Studying Saudi English as a New Variety: A Multi-variate Analysis

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Abstract

Aim. This multi-dimensional analysis explores prominent lexico-grammatical features in English used in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The research focuses on the linguistic variation in editorials in Saudi English newspapers. The study's goals were to create a specialised corpus of Saudi English, to determine how Saudi English differs from British English, and to establish Saudi English as an independent form of English, allowing syllabi designers to serve ESP course developers better.

Method. Douglas Biber's multi-dimensional analysis (2006), a corpus-based, quantitative, empirical, and comparative technique for studying linguistic variety, was used by the researchers for analysing this language diversity. Quantitative and functional techniques were employed in the research. The authors examined and statistically analysed the acquired data to establish the communicative function of press editorials. Biber's (2006) tagger was used to tag the data. Then, using the analysis of variance (ANOVA), the linguistic differences between Saudi publications and British newspapers were determined.

Results. The results indicate that *Saudi Newspaper Editorial* (SNE) is more informational, explicit, abstract, and less argumentative than *British Newspaper Editorial* (BNE). On one dimension, SNE produces non-narrative while BNE produces narrative discourse. Except for D2, the findings of the internal comparison reveal that there are minor variations in the mean score of Saudi newspaper editorials. *Saudi Gazette* creates a non--narrative discourse on D2, whilst *Arab News* produces a narrative one.

Cognitive value. The findings support the claim that English spoken in Saudi Arabia qualifies as a distinct variation of English.

INTRODUCTION

Saudi Arabia is enthusiastically focused on exploiting its resources to achieve the vision of 2030. The focus is on diversifying its capabilities and generating or relocating resources, and on human capital development. While human capital is critical to the success of this ambitious initiative, the foundations of skill development programs must be restructured or improved. Saudi Arabia, which is already geographically a gateway to the globe, will undoubtedly need to interact with the rest of the world due to massive economic expansion. English language abilities, among other things, are essential for successful communication with most other countries. While changes in ELT programs are necessary, it is also critical to respect Saudi English's independent position. Making the most effective English language teaching and learning program is critical. This research will assist syllabi designers in researching language content for ESP syllabuses using authentic material (English authored by Saudi writers).

For many years, scholars have been focusing their attention on the growing localised or indigenised variants of English. While academics have done extensive studies on African and South Asian Englishes (e.g. Sharma et al., 2016; Thinley, 2011), English spoken and written in the Arab world, notably Saudi Arabia, has gotten little attention. There is very little research on how sociolinguistic histories, cultural backgrounds, and functional settings impact English use in this region of the world. Despite the availability of labels such as Arab English or, to be more specific, Saudi English, research on English spoken and written in Saudi Arabia have only looked at aberrant syntax, lexico-grammatical choices, syntactic fusion, and interlanguage as errors. As a result, there was a great need to research the English spoken in Saudi Arabia and determine if it qualifies as a distinct variety capable of being designated as Saudi English. Furthermore, rather than looking for particular language characteristics, a full model of analysis was required. The suggested study is an attempt to investigate the usage of English in Saudi Arabia using a multi-dimensional model of linguistic variation analysis (1988, 2006), which gives a more complete analysis and more trustworthy results. Due to cross-cultural background distinctions and indigenous standards that appear to have been incorporated into the language of Saudi media with the passage of time, the language of editorials in Saudi print media looks to be a major topic for investigation.

In various aspects, the current research of press editorials in Saudi print media varies from earlier studies. Previous research, for example, did not utilise any particular press editorial corpora, whereas the current study

used a special purpose corpus of Saudi press editorials in the context of Saudi English. In comparison to previous registrations, the current study uses multi-dimensional analysis to examine press editorials in Saudi print media, which is the most suited approach for studying press language.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to create a special Saudi English corpus, find out how much linguistic variation there is in Saudi English (particularly *Saudi English Newspaper* editorials), and determine what distinguishes Saudi English from British English in terms of linguistic traits. The objectives also include establishing Saudi English as a distinct variety of the English language and assisting syllabus designers in the creation of ESP courses.

