# LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE OR SHIFT? A SOCIOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE USE OF HAUSA AMONG SAUDI HAUSA IN THE CITY OF MECCA

***Ayman Tawalbeh***, ***Mohammed Dagamseh***, ***Abdullah Al-Matrafi***
Umm AlQura University, Mecca, Saudi Arabia

*Summary*: This paper explores the phenomenon of language maintenance and shift among the Saudi Hausa people in the city of Mecca. The goal is to measure the extent of language shift or maintenance among Saudi Hausa as well as to gain an insight into the effect of gender on language shift or maintenance. The data were collected by means of a questionnaire, interviews and observations. Information was elicited relating to the respondents' language proficiency, language use in different domains, and attitudes towards Hausa and Arabic. The results indicate that Saudi Hausa do not present signs of language maintenance and they have a limited ability in four Hausa language skill areas. In contrast, Arabic is used in almost all communication domains and socio-religious practices. The results prove that there has been a fast shift among Saudi Hausa towards Arabic and such a shift could be attributed to socio-economic, religious, and negative attitudinal factors.

## 1. Introduction

In contact situations, it is apparent that immigrants live with the dilemma of two conflicting wants: (a) the want to preserve their language as part of their heritage and identity, and (b) the want to be involved within their host community. Enhancing and encouraging the first want may lead to language maintenance, whereas enforcing the second one may lead immigrants, through generations, to lose proficiency in their ethnic language and ultimately shift towards the dominant language. Commenting on the loss of the minority language, Kaplan and Baldauf propose that:

«If both languages can serve all of the same functions and domains, then minority speakers are often drawn to the majority language because it offers greater access to material rewards, employment and economic opportunities. It may also be that there is status to be gained by linguistic and cultural association with the majority group. In addition, in urbanization situations, where minority individuals are drawn into urban centres − essentially for the same reasons of employment and economic reward − minorities are required to learn and use the majority language. Over time, these conditions lead to an environment in which the young have no incentive, and perhaps little opportunity, to learn the minority language» [Kaplan, Baldauf 1997: 62].

According to Winford [2003: 15], language shift refers to the partial or total abandonment of a group's native language in favor of another. In this regard, Thompson [2001: 9] writes: «Intense pressure from a dominant group most often leads to bilingualism among subordinate groups who speak other languages, and this asymmetrical bilingualism very often results, sooner or later, in lan-

guage shift». Thus, language shift is the product of different socio-economic and socio-political factors. Below, we will provide an overview of the factors that are regarded as influencing language maintenance or language shift and will present some of the important studies that are relevant to the scope of our research.

While analyzing the linguistic situation of German-speaking communities in the United States, Kloss [1966] proposed a taxonomy of linguistic and socio-demographic factors that can promote either language maintenance or language shift. According to Kloss, there are six factors that reinforce language maintenance: 1) religio-societal insulation, 2) time of immigration, 3) existence of language islands, 4) affiliation with denominations fostering parochial schools, 5) pre-immigration experience with language maintenance efforts, and 6) former use as the only official tongue during the pre-Anglo-American period. The following nine factors were categorized as ambivalent, whereby they can promote either maintenance or shift: 1) high educational level of immigrants, 2) low educational level of immigrants, 3) great numerical strength, 4) smallness of the group, 5) cultural and/ or linguistic similarity to Anglo-Americans, 6) cultural and/ or linguistic dissimilarity between minority and majority, 7) suppression of minority tongue(s), 8) attitude of the majority to the language or group, and 9) socio-cultural characteristics of the minority group in question.

In their «ethnolinguistic vitality model», Giles et al. [1977] demonstrate the importance of socio-structural and socio-psychological factors in the study of language behavior of group members in a contact situation. According to them, ethnolinguistic vitality is «that which makes a group likely to behave as a distinctive and active collective entity in inter-group situations» [Giles et al. 1977: 308]. Accordingly, the continuity of a minority language relies on the group's success in preserving their ethnolinguistic vitality. Giles et al. identified a number of structural variables that influence the ethnolinguistic group's vitality. These include: status factors, demographic factors, and institutional support factors.

Different studies have been conducted to investigate the language shift patterns of various linguistic minority groups in different parts of the world [cf. Veltman 1979, Dorian 1981, Clyne 1988, Stoessel 2002, Kipp 2002, Sofu 2009, Weinreich 2010, etc]. For example, Gal [1979] investigated the linguistic situation in the town of Oberwart in eastern Austria where Hungarian-German bilingualism has existed for a long period of time. She pointed out that German is replacing Hungarian in almost all domains. She attributed this shift towards German to different social factors such as urbanization, industrialization, loss of isolation, and social context appropriateness. As a result, the present generation is not using Hungarian in different social contexts as it had been used by earlier generations.

The immigrant situation in the Middle East has attracted the attention of few researchers in this field [e.g., Dweik 2000, Al-Khatib 2001, Al-Khatib, Al-Ali 2005, Al-Khatib, Alzoubi 2009, Mugaddam 2006, Habtoor 2012]. In a study by Al-Khatib [2001], he maintained that the Armenians of Jordan are experiencing a gradual shift toward Arabic that may lead to language loss on their part. The results showed that Arabic is mainly used in most social domains, whereas

the Armenian language is used in very restricted situations. The researcher attributed such a shift to socio-demographic and socio-psychological factors.

