A blueprint of Saudi English typology: A substrate effect

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Articles

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Abstract: Although some Englishes in Asia have received extensive attention, the grammar of Saudi English remains relatively unexamined. It remains unclear whether the Saudi English grammatical (or morphosyntactic) patterns derive from universal principles. Al-Rawi (2012); Mahboob and Elyas (2014) seem to provide an individual description. This paper is an attempt to provide an analysis for the morphosyntactic features of the variety of English in Saudi Arabia from a global approach by adopting Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) geographic and variety-specific perspectives. Our findings show that Saudi English has 7 distinctive features. Four of them are universal. Due to the limitations in covering all the distinctive features and due the clear analogy between these features and the substrate Arabic patterns, we argue that the distinctive features are simply the result of the substrate influence rather than universal principles that derive these deviant forms.

Keywords: Saudi English, morphosyntactic features, substrate effect, transfer effect, typology.

Introduction

It has been claimed that English is a highly diversified language that appears in a multitude of different varieties across the globe (Siemund, 2013). Hence, English language has been perceived as a highly diversified language that appears in a multitude of different varieties and dialects across the globe (Siemund, 2013; Siemund et al., 2013, 2021). These varieties have been under investigation since the ninetieth century (Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008). Many pioneering scholars called these varieties of English 'World Englishes'. Kachru's (1985) model of World Englishes was credited due to a myriad of research in 'World Englishes' worldwide. Onysko (2016) states that "a range of studies have emerged along related strands of research concerned with the global spread and creation of

Englishes (World Englishes)" where the spread of English, globalization, and explicit contact impact the "other languages and the influences that emerge from this contact" (p.1). The impact of globalization, media, and world entertainment have further impacted world Englishes worldwide along the contact with local languages (Bolton, 2013, 2019; Onysko, 2016). Due to such an impact, a handful of researchers have advocated for a global English education instead of standard American or English education (Fang et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2020, 2022) arguing for 'plurality of English' towards fostering unequal disposition against unequal Englishes (Tupas, 2021, 2022).

In the Arabian Gulf region, a handful of researchers have shed some light on the varieties of English used in their respective country of residence. 'Gulf English' was then labeled by Fussell (2011) where he examined the syntactic, lexical, and phonetic features found in the English speech as varieties of English by the Arabian Gulf citizens. Since then, the status of English in the Arabian Gulf was investigated by many researchers such as Elyas and Mahboob (2021a, 2021b), Hillman et al. (2021), Hopkyns et al. (2021), Mahboob (2013); Siemund et al. (2021), Tuzlukova and Mehta (2021), and van den Hoven and Carroll (2021). Hillman et al. (2021) scoping review of World Englishes in the Middle East and North African (MENA) has systemically researched and documented research on World Englishes. Also, Elyas and Mahboob (2021b) have published a through bibliography of World Englishes in (MENA) in the same journal (Journal of World Englishes) showcasing the myriad of research conducted on the varieties of English in the region, including MA and PhD theses on the topic by locals and Western scholars living and working in the region.

Saudi English

Al-Shurafa (2009) was among the first to analyze the syntactic features found Saudi English. In her work, she established what she called "Arabicised-English" not only in Saudi Arabia, but also in the Arab world. In her study, she showed that Arabs tend to overuse the modifier very, the first-person pronoun, and the connector which indicated L1 (i.e., Arabic) interferences. English in Saudi Arabia is being used as a lingua franca between Saudis and foreigners, such as pilgrims, tourists, and workers in international companies (Elyas, 2011; Elyas & Picard, 2013; Elyas & Picard, 2018). To illustrate the importance of English, Al-Rawi (2012) stated that learning English can greatly help Saudi university graduates to increase their chances of employment in private and international companies in Saudi Arabia. Al-Rawi (2012) Mahboob and Elyas (2014) were the first who coined the term Saudi English (SE) in their study. By analyzing university and high school students' speech as well as their English language textbooks, they noted that SE features include deletion of the indefinite articles *a, an* and more use of the definite article *the*, more variable use of tense markers such as use of the perfect tense for the

past tense, and replacing /p/ with /b/ and /v/ with /f/ due to the non-existence of /p/ and /v/ sounds in the Arabic language.

Culture and religion also play a major role in the influence of English usage on Saudis' word choice. Elyas et al. (2021) coined the term 'culigion' as a feature of Saudi English where culture and religion have a major impact of Saudi utterances of English on their daily English conversations. Fallatah (2017) in her analysis of SE in stand-up comedy, she has referred to the use of distinct Saudi cultural and Islamic/religious expressions such a 'haram' (an Islamic expression of wrong doings) and the use of the word 'Niqaab' (women face cover). Fallatah (2017) has detected a routine usage of religious phrases indicating an infused Saudi discourse with the Islamic religion. Since then, SE has been claimed as an emerging variety of English (Al-Rawi, 2012; AlRawi et al., 2022; AlShurfa et al., 2022; Barnawi, 2022; Elyas et al., 2021; Fallatah, 2017; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Nevertheless, in the same token, there is still a gap in the literature and more studies on SE are needed. AlRawi et al. (2022) examined the speech of several Saudi speakers in order to describe SE. The results of their study show that there are nseveral grammatical characteristics in SE speech. In relation to noun phrases, it was found that speakers show variation in the use of articles, the plural, possession, and pronouns. In verb phrases, they showed variation in the use of tense, aspect, modality, number, and forms of be. SE speakers were also found to use prepositions differently from Standard English speakers as they delete, insert, and substitute prepositions.

