

## Speakers' Perceptions on Speech Style Convergence and Divergence in One to One Interaction

**Ghada Abdullah Al-Ghathami**

Assistant professor of Linguistics

Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University

College of Language and Translation

**Abstract:** This paper analyzes Saudi women's perceptions on speech style convergence and divergence in interaction. Speakers might convert their style towards others or perhaps diverge their style away from others as a result of different social motivations. A questionnaire was distributed among a total of 83 Saudi female speakers to investigate their perceptions towards this linguistic behavior. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: close-ended, five-scale statements related to the nature and motivations of style change and convergence; as well as the nature and motivations of style maintenance and divergence away from others. The second part of the questionnaire included a set of open-ended questions to further investigate this behavior. Results of the study showed that women see themselves to adopt the style of others motivated by the situation or as an attempt to be polite. The perceptions of Saudi women on the linguistic behavior of style maintenance and divergence reflected that keeping one's style while being with close people and keeping style to gain respect are common, being motivated by educational aims, keeping one's identity and seeking success. Most participants realized that their choice of words and level of formality is highly affected. Further investigation is recommended covering a wider scope of participants from both genders and from different age groups to shed light on this case.

**Key words:** Communication accommodation theory, Style, audience design, style divergence, style convergence

### Introduction:

The speech style of an individual is a profound part of his/her social identity and a channel for identification expression. A speaker's speech reveals speaker's place of origin, gender, age, social class, ethnicity, and education; therefore, reveals his/her social group membership (Gumperz, 1997; Spolsky, 2007). Thereby, a speaker's social identity is a construction of a set of identities influenced by several social factors that are manifested differently in accordance with various social contexts with various addressees (Bouman, 2004; Jandt, 2010). These identities are represented through speech and style of talk in a negotiated and dynamic pattern. One Theory that attempts to account for speakers' style is the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) as a way of understanding style dynamics in interaction (Giles, H, Coupland, J., Coupland, N., 1991; Holmes, 2013). In this sense, accommodation is seen as a conscious linguistic behavior that reflects images of self and relations with others. Both individuals and

groups accommodate. A person adjusts his/her speech, gestures or vocal patterns to the one he/she is addressing. There are two types of accommodation, convergence or change and divergence or maintenance. Convergence is when the adjustment or the shift of speech increases the similarities between the speaker and the addressee (Holmes and Wilson, 2017). Convergence takes place when we move towards others' style for several reasons such as expressing solidarity, social distance, admiring other's codes, avoiding judgments, and being accepted by others. It can go up and down depending on the participants involved, and it is usually positive (Wardhaugh, 2010; Holmes and Wilson, 2017). Divergence behavior takes place when we move away from others to express identity.

Style change denotes different social meanings such as social identities and social attitudes of speakers (Romaine, 2000; Bouman, 2004). There are two major approaches that explain style change among adults. First, changes in style occur due to social and pragmatic factors that determine the degree of formality and closeness between interlocutors (Labov, 1972; Coupland, 2007). This idea is illustrated in theories such as Audience Design and Accommodation Theory. Second, stylistic variations occur as a result of some cognitive mechanisms that participants use to be involved in a successful communicative situation as proposed by Garrod and Pickering (2004). William Labov (1972) affirms that style changes could be also a result of a psycholinguistic intra-individual variation, in reference to what is known as the variation within a single speaker. According to Coupland (2007), style changes are controversial, and might result from relationships between participants. In this case, the listener's situation and status determines the speaker's speech style selection. Other views of style, such as Accommodation Theory and Audience Design, argued that stylistic variation is conditioned by the speaker's assumptions about the listener(s) (Schiffrin, 1994; Bell, 2001).

Keller-Cohen (2015) investigated style variation taking into consideration other factors related to social relations, such as network size, frequency of contact and satisfaction with contact. The results showed that older adults adjusted their speech when speaking to a child, producing a high number of propositions and rapport-building devices. However, older adults provided a higher number of type-token ratios when addressing the adults with more complex syntactic structures. By carefully examining the previous work in the area of style variation, it can be concluded that style change or maintenance in speaker's performance is a linguistic behavior that needs detailed understanding of the situation, participants and linguistic patterns affected by the setting. The investigation in this paper gained its significance from background knowledge that suggested that the way people design their speech can be affected by the type of listeners with whom they speak (Romaine, 2000). This paper attempts to investigate Saudi women's perceptions of the way they perform style changes or maintenance in conversations.