Review of Literature

English is spoken and written in many different ways across the world. The new variants of English are the result of a combination of cultural and linguistic influences. For many years, scholars have focused their attention on the localised or indigenised forms of English (e.g., Kachru, 2005; A. Mahmood, 2009; R. Mahmood, 2009; Rasheed, 2009; Talaat, 2002). However, English, both spoken and written, has received little attention in the Arab world, notably in Saudi Arabia. Although there have been a few studies of the Saudi English press, the focus has stayed on either content analysis or gender analysis. Various studies (Hafez, 2014; Seib, 2005) have looked at the effect of the Western media in general, and the American media in particular, on the content of Arab and Saudi newspapers on foreign affairs.

In terms of gender, various studies (Akeel, 2010; Basmaeel, 2008; Kniffka, 2005) look at the situation of Saudi women working in the media and at the problems they encounter. Various research on various registries were undertaken in Saudi Arabia. Some research, for example, are shown on Saudi television (Basfar, 2007; Kraidy, 2009, 2013).

It is obvious from the continuing discussion that there was no such research in Saudi Arabia that considered Saudi English as a distinct variant. As a result, there was a great need to do research on the linguistic characteristics of Saudi English in order to distinguish it as a distinct variant. Furthermore, there was little research that looked at how sociolinguistic histories, cultural backgrounds, and functional settings affected English use in this region of the world. As a result, the current study compares its findings to editorials in the British press.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The suggested research is significant in many ways. To begin with, the research is noteworthy since it provides a specialised corpus of Saudi English. Saudi English newspaper editorials make up the specialised corpus. The researchers may use the particular corpus to learn more about how Saudi English differs from American and other types of English. Second, the research is the first step towards creating Saudi English as a self-contained English variation. This study will benefit future academics working on English language learning and instruction in Saudi Arabia in building an understanding of the varied features of English written by Saudi authors. The study gives future academics an understanding of the numerous aspects of Saudi English written by Saudis. Finally, the proposed study's findings are a helpful resource for English language instructors since they give a comprehension of the textual aspects of press editorials. The findings of this study are also beneficial to journalism syllabus designers, as the comprehensive linguistic aspects of press editorials will aid syllabi designers in determining the language content of press editorials in Saudi print media.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Data collection, data analysis, and result interpretation were the three primary steps of the current study. The study interprets statistically acquired data and statistical analysis to assess the communication function of newspaper editorials using both quantitative and functional techniques. Saudi English has been recognised as a distinct/independent variant of English based on the examination of the data obtained. Furthermore, the study's findings aid in enhancing English language teaching and learning rather than reorganizing English language teaching programs in order to match them with the demands of a booming market with a focus on "Vision 2030."

Scheme for Corpus Development

The language of newspapers reflects the societal language (Bell, 1991). As a result, newspaper editorials have been chosen. We created a dedicated corpus of Saudi English newspaper press editorials for quantitative research. Because no corpus of Saudi newspaper editorial exists, this corpus had to be created expressly for this study. In addition, a corpus of recent British newspaper editorials has been created in order to compare them to Saudi press editorials. The first stage in the data collection procedure was to choose newspapers. From the Saudi press, we chose *Arab News* and *Saudi Gazette*, and from the British press, *The Guardian* and *Daily Mirror*. The data for this study was compiled from 120 files from each newspaper over

the course of three years (2018 to 2020). As a result, SENEC (Saudi English Newspaper Editorial Corpus) is made up of 240 text files. 240 text files from British newspapers were also obtained in order to compare SENEC with editorials in British publications. The following abbreviations were used in the paper: *Saudi Corpus* (SCO), *Arab News* (AN), *Saudi Gazette* (SG), *British Corpus* (BC), *Daily Mirror* (DM), *The Guardian* (TG), and *Text* (T).

Data Analysis

In order to achieve the study's goals, a mixed method research approach was used, which included both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The corpus was used to analyse what linguistic elements emerge in Saudi newspaper editorials and how their language fluctuates using the multi-dimensional model (1988, 2006).