In relation to the structure of English clauses, SE speakers were found to omit subjects and objects, repeat subjects, and use comparative and superlative structures irregularly. These findings confirm the results found in previous studies in SE literature (Al-Rawi, 2012; Al- Shurafa, 2014; Barnawi, 2022; Elyas, 2011; Elyas et al., 2021; Fallatah, 2017; Mahboob, 2013; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). AlShurfa et al. (2022) recent paper has given a brief overview of the main morphosyntactic and lexical features of Saudi English. It has been conveyed that the expansion of the role of English in Saudi Arabia and the increased number of English speakers has resulted in a variety of English that is distinct from SE (Elyas et al., 2021; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). In the morphosyntactic domain, a total of 30 traits have been detected. The frequencies of these traits are argued to depend on the speakers' contact with standard English. The traits are less among speakers who have a direct contact with standard English (or ESL speakers) and more among the speakers who have no direct contact to standard English (AlRawi et al., 2022). Bukhari (2022) has investigated teachers' view of SE errors in her paper. Her findings revealed that a proper understanding of ELF concepts creates a positive attitude towards ELF and confidence in one's own English use. Thus, could meet the needs of Saudi learners more effectively and fulfill the expectations of the speech community (McKay, 2010), challenging the dichotomy of native and non-native speakers' dominance in Saudi context (Elyas & Alghofaili, 2019).

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However, a major shift in the status of English language in Saudi Arabia came with the post 9/11 political scenario when the English language was acknowledged, probably under social and political pressure from some West (i.e., the US) (Elyas, 2008), as a necessity for development and modernization in the country, declaring it [English] a compulsory subject across all school levels (Elyas, 2008; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014; Shah & Elyas, 2019). This, in turn, has created us versus them ideological paradigm shift (Hopkyns & Elyas, 2022) where the interplay between Arabic and English paradigm became under question in Saudi society where religion determine people's everyday lives (Elyas, 2011). With the privileged status of English as a compulsory foreign language in the country already established, the launch of the late King Abdullah's vision 2020 for his country in 2007, and later the Saudi vision 2030 led by Mohammed Bin Salman has led to the adoption of English as a medium of instruction for all science departments in the Saudi universities (Elyas et al., 2021; Elyas & Picard, 2018).

In this paper, SE was chosen being both a variety in the Expanding Circle and among the so-called #Arabicised-English# (Al-Rawi, 2012; AlRawi et al., 2022; Al-Shurafa, 2009; AlShurfa et al., 2022; Elyas et al., 2021; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) to distinguish substrate- superstrate interaction. Unlike the post-colonial English varieties used as the basis for the typological classification (Kortmann & Szmrecsanyi, 2004), Saudi English is a variety that relies on external norms (Kachru, 1985, p.5) through showing an "endonormative" (Schneider, 2004) attitude, or #at least one that does not overcompensate to avoid transfer# (Sarmah et al., 2009, p. 207) from the mother tongue. The New English that is deviant from the 'standard English', is generally socially acceptable (Barnawi, 2022).

There has been a rising interest to study the non-standard varieties of English from a global perspective irrespective of the learner's first language. Chambers (2001, 2003, 2004) develops the concept of "vernacular universals" suggesting "a small number of phonological and grammatical processes [that] recur in vernaculars wherever they are" (Chambers, 2004, p.128). At the grammatical level, he identifies four features: (a) conjunction regularization, or levelling of irregular verb forms; (b) default singulars, or subject-verb nonconcord; (c) multiple negation, or negative concord; (d) copula absence, or copula deletion. These features are worldwide. In the same vein, Mair (2003) proposes the notion of "angloversals" (p.84) for the universal features that occur in the postcolonial varieties of English (or L2 varieties) which cannot be explained historically or genetically. Building on the works of Chambers (2001, 2003, 2004) and Mair (2003), Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) design a catalogue that comprises 76 universal morphosyntactic features available in 46 non-Standard varieties of English around the globe. The features in the catalogue are numbered from 1 to 76 for ease of reference. Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) classify them from a regional and variety-specific (L1, L2, Pidgins and Creoles) perspectives. On the one hand, the features are identified according to the seven word regions:

British Isles, America, Caribbean, Australia, Pacific, Asia, and Africa. On the other hand, they are identified based on the variety type distinguishing three groups of features: (L1, L2, Pidgins and Creoles).