## 2- Review of the literature:

In interaction, there is always a need to be involved with other participants. This kind of involvement is reflected through the process of style choice based on participants involved (Scollon, R., Scollon, 2001; Clark, 2007). The sources of power are developed from different perspectives based on the institutional structure of cultures including sources like age, gender, education, race, color and class. These sources interact to place interlocutors in a certain position (Pinker, 1994; Trask, 1999; Saville-Troike and Muriel, 2003). Female language style is based on conversational facilitation strategies, leading to the creation of solidarity where female participants communicate by supporting each other. Tannen (1994, 2007) described two types of speakers as high-involvement and high-considerateness speakers. High-involvement speakers are concerned to show enthusiastic support even if this means using simultaneous speech styles; while high-considerateness speakers are more concerned to be considerate of others including choice of style.

Alternating between styles can be narrowed down into two classifications in relation to accommodating speakers. One of which will be towards the style adopted by the audience, and another that shifts away from the audience keeping one's own style. There are a number of motivations that can influence the process of style choice towards or away from the other interlocutor. One of these motivations is the age or social status of the listener. Speakers tend to move towards the speech style of younger or older speakers in a positive accommodation (Coulmas, 2013). Status of speakers is also taken into consideration in style choice. Women in specific, are more cooperative and are known to adopt higher involvement styles; this can be reflected in a higher tendency to convert towards the speech of others to be more polite, to reduce tension, to be more friendly and to express closeness and interest in others through changing towards their style of talk (Danesi, 2016). Style divergence or maintenance could also be motivated by different factors such as educational purposes. Yet, it could result from more critical factors such as keeping one's identity, distancing others or to show uniqueness. It could be negative or positive depending on the situation and intentions of performing these choices (Danesi, 2016, Holmes and Wilson, 2017).

Masuda (2016) investigated the notion of style change in student-professor conversations In Japan. This case study analyzed the use of desu/masu form and plain form in the Japanese society, especially in dialogues between students and professors in informal situations. She concluded that style-shifting is used to establish or maintain social identities and attitudes. This study also hypothesized that the Japanese female students and professors employ three main strategies, which are the same as the strategies used in formal conversations, to indicate those social identities and attitudes. Martin, N., Chevrot, J., & Barbu, S. (2010) studied stylistic variations in the social network of a 10-year-old child as a case study, involving observations and audio recordings in an informal setting. They concluded that the child under investigation has adjusted his use of the sociolinguistic variants according to the different social positions of his

addressees, where the usage of the non-standard variants changed from talking to his parents to talking to his siblings.

Gnevshva (2015) has examined situational style change in L2 speakers of New Zealand English, indicating that sociolinguistic variation has been used by nonnative speakers (NNSs) for many reasons. Among them are: to align with or distance the L2 speakers from potential membership groups, and to use a continuum from "native-like" to "nonnative-like" style for further identity work. In addition, nonnative speakers were able to consciously control their accents depending on the communicative situation. Kaoru Amino (2009) investigated women's style arguing that women's style is affected by the other interlocutors in the conversation, which is most likely to be expressed by the use of adjectives, backchannels, and fillers. Furthermore, the researcher argued that the supportive style by women in mixed-gender conversations depends on their role towards their interlocutors. This study goes in line with previous literature in the area of style, attempting to shed light on Saudi women's attitudes towards this linguistic performance.

### **3- Methodology and Data:**

The data of the study is collected through implementing a two-part questionnaire. Participants were female university students between (19-22) years old. The study questionnaire was distributed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 2018. All participants were female college students. The total number of distributed questionnaires was 95, and the turned on questionnaires that were completely answered were 83. The results were further analyzed using statistical analysis tools, and presented in diagrams and tables. The quantitative aspect of this paper deals with answering questions related to participants' perspectives on style convergence and shift, and motivations that might influence this linguistic behavior. It also attempts to answer questions related to style maintenance and divergence away from audience style, and motivations that might trigger this behavior. This instrument was designed based on theoretical motivations proposed by scholars and researchers. The first part of the questionnaire is divided into four subtitles each of which asks a different question. Under each subtitle, a number of statements were presented on an agreement scale. The second part of the questionnaire includes four open-ended questions, focusing on reasons way participants perform this action, and what linguistic features are affected by this behavior. Data was analyzed using SPSS, calculating the mean and the rank of participants' responses to each item. The results were summarized in tables.