To find the statistically significant difference between press editorials from the two countries with respect to five textual dimensions, the following steps were taken: tagging for a variety of linguistic features, obtaining linguistic features' raw counts, transforming the raw counts into normalised frequencies, computing dimension scores, and doing variance (ANOVA) analysis. As concerns Old MD analysis, the sets of co-occurring features are already established by Douglas Biber (1988).

The Tukey post hoc test was used to verify the significant differences. The statistical significance has been shown through p-value by applying post hoc tests among dimensions and statistically significant differences have been observed. The significant linguistic differences between dimensions have been testified through post hoc tests. The post hoc test verifies that there lie statistically significant results among the dimensions. The p-value has been found below 0.05 in the interaction between the dimensions (see appendix A). However, it indicates that there lie no statistically significant differences only between dimensions four and five.

Theoretical Framework

The study uses Biber's (1988, 2006) Multi-dimensional (MD) analysis as a theoretical framework. Biber's (2006) tag count tool was used to tag the data for various linguistic characteristics. All of the text files were run via Biber's (2006) tagger to give grammatical categories to the lexical elements. The sets of co-occurring features consist of five dimensions have already been established by Biber (1988).

Results

Positive scores suggest that the primary goal of this discourse is involvement, whereas negative scores show that diversity is associated with the generation of informative discourse. Biber (2006) labels this dimension

Involved vs. Informational Discourse (1988). When comparing editorials from British and Saudi newspapers, a striking language difference emerges. The SNE language is more informative than the BNE language. Table 1 shows that SNE provides informative discourse with a negative mean score of -9.73. The findings show that informational characteristics such as nouns, prepositions, and attributive adjectives are less prevalent in BNE than in SNE.

Table 1

Comparison Between SNE and BNE on D1

		Britain	Saudi Arabia	Total
	N	240	240	480
	Mean	-2.2275	5.12146	-5.9832
	Std. Deviation	8.08920	5.12146	7.73768
	Std. Error	.52216	.33059	.35318
95% Confidence	Lower Bound	-3.2561	-10.3902	-6.6772
Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	-1.1988	-9.0877	-5.2892

Source: own research.

The examples that follow will elaborate on the topic. The following is an example from *Arab News*, a Saudi newspaper.

> We can spend the **coming days** talking **about** the **past**, the **previous state,** and its **historical roots —** talk that has no value. None of you believe that the southerners are **in** agreement and in **single-hearted unity**, nor do you believe that those who are **in agreement** are united **on** the **state's name**, l**eadership** or **system.** (Al-Rashed, 2019)

The bold words in the extract are instances of the language characteristics that result in informative conversation. The following is an excerpt from the *Daily Mirror*, a British newspaper.

> Seriously. I would have been suspicious about what was being pumped in **through** the air-vents if most of it hadn't been outside. We met **elves, huskies** and **reindeer**. There was **snow** and **twinkling lights** wherever you looked. We ice-skated and drank steaming **hot chocolate** with **marshmallows**. It was like being **in** a **movie.** (Hudson, 2018, December 17)

The bold words are examples of linguistic elements that contribute to the production of informative discourse. The language qualities that constitute informational discourse in the British newspaper are significantly fewer than the informational linguistic aspects found in the Saudi daily. The language differences between the Saudi media are evident in the comparison.
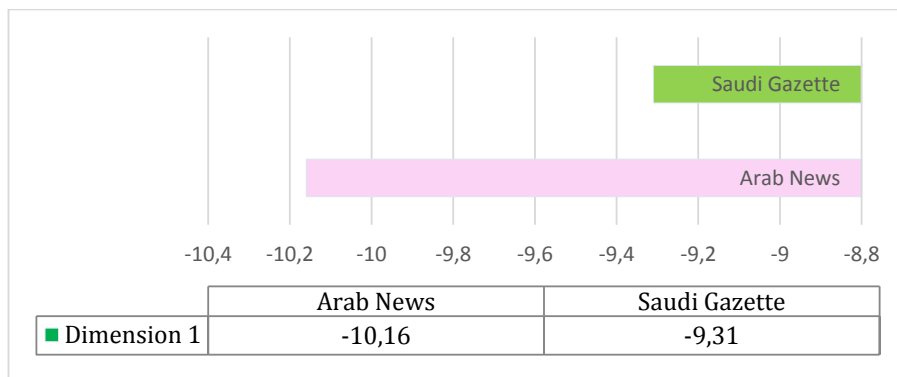
	Arab News	Saudi Gazette
■ Dimension 1	-10,16	-9,31

Fig. 1
Difference Between Arab News and Saudi Gazette on D1
Source: own research.