It is worth noting that none of the 46 varieties attested by Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) was from the Middle East. Therefore, there is a need to put Saudi English on the global synopsis especially that Al-Rawi (2012) reports that Saudi English shows three angloversal features: a) the irregular use of articles, which corresponds to Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's (2004) feature number [17], b) the deletion of be, which corresponds to Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's (2004) feature number [57], c) the invariant present tense due to zero marking for the third person singular (Kortmann & Szmrecsanyi's (2004) feature [53]). It remains unclear whether the features in the Saudi Arabia can be identified using the global synopsis (be it geographical or variety-specific).

Saudi English has shown to have 7 distinctive features that are widely used by the majority of its speakers. These features are the invariant present tense, the irregular use of articles, the redundant use of pronouns, the irregular use of prepositions, the lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions, the absence of the plural marking, and the irregular use of plural marker '-s'. In an attempt to account for the existence of features from a global perspective, the Saudi distinctive features have been compared to the features of the 7 world regions, on the one hand, and to the features of L1, L2, and Pidgin/Creole varieties, on the other hand. The geographical- based approach has shown to be inadequate to account for the Saudi features while the variety- specific approach has shown to be more closely related. The fact that neither the geographic nor the variety specific approaches can account for all 7 Saudi features suggests that the Saudi features may not follow some universal principles. The comparison between the English patterns and the Arabic counterparts has shown a correlation between the substrate system and the occurrence of the features. While a great deal of work remains to be done in describing the complete system of Saudi English speakers, it is clear that the distinctive features of a new English may result from a transfer effect. Future research is needed to examine similarities between new Englishes that share similar Arabic substrate.

Research Questions

The paper aims to answer two research questions:

1. What are the features of Saudi English used by the majority of the educated speakers?
2. Can these features be accounted for following a universal perspective (be it geographic or variety-specific?

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Data

Data were collected from 91 educated Saudis ranged in age between 23 to 55 years. The speakers are of two groups: the first group consists of both MA students of linguistics and literature (including 21 speakers) and undergraduates in their final year (including 39 speakers) studying English major and medicine at King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The second group includes 12 English teachers in government schools, 9 science teachers in private schools, 6 employees in a multinational company (including 1 manager, 2 engineers, 2 supervisors, 1 human-resources coordinator), 2 employees in a local bank (1 customer-service representative and 1 teller), and 2 fashion designers. The subjects of the second group (totaled 31) are all highly educated, with bachelor's and master's degrees in the following fields: engineering, science, business administration, arts and humanities. The overall sample is assumed to represent a target population of 'educated users of Saudi English'. For this research, we refer to those who have finished at least secondary school – although, as indicated above, the sample comprises speakers who at least have completed their third year of university. The speakers in the sample were all born and raised in Saudi Arabia and received their education locally. The speaker sample of both groups is shown in Table (1).

Table 1
Participants information in each group

Group	Number of speakers	Occupation of speakers
1	21 39	MA students Undergraduate students
2	12 9 6 2 2	English teachers Science teachers Employees in a company Employees in a bank Fashion designers

The data comes from two sources: (a) interviews, and (b) recordings of spontaneous speech. The 60 students involved in the first group were all informally interviewed. Each interview lasted for 5 minutes, producing on average 300 words. The main topics discussed by the speakers were: their future plans, their favorite courses, and ways to improve their personalities. The interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. The total number of collected data is 18,000 words. Table (2) demonstrates the number of interviewed participants, the duration, and the number of words collected from the interviews.

Table 2
Interviews information

No of participants	Duration	No of words
60	5 min each	300 each
total	5 h	18,000

The second kind of data was recordings of spontaneous speech. The recoded data is based on the second group of speakers. There were four categories of recorded data: conversations of business meetings (6 speakers), conversations in a bank (2 speakers), both English and science classes (21 speakers), and fashion speeches in a college (2 speakers). Their permission to use the recorded material in an anonymous fashion was obtained. The recorded material includes 4 business meetings that vary in length from approximately 1 to 2 hours each, representing a total of approximately 6 hours. The second set comprises 4 conversations between 2 bank employees serving non-Arab customers. Each conversation lasted 10 - 20 minutes, totaling approximately 1 hour. The third set involved two fashion designers presenting a speech in a college. Each recorded speech lasted 1 hour, representing a total of 2 hours of collected material. The fourth set includes 21 teachers: 12 English teachers working in 4 different government schools and 9 science teachers in 3 private schools. The recorded data consists of 21 lessons (each is one-hour duration). The recorded data collected from all four sets are written down in a Word document. The resultant corpus consists of 30,000 words. Table 3 summarizes the information about the recordings (duration and number of words) in each context.

