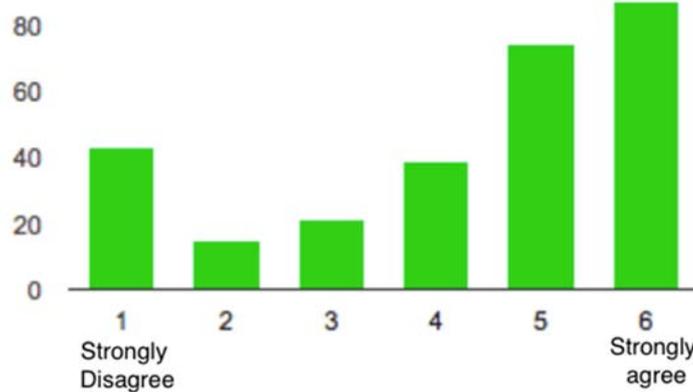


Figure 16. The Participants’ Attitudes towards the Standard Arabic for Dubbing the Mexican Drama.

#### 4. Discussion

As the findings show that the Syrian dialect is mostly and exclusively preferred for the Turkish drama, the first research hypothesis can be accepted and validated. It can be indicated that sociocultural aspects and physical appearance resemblances between the two neighboring countries, Syria

and Turkey, is a true and key factor of the dubbing process success. At the same time, it can be argued that the participants’ positive attitude towards this particular dialect may contribute to their acceptance to the Turkish drama hence it influences the acceptance and validity of the research hypothesis. Yet, the participants’ negative stance towards the same dialect with other types of soap operas can help approve the theory and accepting the hypothesis, despite

the fact that this dialect, the Syrian, is the most proffered in general as the findings reveal.

Besides, the data can indicate that physical appearances and features similarities as a factor *per se* is not sufficient when making decisions regarding the dubbing process. That is, as a sole agent and entity constituting the link between the two realms, it cannot be depended upon to yield positive attitude towards the dubbing dialect. This means that other cultural and sociocultural issues are important and should be considered if the dubbing process to be successful. This particular discussion is drawn from findings relating to the Indian drama and Khaleeji/Kuwaiti dubbing dialect that is chosen based on only physical appearance resemblances.

Thus, it can be concluded that the first research hypothesis cannot be disseminated and should include both factors together; cultural juxtapositions the physical appearance proximities.

The participants' attitudes towards other dialects when used for dubbing other foreign melodrama also contribute to the theory validity since all the proposed dialects with the drama with which they have been used are negatively perceived. Instead of dialects, the participants opt for the standard Arabic which is the most preferred in general.

The participants' negative attitude towards Khaleeji dialects can indicate negative national or social identity. Although these participants reveal a strong positive attitude to their national and social identity through opting for Standard Arabic, they seem to be neutral, less bigoted in terms of asserting their identity when the parameter is their colloquial dialects. This finding can suggest that certain nation's language or dialect/s might not be indisputably accepted or favored unconditionally. In the light of the particular issue of this paper, other constructs should be considered while figuring out what language with which foreign content, namely sociocultural homogeneity.

## 5. Conclusions

Regardless of the mounting movement of relying on colloquial dialects for dubbing foreign melodramas, this study found that Standard Arabic, unpacked from any specific ethnic or racial/indigenous aspects, is preferred over any other non-standard colloquial dialect. From the participants' viewpoint, it equally encompasses and relate to all Arab nations, as a unifying language, with which all Arabs are and should be familiar. Thus, being broadcasted to the whole Arab world with its comparatively diverse backgrounds, foreign dramas dubbed with specific dialects may appeal to territorial segregation concepts that may feed feelings of discrimination among these countries. It might be argued that the classification of these countries as all belonging to one world, Arab world, due to the shared language, Arabic, help constitute a strong unifying identity as an Arab.

In the same line of thought, based on the findings, particularly those relating to identity issues in terms of colloquial dialects, it can be concluded that issues of cultural,

social, and national identity preservation might not be inevitably germane while making decisions about what dialect to choose for specific audience.

To conclude, on the colloquial and dialectal level, the paper emphasizes the centrality of the accord of sociocultural elements and traits between any two nations in question, yet not only on the physical appearance level, if the dubbing process to be successful.

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