Arab News, with a mean score of -10.16, is more informative than *Saudi Gazette*, according to the findings of both countries (-9.31).

Narrative vs. Non-narrative Discourse has been classified as Dimension 2 (D2). In terms of narrativity, the narrative tone in BNE is more prominent than in SNE. Non-narrative speech is created by linguistic elements such as the present tense verb, the pronoun "it," the location adverbial, and "that" deletion. On the other hand, linguistic elements such as the past tense verb, third-person pronoun, verb-perfect aspect, and public verb form narrative speech on the other side of the polarity.

Table 2
Comparison Between SNE and BNE on D2

		Britain	Saudi Arabia	Total
	N	240	240	480
	Mean	.3535	-. 0325	.1605
	Std. Deviation	2.29828	2.59188	2.45454
	Std. Error	.14835	.16731	.11203
95% Confidence	Lower Bound	. 0612	-.3620	-.0596
Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	.6457	.2971	.3806

Source: own research.

The results show that BNE provides narrative discourse with a mean score of 0.35. SNE, on the other hand, creates non-narrative speech with a mean score of -0.03. The discourse is a mixed-purpose discourse if it is close to the 0.00 mean score (Biber, 1988).

An example of mixed-purpose discourse may be seen in the following paragraph from the *Saudi Gazette* newspaper.

The truth is that the GCC **has** gone through many challenges over the past four decades, the consequences of which **have** surpassed the current crisis or **those** that preceded it with Qatar, and yet the Council, led by Saudi Arabia, passed through **them** to safety, and that is with the cooperation of its sister States. The fear for the GCC is justified, and therefore there **were** several statements about the need for the Gulf security coordination… (Al-Homayed, 2020).

The bold words are instances of narrative discourse linguistic traits, whereas the underlined words are examples of non-narrative discourse linguistic features. The following example has been taken from *The Guardian*, a British newspaper.

It's true that my generation of homeowners, **who** bought years ago when that **was** still vaguely possible and **have** mostly built up a reasonable cushion of equity, are the ones best placed to be philosophical about losing what **was** only ever paper money (Hinsliff, 2018).

The bold words in the example above from *The Guardian* are examples of linguistic features that produce narrative discourse. The comparison of selected Saudi publications reveals some intriguing results. The statistical findings reveal a significant linguistic gap between them.
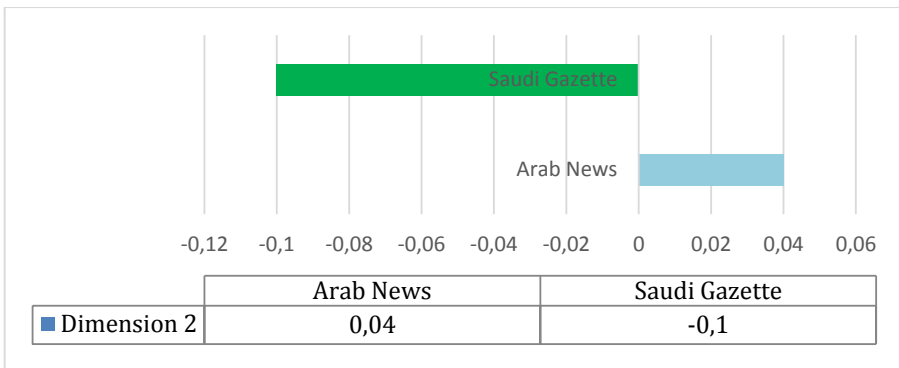

	Arab News	Saudi Gazette
■ Dimension 2	0,04	-0,1

Fig. 2
Difference Between Arab News and Saudi Gazette on D2
Source: own research.

Figure 2 reveals that the *Arab News*' mean score (.04) indicates a tendency to develop narrative discourse, whereas the *Saudi Gazette*'s negative mean score (-0.1) indicates a tendency to produce non-narrative discourse.