Table 3
Recordings information in each context

Context	No of speakers	Duration	No of words collected
A company	6	6 h	5,950
A bank	2	1 h	1,080
Schools	21	21 h	20,870
College	2	2 h	2,100
Total	31	30 h	30,000

Results and discussion

In order to answer the first research question, frequencies of deviant uses are calculated to determine distinctive morphosyntactic features of the variety of English in Saudi Arabia. Despite that some sociolinguists have attempted to use "educated usage" as the main criterion, we rely on the frequency to determine distinctive features due to lack of agreement of on what constitutes the educated usage. We consider it legitimate to regard what Wardhaugh (2002, p.43) describes as "noticeable differences in pronunciation, in the choices and forms of words, and in syntax" in the English of Saudi Arabia although neither pronunciation nor lexicon is part of this study. We take syntactic uses that are different from Standard Englishes to be distinctive features of Saudi English when they are frequent and widespread. To ensure that they are used by the majority of the speakers, we focus on the forms that are used by 'not less than 90%', following Arua (2004, p.259).. Accordingly, features, which are not used

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by the majority (i.e. 90%), are ignored. A feature such as 'variation of tense marker' (or feature [25] 'levelling of difference between Present Perfect and Simple Past' of Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004, pp. 1146-7), that is taken by Mahboob and Elyas (2014) to be Saudi English, is, in fact, not frequent in our study. Table 4 below presents 7 distinctive features of Saudi English with the corresponding speakers' total number and percentage, and examples.

Table 4
The occurrence of Saudi morphosyntactic features

feature	speakers Total	%	examples
invariant present tense	88/91	96	a. He speak-Ø English. b. The student usually depend-Ø on guessing.
irregular use of articles	86/91	94	a. Mr. Ali is Ø good professor. b. **The** syntax is the most difficult course.
redundant use of pronouns	85/91	93	a. **Mr. Ali, his** son is studying in the States. b. **The spelling**, you should correct **it** now.
irregular use of prepositions	82/91	93	a. I compared this group **by** the other group. b. The student should focus **in** this question. c. He is good **in** math. d. I've never been **in** London.
lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions	84/91	92	a. **You are** available? b. **You are** convinced?
absence of plural marking	85/91	90	a. The form has twenty question-Ø. b. I like student-Ø who work hard.
use of plural marker '-s' with singular nouns	82/91	90	a. This is a valuable point**s**. b. It is a bad habit**s**.

As shown in Table (4), there are 7 morphosyntactic forms used by the majority of the speakers: i) the invariant present tense; ii) the irregular use of articles; iii) the redundant use of pronouns; iv) the irregular use of prepositions; v) the lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions; vi) the absence of the plural marking; vii) the irregular use of plural marker '-s'. What supports the argument that these features are robust in the Saudi society is that the same features are argued by AlRawi et al. (2022) to be used by both ESL and EFL Saudi speakers.

In order to answer the second research question, the features are put in comparison to Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) *angloversals* to test whether these features can be accounted for from a universal perspective. As we mentioned earlier, Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi (2004) classify English varieties around the globe into typologies based on two parameters: geography and variety type. By first comparing the Saudi features to the ones related to the 7 world regions, the results are shown in Table (5) below (for ease of reference, we number the features from 1 to 7).

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Table 5
Saudi English among other world regions

Feature	America	British Isles	Caribbean	Pacific	Australia	Africa	Asia
1 invariant present tense	☐		☐	☐			
2 irregular use of articles		☐	☐		☐	☐	☐
3 redundant use of pronouns							
4 irregular use of prepositions							
5 lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions			☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6 absence of plural marking		☐	☐	☐	☐		☐
7 use of plural marker '–s' with singular nouns							

The Saudi features are not all available Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's (2004) global catalogue. Only four features, namely the invariant present tense, the irregular use of articles, and the lack of inversion in the main clause yes/no questions, which correspond to Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's (2004) features number [53], [17], [74], and [14] respectively, are among the universal features. The redundant use of pronouns, the use of plural marker –s with singular nouns, and the irregular use of prepositions are not part of the Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's (2004) catalogue, the non-existence of the latter features is one piece of evidence that the Saudi features cannot be identified using the global geographic-based perspective. Another piece of evidence comes from fact that the Saudi universal features are not typically Asian. Geographically, Saudi Arabia is situated in Southwest Asia, separated from Africa by the Red Sea on the west. If the Geographical classification is on the right tract, we would have expected Saudi English to have Asian features. Saudi English shares with the Asian only three features: (1) the irregular use of articles, (2) the lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions, and (3) the absence of the plural marking. The most distinctive feature (i.e., invariant present tense) is not an Asian feature. Note that this feature is reported by Al-Rawi (2012) to be stable among all levels of educated users, unlike other features where the occurrence is affected by the level of education (Al-Rawi, 2012). It is ascertained to be a common feature accepted by the society (AlRawi et al., 2022; AlShurfa et al., 2022; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). On the other hand, Saudi English shares with Caribbean English more features than Asian English. It has four Caribbean features. In other words, all the universal features it has are Caribbean. This means that it is closer to be Caribbean than Asian while it must be the opposite according to the Geographic approach because Saudi Arabia is in Asia.

