

Language Choice on Social Media Platforms: The Case of Kuwaiti Arabic

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Abstract

Kuwaiti Arabic exists within a complex sociolinguistic environment shaped by diglossia and ongoing contact with English across education, media, and digital communication. On social media platforms, this linguistic diversity is particularly visible as users move fluidly between Modern Standard Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic, and English. This study examines how and why Kuwaiti speakers choose Kuwaiti Arabic in online spaces, focusing on the functions it serves in everyday digital interaction. By analysing authentic examples from social media discourse, the paper explores how users signal identity, stance, and social relationships through their language choices, and how Kuwaiti Arabic is deployed alongside other linguistic and multimodal resources.

Adopting a qualitative sociolinguistic approach, the study analyses a corpus of naturally occurring posts and interactions drawn from popular social media platforms. The findings show that Kuwaiti Arabic is frequently used to express intimacy, humour, evaluation, and local identity, while also functioning as a strategic resource for audience alignment and community building. Rather than existing in opposition to Modern Standard Arabic or English, Kuwaiti Arabic operates within a flexible repertoire where language choice reflects context, platform norms, and communicative intent.

The paper argues that examining language choice on social media provides valuable insight into the contemporary status of Kuwaiti Arabic and its evolving functions in digitally mediated communication. It highlights the importance of vernacular Arabic varieties in understanding language use, identity construction, and social interaction in Kuwait's rapidly changing linguistic landscape.