There is significant diversity in the newspaper discourse of two countries on dimension 3 (D3), Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Discourse. Table 3 shows that both nations create explicit discourse, as indicated by their good mean ratings. The linguistic elements wh-clauses, coordinating conjunctions, and nominalisation all serve to produce explicit conversation. Wh-clauses, according to Douglas Biber, Susan Conrad, and Randi Reppen

(1998), are connected with conversation. Alena Kachmarova and Bavjola Shatro (2017) support their hypothesis that frequent usage of wh-clauses is linked to informal communication.

Table 3

Comparison Between SNE and BNE on D3

		Britain	Saudi Arabia	Total
	N	240	240	480
	Mean	1.9418	5.2130	3.05774
	Std. Deviation	2.57682	2.63537	3.47557
	Std. Error	.16633	.17011	.14038
95% Confidence	Lower Bound	1.6141	4.8778	3.3015
Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	2.2695	5.5481	3.8532

Source: own research.

Table 3 shows that SNE creates more explicit discourse with a mean score of 5.21, whereas BNE employs less linguistic elements that are the major markers of explicit discourse with a mean score of 1.94. The following sample comes from *Arab News*, a Saudi newspaper.

> Saudi Arabia **and** the UAE have rushed to support Khartoum politically **and** economically, **so** as not to see it slip into chaos **and** to proceed politically with minimal pain. **Removing** Bashir will not be enough because the regime is full of people **who** belong to his party, **who** hold positions at all levels **and** are capable of obstructing change (Al-Rashid, 2019).

The dense presence of language features like "wh-clauses," "coordinating conjunctions," and "nominalisation" in the following extract suggests that explicit conversation is being produced. The following is an excerpt from the *Daily Mirror*, a British newspaper.

> Shocks like Dani **and** Jack not winning DO happen in Reality TV votes, especially when there's such a clear winner, **so** people feel like they're so safe that they don't need to bother voting for them. Laura making the final two was the miracle Love Island producers must have been praying for, because it added some genuine tension to the most foregone **conclusion** of all time (Hudson, 2018, July 31).

Bold words are examples of linguistic features that produce explicit speech in the example above. When we examine the two samples, it becomes evident that *Arab News* has more explicit discourse than *Daily Mirror*.

An internal comparison is shown in Figure 3. It compares *Arab News*' with *Saudi Gazette*'s average scores. There is a little variation in the mean score of the two newspapers.

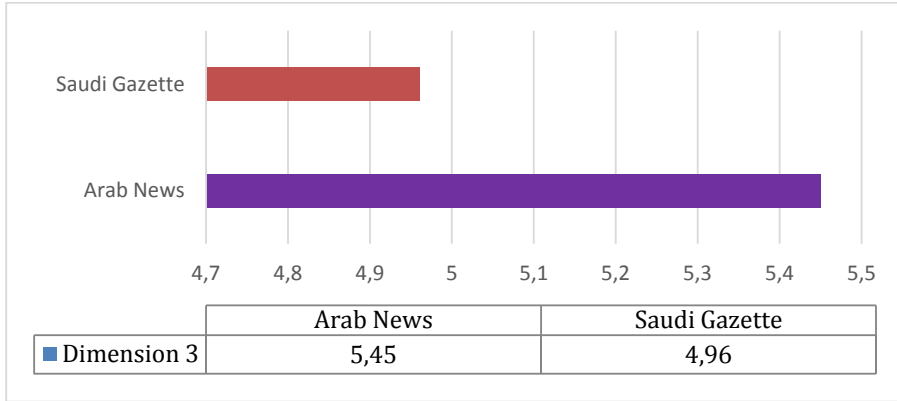|	Arab News	Saudi Gazette
■ Dimension 3	5,45	4,96

Fig. 3

Difference Between Arab News and Saudi Gazette on D3

Source: own research.

In terms of discourse creation, *Arab News* (5.45) is slightly more explicit than *Saudi Gazette* (4.96).