### **4- Findings:**

This part presents the findings of the current study. The main purpose of this study is to study and analyze the perceptions of Saudi women regarding style convergence or change, and style maintenance or style divergence. This part is further divided into two sub-sections: close-ended agreement scale section, and open-ended questions. Each sub-section is further sub-titled based

on questionnaire main questions. The data of this study was calculated quantitatively and presented in tables.

**4- 1: close-ended agreement scale section:**

**4-1-1: style change and convergence:**

One of the questions asked in this study is about the nature of style change and convergence towards adopting the style of others. This question included 10 statements that centered on the direction of the style change (higher/ lower) towards others, place where style change is performed, is it subconscious or deliberate, frequency, and intentions. Statements were presented and ordered in the following table (2) according to their rank by participants' responses.

Table (2)  
Style change and convergence

	Item	Response										Me an	S. D	Respo nse
		Strongl y agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagre e		Strongl y disagre e				
1	Sometimes I change my style up to a higher style matching the style of others.	18	21.7	43	51.8	14	16.9	6	7.2	2	2.4	3.83	0.93	Agree
2	I might change my style down to someone lower.	12	14.5	39	47	15	18.1	13	15.7	4	4.8	3.51	1.07	Agree
3	In the middle of a conversation, I might change my style to	7	8.4	24	28.9	28	33.7	21	25.3	3	3.6	3.13	1.01	Neutr al

	another.													
4	I usually change my style deliberately.	5	6	29	34.9	23	27.7	20	24.1	6	7.2	3.08	1.06	Neutral
5	I usually move from one style to another while talking.	4	4.8	27	32.5	24	28.9	24	28.9	4	4.8	3.04	1.01	Neutral
6	I am not aware of the fact that I change my style when I talk.	6	7.2	20	24.1	30	36.1	23	27.7	4	4.8	3.01	1.01	Neutral
7	When I change my style, the participant feels that I am cooperating.	3	3.6	19	22.9	38	45.8	21	25.3	2	2.4	3.00	0.86	Neutral
8	I usually change my style and adopt the listener's style regardless of his/her position.	6	7.2	14	16.9	18	21.7	29	34.9	16	19.3	2.58	1.19	Disagree
9	I usually change my style to imitate someone else's style.	0	0	10	12	21	25.3	35	42.2	17	20.5	2.29	0.93	Disagree
10	I usually change my style to imitate the style of someone famous.	0	0	10	12	15	18.1	31	37.3	27	32.5	2.10	1.00	Disagree
MEAN												2.96	0.43	

It is observed from the previous table that the responses are with agree degree on statements No. (1,2) whose means are (3.83-3.51), and this mean is put at the fourth category of the five scale and referred to (agree) degree. These statements included, (Change style up to a higher style matching the other speaker, and changing style down to someone lower) and a standard deviation (0.93- 1.07). The responses of study respondents were neutral on statements (3-7) that included, (changing style in the middle of a conversation, changing style deliberately and on purpose, moving from one style to another while talking, not being aware of the fact that I change my style when I talk, and when I change my style, the participant feels that I am cooperating). Respondents of this study disagreed with statements (8-10) that indicated, (changing of style and adoption of speaker’s style regardless of his/her position, changing of style to imitate someone else’s style, or the style of someone famous). As it is observed from the results, there is a variance in the responses of the study respondents on the axis (Style change and convergence). Additionally, the general mean of agreement degree on the statements of this axis is (2.96), and this mean is put at the third category of the five scale referred to (neutral degree) that reflects that study respondents' perceptions about style change by Saudi women are neutral.