As for the variety-specific perspective, Saudi English is close to be identified as a Pidgin/Creole because it has four Pidgin/Creole features: the invariant present tense, the irregular use of articles, the lack of inversion in the main clause yes/no questions, and the absence of the plural marking as illustrated in Table 3 below. On the other hand, it shares

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only two features with L2 varieties, namely the lack of inversion in the main clause yes/no questions, and the absence of the plural marking, and another two features with L1 varieties, namely the irregular use of articles, the lack of inversion in the main clause yes/no questions. Therefore, it is closer to be classified as a Pidgin/Creole.

Table 6
Saudi features among L1 L2 PidginCreole varieties

Feature	L1	L2	P&C
1 invariant present tense			☐
2 irregular use of articles		☐	☐
3 redundant use of pronouns			
4 irregular use of prepositions			
5 lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions	☐	☐	☐
6 absence of plural marking	☐		☐
7 use of plural marker '–s' with singular nouns			

Classifying Saudi English as a Pidgin/Creole is to a large extent true because in Saudi Arabia there was no direct contact with Standard English. However, this classification is not without limitations. It cannot explain the presence of three distinctive features, namely the redundant use of pronouns, the irregular use of prepositions, and the use of plural marker '-s' with singular nouns. The status of Saudi English can be represented in Figure 1 below:
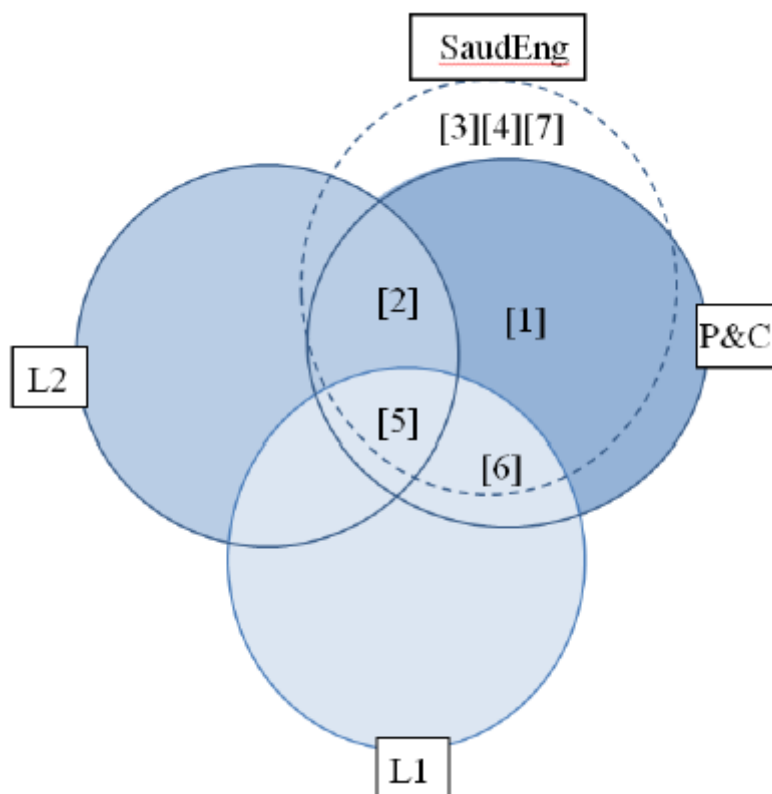
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Figure 1
The distribution of the Saudi features based the variety types: L1, L2, P&C.

Based on the distribution of the universal features, Saudi English can best be described as a Pidgin/Creole variety. Before we put our final conclusion and suggest that the Saudi patterns derive from universal principles related to Pidgin/Creole typology, a closer examination at the substrate system is required (see Sharma, 2009). This is because 'surface similarities across new Englishes can be skin deep, diverging grammatically upon closer examination, due to substrate systems or substrate-superstrate interaction' (Sharma, p.23). Therefore, a pattern may not necessarily be universal. A simple substrate explanation can determine whether a substrate or unmarked explanation is appropriate.

Substrate Effect

We argue along the lines of Al-Rawi (2012); Mahboob and Elyas (2014); AlShurfa et al. (2022); AlRawi et al. (2022) that the 7 Saudi English features illustrated in Table 1 are the result of the influence of the substrate Arabic system. The first and the most pervasive feature is the invariant present tense due to the zero marking for the third person singular, which is Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's feature #53 as shown in example (1) below.

He receive-Ø two thousands every month.