Dimension 4 (D4) is known as Overt Expression of Argumentation/ Persuasion, according to Biber (1988). The "infinitive verb," "modal of prediction," "persuasive verb," "subordinating conjunction-conditional," "modal of necessity," and "adverb inside auxiliary" are all language characteristics that work together to provide overt statement of argumentation.

Table 4

Comparison Between SNE and BNE on D4

		Britain	Saudi Arabia	Total
	N	240	240	480
	Mean	3.2093	.2233	1.7163
	Std. Deviation	3.07493	3.01711	3.39019
	Std. Error	.19849	.19475	.15474
95% Confidence	Lower Bound	2.8182	-.1604	1.4122
Interval for Mean	Upper Bound	3.6003	.6069	2.0203

Source: own research.

Table 4 illustrates that both countries create argumentative discourse, despite a significant difference in BNE and SNE mean scores. BNE creates more argumentative discourse than SNE (0.22), with a mean score of 3.20.

The following instances back up the above-mentioned statistical findings. They came from BNE and SNE, respectively.

The following is an excerpt from *Arab News*, a Saudi newspaper.

There was a time in Spain, beginning in 711, **when** it was ruled by Muslims at the time of the Umayyad caliphate. In those days, the people of the three great Abrahamic religions lived in absolute peace and harmony. It was an extraordinary time of tolerance and mutual respect, **when** art and culture flourished. Scientists and mathematicians from all over northern Europe came to Spain to study, **to work** together, and **to make** spectacular discoveries (Abbas, 2020).

There are less linguistic characteristics of argumentative speech in the above-mentioned text sample. The following is an excerpt from *The Guardian*, a British newspaper.

Yet the real problem with constantly shifting the blame is **that while** it fixes tomorrow's headlines it doesn't solve the underlying problem, **which** is why the government seems to keep on **getting** things wrong. What one former No 10 staffer calls a "macho inflexibility" at the heart of government – **which** hates giving its critics the satisfaction of **admitting** it's wrong and so digs its heels in when it **shouldn't** – is clearly part of the problem (Hinsliff, 2020).

The bold words are examples of language characteristics that are common in argumentative conversation. The passage demonstrates a dense presence of argumentative discourse lexical items.

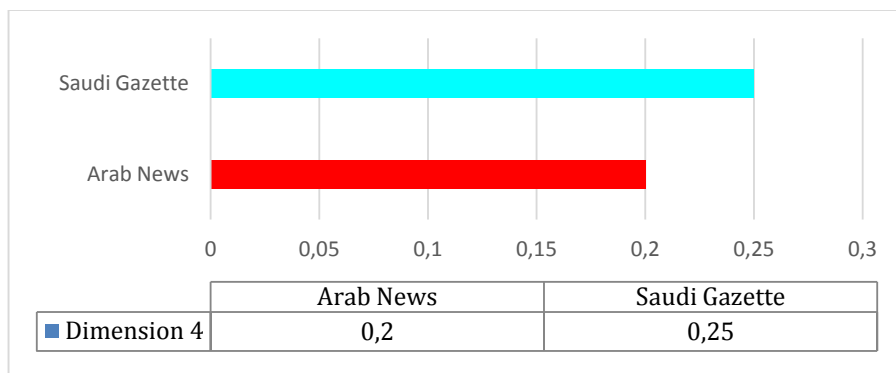When two Saudi newspapers are compared, it is clear that both promote argumentative discourse.

	Arab News	Saudi Gazette
■ Dimension 4	0,2	0,25

Fig. 4
Difference Between Arab News and Saudi Gazette on D4
Source: own research.

Figure 4 shows that the *Saudi Gazette* (0.25) is somewhat more argumentative than *Arab News* (0.2).

Biber classifies Dimension 5 (D5) as Impersonal (Abstract) vs. Non-Impersonal (Non-Abstract) style (1988). The two fundamental characteristics of constructing abstract discourse, among other language features, are "passives" and "adverbial conjuncts."

Table 5

Comparison Between SNE and BNE on D5

		Britain	Saudi Arabia	Total
	N	240	240	480
	Mean	.7767	1.9875	1.3821
	Std. Deviation	1.83739	2.60964	2.33446
	Std. Error	.11860	.16845	.10655
95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Lower Bound	.5431	1.6557	1.1728

Source: own research.