**4- 1-2: Motivations of style changing and converging:**

The second question of this part focused on understanding the perceptions of Saudi women on the motivations of style change and convergence. This question included 12 statements, focusing on factors related to age and status of the audience, politeness, reducing tension and anger in a situation, level of closeness between participants, being friendly, reflecting interest, being cooperative or meeting expectations of others. Statements were presented and ordered in the following table (3) according to their rank by participants’ responses.

Table (3)

Motivations of style changing and converging

	Item	Response										Me an	S. D	Respo nse
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagre e		Strong ly disagr ee				
1	I change my style more often with children or elderly.	43	51.8	25	30.1	12	14.5	3	3.6	0	0	4.30	0.85	Strongly agree

2	I change my style to sound polite.	27	32.5	39	47	15	18.1	2	2.4	0	0	4.10	0.77	Agree
3	To reduce tension and anger, I might change my way of talk.	26	31.3	37	44.6	17	20.5	2	2.4	1	1.2	4.02	0.86	Agree
4	I find myself changing my style when I interact with close people.	28	33.7	28	33.7	14	16.9	11	13.3	2	2.4	3.83	1.11	Agree
5	I find myself changing my style when I interact with people who are not close to me.	17	20.5	39	47	16	19.3	8	9.6	3	3.6	3.71	1.02	Agree
6	To maintain a friendly atmosphere, I might change my style.	8	9.6	41	49.4	25	30.1	8	9.6	1	1.2	3.57	0.84	Agree
7	I change my style towards my speaker's style to show interest.	6	7.2	41	49.4	19	22.9	16	19.3	1	1.2	3.42	0.93	Agree
8	I find that changing my style makes me more successful.	8	9.6	35	42.2	21	25.3	18	21.7	1	1.2	3.37	0.97	Neutral
9	I change my style because I want to be cooperative.	3	3.6	29	34.9	38	45.8	12	14.5	1	1.2	3.25	0.79	Neutral
10	I change my style to a more prestigious way of talk to reflect a higher social	7	8.4	28	33.7	21	25.3	21	25.3	6	7.2	3.11	1.10	Neutral



	status.													
11	I might change my style towards my speaker's style to avoid judgment.	10	12	21	25.3	24	28.9	22	26.5	6	7.2	3.08	1.14	Neutral
12	I change my style to meet the expectations of others.	6	7.2	24	28.9	23	27.7	26	31.3	4	4.8	3.02	1.05	Neutral
MEAN												3.57	0.40	

It is observed from the previous table that the responses are with strongly agree degree on statement No. (1) related to the age of the interlocutors whose mean is (4.30) and this mean is put at the fifth category of the five scale and referred to (strongly agree) degree as their means range from (4.21 to 5.00) degrees. The responses are with agree degree on statements No. (2-7) whose means range from (3.42-4.10) and this mean is put at the fourth category of the five scale and referred to (agree) degree. These statements included, (changing style to sound polite, to reduce tension and anger, being with close people, interacting with people who are not close, to maintain a friendly atmosphere and to show interest). On the contrary, the responses are with neutral degree on (5) statements (8-12) whose means ranged from (3.02 to 3.37) and these means are put at the third category of the five scale and referred to (neutral) degree as their means range from (2.61 to 3.40) degrees. These statements included, (changing style to be more successful and gain social approval, being cooperative, changing to a more prestigious style, avoiding judgment, meeting the expectations of others). As it is observed above from the results, there is a variance in the responses of study respondents on this axis. Additionally, the general mean of agreement degree on the statements of this axis is (3.57) and this mean is put at the fourth category of the five scale and referred to (agree degree) that reflects that study respondents' perceptions about motivations of style change and convergence are positive.

**4-1-3: Style maintenance and divergence:**

The third question of this part focused on the perceptions of Saudi women on the linguistic behavior of style maintenance and divergence to one's own style. This question included 10 statements that targeted understanding the nature of this behavior. These statements focused on concepts related to keeping one's style while being with close people, keeping style to gain respect, maintaining style deliberately or subconsciously as well as the influence of the status

and distance of the audience on style maintenance. Statements were presented and ordered in the following table (4) according to their rank by participants' responses.