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This feature seems at a first glance to be irrelevant to the substrate, as assumed by Al- Rawi (2012), because Modern Standard Arabic (henceforth, MSA) has a rich inflectional system that predicts using –. rather than deleting –.. The rich agreement is illustrated in (2) below where the verb in MSA fully agrees with the preverbal subject in person, number, and gender in the so-called nominal sentences (i.e., sentences that show SV order).

a. ʔal-ʔawlaad-u   **ya**drusu**uun.**   (MSA)
   the-boys.3.PL-NOM study.3.M.PL
   'The boys study.'
b. ʔal-walad-u   **ya**-drus-u.
   the-boy.3.SG-NOM   study.3.M.SG
   'The boy studies.'
                                                                      (2)

However, Arabic shows another form of agreement, which is a partial agreement, in the so-called verbal sentences (or VS sentences) (see Mohammad, 2000). In this type of sentences, the third person singular is considered a default agreement because it is used with both singular and plural subjects as illustrated in (3) below:

a. **ya**-drusu   ʔal-ʔawlaad-u.   (MSA)
   study.3.M.SG the-boys.3.PL-NOM
   'The boys study.'
b. **ya**-drusu   ʔal-walad-u.
   study.3.M.SG the-boy.3.SG-NOM
   'The boys study.'
                                                                      (3)

Therefore, deleting the third person singular –. in English is predictable as a result of the Arabic system and the difference between English and Arabic. English, on the other hand, is not a rich agreement language. The English sentences may have been comparable in the mind of the Saudi speaker to the Arabic partial agreement sentences, which have the third person singular as a default (or zero-agreement) marker. When the Arabic speaker uses his/her Arabic competence, it becomes predictable that the performance reflects an Arabic underlying system, treating the English third person singular –. as a default agreement that can be optionally dropped.

The second most pervasive feature is the irregular use of the articles, which is Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's feature #17, includes both deleting the indefinite article *./an* and adding the definite article *the* as exemplified in (4) and (5), respectively.

   a. This man was Ø doctor.
   b. There is Ø possibility to select the other option.

(4)

a. No one here speaks **the** Indonesian.
b. **The** money transfer arrives faster than **the** cheque.

(5)

We adopt Al-Rawi's (2012) argument that article irregularities are influenced by the substrate Arabic language. In the Arabic grammar, indefiniteness is not always expressed by an article. For example, in MSA indefiniteness marker appears as an inflection on the noun, whereas in the local dialect spoken in Saudi Arabia known as Saudi dialect (henceforth, SA), indefiniteness is expressed by a zero-article. Parallel to (4) above are the structures of MSA in (6a) and (6b) and the structures of SA in (6b) and (7b) below.

a. haðaa r-rajul-u   kana   ṭabiib-a-n.   (MSA)
    this   DEF-man-3.SG-NOM be.3.M.SG.PAST doctor-ACC-INDEF
b. haðaa r-rijaal   kana   ṭabiib   (SA)
    this   DEF-man.3.SG   be.3.M.SG.PAST doctor
    'This man was a doctor.'   (6)

a. hunnaaka ʔiħtimaal-u-n   li-l-fašal-i.   (MSA)
    there   possibility-NOM-INDEF   for-DEF-failure-GEN
b. fiih   ʔiħtimaal   li-l-fašal.   (SA)
    there possibility for-DEF-failure
    'There is a possibility to fail.'   (7)

Likewise, the Arabic article *al-*, beside its function as a definiteness marker, is used for generic interpretation and is a default expletive article (see Abdulhameed, 2000; El-Dahdah, 1993). The examples in (7) and (8) below from both MSA and SA, which are comparable to the ones in (5) above, represent these functions:

a. la yuujadu   man yatahadath   **ʔal-**ʔandonosiyya   (MSA)
    no exist.3.SG who speak.3.M.SG DEF-Indonesian
b. maa fiih miin ya-tahadath   **ʔal-**ʔandonosiyya   (SA)
    no   exist who speak.3.M.SG DEF-Indonesian
    'No one speaks Indonesian.'   (8)

a. **ʔal-**ħawala-t-u   **ʔal-**maaliyya-t-u   taṣilu   ʔasraʕ min **ʔal-**šeek.
(MSA)
    DEF-transfer-F-NOM   DEF-financial-F-NOM   arrive.3.F.SG fast   from DEF-cheque
b. **ʔal-**ħawala-h ʔal-maaliyya-h taṣil   ʔasraʕ min **ʔal-**šeek.
     (SA)
    DEF-transfer-F DEF-financial-F arrive.3.F.SG fast   from the-cheque
    'Money transfer arrives faster than cheque.'   (9)

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Therefore, in the English counterparts (4) and (5), the Saudi speaker tends to drop the indefinite article or insert the definite article based on his/her Arabic competence. The third distinctive feature is the redundant use of pronouns. An additional pronoun is used to refer to an initial nominal instead of using the latter as a subject as illustrated below. This is a common structure in Arabic (the so-called nominal sentences, see Abdulhameed, 2000, among others).

(6) **Khalid, his** behavior is not accepted.

(7) **This topic**, I will never discuss **it**.