The frequent presence of passives, according to Monika Bednarek (2008), is a notable element of the news register. Both nations with positive mean scores in this research develop abstract discourse. Table 5 shows that SNE's discourse production is more abstract than BNE's (0.77), with a mean score of (1.98).

The misyar or marriage of convenience within the country's borders became a popular variant of marriage *after it was sanctioned by some of our religious sheikhs*. Essentially a license to have multiple partners without much responsibility or expense, *it was soon followed by the misfar and other variations* as well (Al-Maeena, 2019).

Abstract conversation is exemplified by the passive sentences. The italicised lines in the following passage from the British newspaper *Daily Mirror* are instances of passives that form abstract speech.

When Theresa May first tried to trigger Article 50 - months after the referendum, *which was won by the side* that promised it would not do it for 4 YEARS. That's because the Good Friday Agreement, which allowed Northern Irish citizens to live in peace and self-identify as British or Irish, *has been effectively replaced by a Withdrawal* Agreement which says in not so many words that they're all Irish now (Fleet Street Fox, 2020).

The comparison of the newspapers reveals that their discourse production is abstract in both cases. *Arab News*, on the other hand, is more abstract than *Saudi Gazette* (1.59), with a mean score of 2.37.
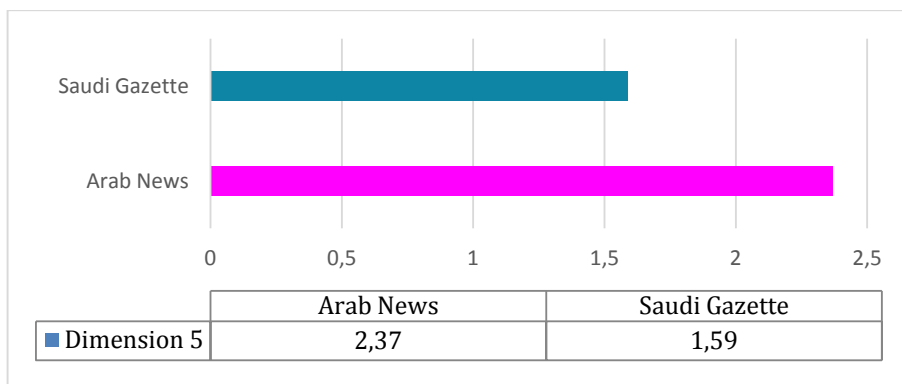
Fig. 5
Difference Between Arab News and Saudi Gazette on D5
Source: own research.

Conclusion and Recommendations

On Biber's (2006) textual dimensions, this study contrasted Saudi newspaper editorials with British newspaper editorials, revealing a significant divergence. On D1, the findings of the comparison between the two nations show that SNE is more informative than BNE. On D2, there is a significant difference in discourse creation between the two countries. SNE, on the other hand, has been proven to create non-narrative speech. On D3, the mean scores of both countries in creating explicit speech differ significantly: SNE is more explicit than BNE.

Except for D2, the results demonstrate that the mean score of the chosen Saudi newspaper editorials differs little. It's important to note that whereas *Arab News* publishes narrative content, *Saudi Gazette* publishes non-narrative content.

The purpose of this study is to determine the unique qualities of Saudi English. It also contains a roadmap for the establishment of the Saudi English National Corpus. The release of the Saudi English National Corpus will offer up new research possibilities.

It not only serves as a source of legitimate examples for studying English spoken and written in Saudi Arabia, but it also allows international academics and publishers to build resources for Saudi students based on the country's actual English language usage. Various English corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC), the American National Corpus (ANC), and others, are accessible across the world, and much of the material for English language education is based on these corpora. Researchers and publishers will be able to generate content tailored for Saudi learners thanks to the establishment of the Saudi English Newspaper Editorial Corpus (SENEC). This will aid in the improvement of

English language teaching and learning rather than reorganizing English language teaching programs to match them with the demands of a growing market with a focus on Vision 2030. As a result, it will assist in maximising the English language's potential in contributing to the success of Saudi Vision 2030.

Acknowledgement

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