Table (4)  
Style maintenance or divergence

	Item	Response										Mean	S.D	Response
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree				
1	I often keep my style when I am with close people.	32	38.6	27	32.5	13	15.7	10	12	1	1.2	3.95	1.07	Agree
2	When I keep my style, I feel that I gain more respect.	10	12	29	34.9	29	34.9	12	14.5	3	3.6	3.37	1.00	Neutral
3	I usually prefer to keep my own style of talk regardless of the situation.	11	13.3	27	32.5	24	28.9	19	22.9	2	2.4	3.31	1.05	Neutral
4	I usually keep my style deliberately.	6	7.2	32	38.6	28	33.7	16	19.3	1	1.2	3.31	0.91	Neutral
5	I am not aware of the fact that I keep my personal style.	8	9.6	28	33.7	25	30.1	19	22.9	3	3.6	3.23	1.03	Neutral
6	I usually keep my style with higher and more prestigious people.	3	3.6	34	41	23	27.7	21	25.3	2	2.4	3.18	0.94	Neutral
7	I often keep my style when I am with people not close to me.	10	12	21	25.3	23	27.7	24	28.9	5	6	3.08	1.13	Neutral
8	When I keep my style, others change towards my way of talk.	1	1.2	19	22.9	35	42.2	25	30.1	3	3.6	2.88	0.85	Neutral
9	I usually change my style away from my participant's style.	1	1.2	18	21.7	26	31.3	33	39.8	5	6	2.72	0.91	Neutral
10	I think that others need to work harder to understand what I mean.	2	2.4	12	14.5	15	18.1	37	44.6	17	20.5	2.34	1.04	Disagree
MEAN												3.20	0.76	

It is observed from the previous table that the responses are with agree degree on statement No. (1) that states that style keeping is related to closeness between participants. It came with (agree) degree with mean (3.95) and standard deviation (1.07). The responses are with neutral degree on statements No. (2-9) whose means range from (2.72 to 3.37) and this mean is put at the third category of the five scale and referred to (neutral) degree. These statements are, (keeping one’s style leads to gaining more respect, I keep it regardless of the situation, it is usually deliberate and on purpose, it could take place without being aware of it, it usually happens with higher and more prestigious people, or with people who are not close to me, when I keep my style, others change towards my way of talk, and it is usual). Yet, the responses are with disagree degree on statement no. (10) that states that, (I think that participants need to work harder to understand what I mean) whose mean is (2.34) and this mean is put at the second category of the five scale and refers to (disagree) degree with a standard deviation of (1.04). As it is observed from the results, there is a convergence in the responses of study respondents on this axis. Additionally, the general mean of agreement degree on the statements of this axis is (3.20) and this mean is put at the third category of the five scale and referred to (neutral degree) that reflects that study respondents' perceptions about style change and divergence by Saudi women are neutral.

**4-1- 4: Motivations of style maintenance or divergence:**

The last question of this part focused on the perceptions of Saudi women on the motivations that would trigger this linguistic behavior of style maintenance and divergence. This question has 11 statements that includes keeping and maintaining style for educational purposes, keeping one’s identity, keeping style leads to success, it is based on need, it reflects uniqueness, keeping style reflects power especially in a work place, and it requires some skills to be performed. Results are presented and ordered in the following table (5) according to their rank by participants’ responses.

Table (5)

Motivations of style maintenance or divergence

	Item	Response										mean	S. D	Response
		Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree				
1	I keep my style for educational	2	24.	3	44.	2	26.	4	4.8	0	0	3.8	0.	Agree

	purposes.	0	1	7	6	2	5					8	83	
2	I keep my style to keep my identity.	20	24.1	31	37.3	22	26.5	10	12	0	0	3.73	0.96	Agree
3	Keeping my style makes me more successful.	15	18.1	23	27.7	30	36.1	15	18.1	0	0	3.46	0.99	Agree
4	I feel that people should keep their style because others could understand them.	14	16.9	26	31.3	26	31.3	13	15.7	4	4.8	3.40	1.09	Neutral
5	I keep my style to show that I am different.	12	14.5	25	30.1	23	27.7	18	21.7	5	6	3.25	1.14	Neutral
6	I usually show lack of interest in what others think about me.	5	6	28	33.7	31	37.3	16	19.3	3	3.6	3.19	0.94	Neutral
7	In a workplace, I need to keep my style to show power.	9	10.8	22	26.5	25	30.1	22	26.5	5	6	3.10	1.10	Neutral
8	I keep my style because I do not need to show cooperation.	5	6	14	16.9	29	34.9	27	32.5	8	9.6	2.77	1.04	Neutral
9	I usually keep my style	3	3.6	14	16.9	20	24.1	33	39.8	13	15.7	2.53	1.06	Disagree