The initial nominal is a topic and the rest of the sentence is a comment. The resumptive pronoun is used in the comment to link the latter to the topic. Parallel to (6) and (7) above are the Arabic sentences (8) and (9) below.

a. **Khalid,** taṣarrufu-**hu**   ʁeeru maqbul.   (MSA)
  Khalid, behavior-**3.M.SG** not   acceptable
b. **Khalid,** taṣarrufu-**h**   ʁeer maqbul.   (SA)
  Khalid, behavior-**3.M.SG** not   acceptable
  'Khalid's behavior is not acceptable.'   (8)

a. **haða ʔal-mauḍuuʕ,** ʔana lan ʔunaaqisha-**hu.**   (MAS)
  this   DEF-topic   I   not.FUT discuss.1.SG-3.M.SG
b. **haða ʔal-mauḍuuʕ,** ʔana maa raħ ʔunaaqishu-**h.**   (SA)
  this   DEF-topic   I   not will discuss.1.SG-**3.M.SG**
  'I will not discuss **this topic**.'   (9)

The use of the pronoun to co-refer with the topic nominal suggests that structures like (6) and (7) are the result of transfer from the substrate.

The forth feature the irregular use of prepositions. Saudi speakers utter four types of prepositional variations: *by* for *with* as in (10), *in* for *on* as in (11), *in* for *at* as in (12), and *in* for *to* as in (13).

(10) I opened the can by a can-opener.
(11) I am in the way.
(12) The shop is located in the main intersection.
(13) Welcome in King Abdulaziz University.

The variations used by Saudis reflect the Arabic system. The preposition *by* 'bi-' in Arabic is literally *by* in English. (14) and (15) represents how Saudis use the preposition *bi-*:

fataħtu   l-bab-a   **bi-**l-muftaaħ-i.   (MAS)
opened-1.SG DEF-door-ACC **by-**DEF-key-GEN
'I opened the door **with** the key.'   (14)

fataħt   l-ʕulba-h   **bi-**l-fattaħa-h.   (SA)
opened-1.SG DEF-can-F **by-**the-opener-F
'I opened the can **with** a can-opener.'

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(15)

Likewise, Saudis use the Arabic preposition *fi* (literally means 'in') for the prepositions *on, at* and *to.* (16), (17), and (18) below are parallel to the sentences (11), (12), and (13) above, respectively.

a. ʔana **fi** ʔal-ṭariiq-i. (MSA)
   I   **in** DEF-way-GEN
b. ʔana **fi** ʔal-ṭariiq (SA)
   I   **in** DEF-way
   'I am on the way.'

(16)

a. yaqʕu   ʔal-maħal-u   **fi** ʔal-taqaaṭuʕ-i   ʔal-raʔiis-i (MSA)
   located.3.M.SG DEF-shop-NOM   **in** DEF-intersection-GEN DEF-the-main-GEN
b. yaqaʕ ʔal-maħal **fi** ʔal-taqaaṭuʕ   ʔal-raʔiisi. (SA)
   located the-shop **in** the-intersection the-main
   'The shop is located **at** the main intersection.'

(17)

a. marhab-an   bi-ka   **fi** jaamiʕat-i   ʔal-malik-i   ʕabdulʕaziz.
   (MSA)
   welcome-ACC by-2.M.SG **in** university-GEN DEF-king-GEN Abdulaziz
b. marhaba bi-k   **fi** jaamiʕat   ʔal-malik ʕabdulʕaziz.
   (SA)
   welcome by-2.M.SG **in** university DEF-king   Abdulaziz
   'Welcome to King Abdulaziz University.'

(18)

The fifth feature is the lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions, which is Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi's feature #74. Saudis tend to keep the auxiliary after the subject without inversion as in (19a) or drop the auxiliary as in (19b) and (19c).

a. **You were** waiting there?
b. **You** okay?
c. You understand?

(19)

This order is comparable to the questions of Arabic varieties spoken in Saudi Arabia.

a. hal **ʔanta kunt**   muntaðir-a-n   hunaak ? (MSA)
   COMP **you** **be.PAST.2.M.SG** waiting-ACC-INDF there
b. **ʔinta kunt** muntaðir hinaak ? (SA)
   you **be.PAST.2.M.SG**   waiting   there
   '**Were you** waiting there?'
c. **ʔinta** bxair ?
   you   okay
   'Are you okay?'
d. fəhəm-t ?
   understand-you
   'Did you understand? '

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In (20a-d), the declarative and the interrogative sentences have the same form without any change in the word order unlike in Standard English, which includes a movement of the auxiliary to a position prior to the subject or insertion of verb DO if the sentence has no auxiliary (see Radford, 2009). Therefore, the pattern illustrated in (19) influenced by the Arabic system.

The sixth feature is the absence of plural marking (i.e. Kortmann and Szmrecsanyi feature #14) as illustrated in (21) below (the symbol Ø is used to indicate the absence of –...

> a. He said it hundred time-**Ø.**
> b. We are proud of all the student-**Ø.**

(21)

A direct substrate effect is evident here. In Arabic, nouns following numerals such as *#išrin* 'twenty', *ϑalaϑin* 'thirty', *mi#at* 'hundred', *#alf* 'thousand', etc. take a singular form. (22) below is a comparable sentence to (21a) above:

> a. qala-ha   miʔat-a   **marra-h.**
>   said.3.M.SG-3.F.SG   hundred-ACC   **time**-F
> b. qala-ha   miʔat   **marra**
>   said.3.M.SG-3.F.SG   hundred   **time**
> 'He said it hundred **times**.'

(22)

As for (21b), another transfer effect is also evident. Arabic has a plural form that has the same form as the singular feminine inflection as illustrated in (23).

> a. naħnu faxuuriina bi-kul-i   ṭ-ṭalab-ati.   (MSA)
>   we   proud.3.PL by-all-GEN DEF-student-PL.GEN
> b. ʔiħna faxuuriin   bi-kul ṭ-ṭalab-**a.**   (SA)
>   we   proud.3.PL by-all DEF-student-3.PL
> Intended: "We are proud of all students (male/female).'

(23)

The singular feminine suffix –at/a in Arabic, beside its function as a feminine marker, has another function, which is to form a plural collective noun as the case in (23). Therefore, the speaker here might have used his/her competence in Arabic to form the English sentence. Parallel to the plural collective noun, that is morphologically singular in form, the Saudi English speaker uses a singular form. Therefore, the use of the singular form in (21b) does not come as a surprise. The speaker may have relied on the analogous singular form used in the Arabic system.

The seventh distinctive feature is the use of plural marker '-.' after singular adjective or demonstrative as exemplified in (24) below.

> a. That's [a simple questions].
> b. Don't go into [this discussions].

(24)

A direct analogy is also available in Arabic:

a. haðihi **ʔasʔila-t-u** basiṭa-t-un (MSA)
   this-F-SG **questions-F-NOM** simple-F.SG.NOM
b. haðihi **ʔasʔila-h** basiṭ-ah. (SA)
   this-F-SG **questions-F** simple-F.SG
   'These are simple **questions**.'

(25)

a. la tadxul fi **haðihi** **ʔal-niqaašaa-t.** (MSA)
  not go.1.SG in this-F-SG DEF-discussions-F
b. la ta-dxul fi **haðihi** **ʔal-niqaašaat.** (SA)
  not go.1.SG in this-F-SG DEF-discussions
  'Don't go into **these discussions**.'

(26)

In Arabic, when the plural noun is inanimate as in (25) *ʔasʔila* 'questions', it is modified by an adjective that takes a singular form (*basiṭ-a* 'simple') in (25) above and a demonstrative in the singular form (*haðihi* 'this') in (26). This may explain why the speaker of English tends to use a plural noun after an adjective or demonstrative.

We can conclude then that all the 7 distinctive features of Saudi English are explainable based on the Arabic system. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume it is the substrate-superstrate interaction that is responsible for the preservation of the Arabic system in the New English variety (Barnawi, 2022). Analyzing the features in Saudi English speakers as the influence of the substrate Arabic grammar provides a wider range of explanations than assuming a generalization that is based on the variety type. If the existence of the Saudi features is the result of a Saudi English being a Pidgin/Creole, then it remains unclear why the three features that not universal occur. On the other hand, the substrate explanation can neatly account for the presence of all the 7 distinctive features in Saudi English.

Conclusion

Saudi English has shown to have 7 distinctive features that are widely used by the majority of its speakers. These features are the invariant present tense, the irregular use of articles, the redundant use of pronouns, the irregular use of prepositions, the lack of inversion in main clause yes/no questions, the absence of the plural marking, and the irregular use of plural marker '-s'. In an attempt to account for the existence of

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features from a global perspective, the Saudi distinctive features have been compared to the features of the 7 world regions, on the one hand, and to the features of L1, L2, and Pidgin/Creole varieties, on the other hand. The geographical- based approach has shown to be inadequate to account for the Saudi features while the variety- specific approach has shown to be more closely related. The fact that neither the geographic nor the variety specific approaches can account for all 7 Saudi features suggests that the Saudi features may not follow some universal principles. The comparison between the English patterns and the Arabic counterparts has shown a correlation between the substrate system and the occurrence of the features. While a great deal of work remains to be done in describing the complete system of Saudi English speakers, it is clear that the distinctive features of a new English may result from a transfer effect. Future research is needed to examine similarities between new Englishes that share similar Arabic substrate.

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Notes

1. Note that Arua (2004) considers forms with less frequency ('not less than 70%') to be features but are not considered as widespread as the ones with 90% frequency. The latter are taken to be used by the majority of the speakers.

Declaración de intereses

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Información adicional

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