	because I do not know how to change my style in different situations.													
10	I usually keep my style to show I am higher.	2	2.4	8	9.6	24	28.9	38	45.8	11	13.3	2.42	0.93	Disagree
11	Changing styles is usually negative	7	8.4	10	12	14	16.9	31	37.3	21	25.3	2.41	1.23	Disagree
MEAN												3.14	0.58	

It is observed from the previous table that the responses are with agree degree on statements No. (1-2-3) whose means range from (3.46 to 3.88) and this mean is put at the fourth category of the five scale and referred to (agree) degree and standard deviation between (0.83) and (0.99). These statements included motivations related to keeping style for educational purposes, keeping style to keep one’s identity and keeping style to be successful. The responses are with neutral degree on statements No. (4- 8) whose means range from (2.77 to 3.40) and this mean is put at the third category of the five scale and referred to (neutral) degree and standard deviations between (0.94) and (1.14). These motivations included, (people should keep their style because others could understand them, keeping one’s style show that he/she is different, lack of interest in what others have to think, keeping one’s style at a work place shows power, and keeping style shows cooperation). The responses are with disagree degree on statements no. (9-10-11) whose means range from (2.41 to 2.53) and this mean is put at the second category of the five scale and referred to (disagree) degree. These statements include, (lack of knowledge on how to change one’s style in different situations, keeping my style shows that I am higher, and changing styles is usually negative). These statements come with a standard deviation between (0.93) and (1.23). As it is observed above from the results, there is a variance in the responses of study respondents on this axis where the general mean of agreement degree on the statements of the axis is (3.14) and this mean is put at the third category of the five scale. This reflects that study respondents' perceptions in relation to the motivations of style maintenance and divergence of Saudi women are neutral.

#### 4- 2: Open-ended questions:

The second part of the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions. This part included two questions that meant to elicit answers related to whether participants change their style of talk in interaction and why, and what exactly do they change. The total number of respondents was 83 participants. Results were quantitatively collected and presented in following sub-titles.

##### 4-2-1: Do you change your style while talking? Why?

In this question, 85% of the participants indicated that they change their style when communicating with others, while 15% of the participants indicated that they keep their own style. The participants also provided their reasons for this behavior as listed in table (6).

Table (6)  
Reasons for style change

Reasons	Number of participants	Percentage
1- It depends on the participants or the situation.	41	49%
2- To be positive	10	12%
3- To help others understand.	7	8%
4- To be polite.	6	7%
5- it is the natural thing to be done.	5	7%
6- Changing your style helps you to achieve your goals	2	2%
7- Do not change because I do not need to do so	7	8%
8- Do not change because my style reflects my identity.	5	7%
Total	83	100%

The majority of the participants agreed on changing their style while talking regardless of the direction of this change. They also provided reasons why they perform this change. The most frequently occurring reason throughout the collected data centered on the influence of the

participants and the situation as two major factors that determine their linguistic behavior with a total of 49% of all responses. Other less significant reasons included being positive, helping others understand, being polite, or it is just natural to change styles while talking. These reasons came with a range of (12%- 2%) of the total responses to this question. Yet, 15% of the participants indicated that they do not change their style, but prefer to keep it for several reasons. These reasons include lack of need to perform the action of style changing, or because one's style reflects his/her own unique identity.

#### 4-2-2: What exactly do you change in your style?

This question focuses on exploring the linguistic nature of style change from the perception of study's participants. These linguistic features are presented in table (7) as follows:

7  
Style features

Style features	Number of participants	Percentage
1- Word choice.	36	43%
2- Level of formality.	13	16%
3- Stress and tone.	12	15%
4- Voice quality.	7	8%
5- Accent.	6	7%
6- Not aware of the features	9	11%
Total	83	100%

The majority of participants were able to detect and highlight linguistic changes that occur in their speech when they perform the action of style change and convergence. A total of 43% of participants indicated that they change their choice of words when they change their style. Other participants referred to other linguistic features such as level of formality, stress and tone, voice quality and accent as features that are affected by any style change. A total of 11% of the participants indicated that they are unsure or unaware of any linguistic changes that might occur in their style when they change the way they talk.

#### 5- Conclusions:

This paper dealt with investigating the perceptions of Saudi women in relation to style change and convergence, and style maintenance and divergence. The two main research questions that the researcher intended to answer are related to how and way style is changed, as well as how and way style is maintained and diverted from the perceptual point of view of the study's

participants. Results indicate that Saudi women assume that the nature of style change or convergence is mainly towards adopting the style of others. Results also indicate that Saudi women perceive motivations of style change and convergence such as age and status of the audience, politeness, and level of closeness between participants as highly effective. The perceptions of Saudi women on the linguistic behavior of style maintenance and divergence to one's own style focused on the nature of this behavior, assuming that keeping one's style while being with close people and keeping style to gain respect are common. Whereas the most perceived motivations that would trigger this linguistic behavior focused on educational purposes, keeping one's identity and seeking success. A total of 85% of all participants indicated that they change their speech for several reasons. The most frequently mentioned reason was related to the influence of participants and the setting on their linguistic performance. Most participants realized that their choice of words and level of formality is highly affected.

#### **6- Suggestions and recommendations:**

These results go in line with previous studies in this area. These results shed the light on this linguistic behavior, and investigate Saudi women's perceptions on these aspects. Further investigation is recommended covering a wider scope of participants from both genders and from different age groups to reach a better understanding of the phenomena in hand. It is recommended that further studies are implemented on the Arabic language in other societies to reach a better understanding of stylistic differences between different Arab speaking communities. Results of this study need to be taken into consideration in the educational and occupational domains, especially in the design of teaching or training material.

#### **References:**

- Amino, K. (2009). Turn-taking strategy and women's style-shift in Japanese conversation. In *Proceedings of the 5th Biennial International Gender and Language Association Conference I GALA* (Vol. 5, pp. 1-15).
- Bauman, Z. (2004). *Identity*. London: Polity.
- Bell, A. (2001). Back in style: reworking Audience Design. In Penelope Eckert and John R. Rickford (eds) *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 139-69.
- Clark, Urszula. (2007). *Studying Language: English in Action*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coulmas, F. (2013). *Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers' Choices*. Second edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Coupland, N. (2007). *Style: Language Variation and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- Coupland, N., & Jaworski, A. (2009). *The New Sociolinguistics Reader*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Danesi, M. (2016). *Language, Society and New Media: Sociolinguistics Today*. London: Routledge.
- Garrod, S., Pickering, M. (2004). Toward a mechanistic psychology of dialogue. *Behavioral and brain sciences*. 27 (2): 169-190.
- Giles, H., Coupland, J., Coupland, N. (1991). Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context, and Consequence. In Giles, H., Coupland, J., Coupland, N. *Contexts of Accommodation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gnevsheva, K. (2015). Style-shifting and intra-speaker variation in the vowel production of nonnative speakers of New Zealand English. *Journal of Second Language Pronunciation*1(2), 135-156.
- Gumperz, J. (1997). *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Fourth edition. London: Routledge.
- Holmes, J., Wilson, N. (2017). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Fifth edition. London: Routledge.
- Jandt, F. (2010). *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community*. Sixth edition. New York: Sage Publications.
- Keller-Cohen, D. (2015). Audience Design and Social Relations in Aging. *Research on Aging*, 37(7), 741–762.
- Labov, W. (1972). *Sociolinguistic Patterns*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Masuda, K. (2016). Style-shifting in student–professor conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 101, 101-117.
- Martin, N., Chevrot, J., & Barbu, S. (2010). Stylistic variations in the social network of a 10-year-old child: Pragmatic adjustments or automatic alignment? *Journal Of Sociolinguistics*, 14(5), 678-692.
- Pinker, S. (1994). *The Language Instinct*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Romaine, S. (2000). *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.