Furthermore, Mugaddam [2006] investigated the process of language maintenance and language shift among ethnic minority groups living in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan. A 22-item questionnaire was used to collect data on language proficiency, language use, and language attitudes. The results showed that a considerable number of younger-generation migrants have adopted Arabic as their primary language. Arabic was also used predominantly in most communication domains. Although most respondents showed a positive attitude to their ethnic languages, they did not make any efforts to maintain them.

No research has been conducted focusing on Saudi Hausa in the city of Mecca. As a result, this research is going to contribute to this field by identifying whether the Saudi Hausa have gradually shifted towards Arabic or if they have maintained their native language and culture.

## 2. Objectives of the study

The main goal of this study is to explore the phenomenon of language shift or maintenance among the Saudi Hausa community in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. By comparing the respondents' answers regarding their use of Arabic and Hausa in different domains, and their attitudes toward both languages, the researchers aim to determine the degree and extent of language shift/ maintenance among Hausa immigrants. Also, we intend to measure the effect of gender on language maintenance or shift, namely to ascertain which sex group is more likely to shift towards the dominant language.

## 3. Socio-historical background of Hausa

The word Hausa refers to both the language and the population. Generally speaking, the Hausa people and language are described in the online Encyclopedia Britannica [www.britannica.com] as follows:

«Hausa people found chiefly in northwestern Nigeria and adjacent southern Niger. They constitute the largest ethnic group in the area, which also contains another large group, the Fulani, perhaps one-half of whom are settled among the Hausa as a ruling class, having adopted the Hausa language and culture. The language belongs to the Chadic group of the Afro-Asiatic (formerly Hamito-Semitic) family and is infused with many Arabic words as a result of the Islamic influence, which spread during the latter part of the 14$^{th}$ century from the kingdom of Mali, profoundly influencing Hausa belief and customs. A small minority of Hausa, known as Maguzawa, or Bunjawa, remained pagan».

Although it is not easy to affiliate the precise date of Hausa entry to Saudi Arabia, especially to the city of Mecca, it is believed that Hausa moved to Mecca for the purposes of trade and pilgrimage. After they had done their pilgrimage, Hausa, as poor Muslims, used to overstay to work and live thereby constituting a large diasporic community in Saudi Arabia. Due to lack of official sources that document the history of Hausa in Mecca, we met and interviewed a retired history teacher of Hausa origin. The purpose of this meeting was to elicit some data regarding the Hausa migration to Saudi Arabia. Commenting on this, the teacher said [our translation]:

«The land of the two Holy Mosques, Hejaz, was one of the few places of Islamic land that was not occupied by the West and thus became the first resort for all Muslims, who were oppressed in their countries. The phase of modern migration of Hausa to Mecca came under a global wave of Muslim immigration to Hejaz, which was under Ottoman Empire rule. During that period the territory of Bukhara – central Asia – fell under Russian rule as well as parts of the Maghreb which fell under French, Spanish, and Italian colonialism. Under these circumstances a lot of Muslims managed to flee to Mecca. So between 1860 and 1930, and because of the consequences of the First World War, large numbers of Hausa, Indians, and Moroccans migrated to Mecca where they interacted with the community of Hejaz forming a unique society of its cultural and ethnic roots under the umbrella of Islamic brotherhood which was enhanced by the Saudi state establishment in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud».

Due to the absence of a census of the Saudi Hausa in Mecca, it was not easy to figure out their exact number. However, many government sources whom we met, interviewed, and called during the study speculated their number to be between 7,000 and 12,000. It should be noted here that there are two types of Hausa in the city of Mecca. Firstly, those who have Saudi citizenship. This type of Hausa are mostly literate and employed. They work as teachers, doctors, police officers, traders, and salesmen. The other group of Hausa are those who stay illegally and are not of Saudi nationality. They usually come to Mecca for pilgrimages and never return to their home country. They are mostly illiterate and unemployed. The majority of them work as porters, car washers, and peddlers. This Hausa community is proficient in its language and speaks little Arabic. They also live in close knit neighborhoods and do not get involved in the social life of the dominant Saudi Arabian community. What concerns us in this research is the first type of Hausa. i.e., the Saudi Hausa.

At the societal level, Saudi Hausa live in different districts of Mecca; however, a larger number of them are present in mainly four areas: Al Mansour neighborhood, Umm AlQura Street, Al Masfalah neighborhood, and Al Rosaifah neighborhood. On the other hand, although Islam calls for equality among all Muslims, it seems that one's origin and color still impact on Saudi Hausa social life. For example, the Saudi community, especially tribal families, does not encourage intermarriage with people of Saudi Hausa origin. Finally, we should note here that all Saudi Hausa in Mecca are Muslims, and most evidence suggests that all of them do practice, for example, praying, fasting, and other forms of sacred worship.

## 4. Design and methodology

### 4.1. Sample of the study

The participant sample consisted of 100 Saudi Hausa individuals residing in the city of Mecca. It was not feasible to select the informants randomly and some variables such as educational background, occupation, and age were not represented equally for different reasons. Firstly, as we stated above, there are no official government records that differentiate Hausa in terms of age, occupation, gender, or educational background. Secondly, there are no Hausa clubs or or-

ganizations through which the researchers could make direct contact with individual members of the community; and thirdly, the topic seemed to be very sensitive for most people of Saudi Hausa origin. A number of our students, with whom we discussed the research topic and objective, were initially very hesitant and reluctant to participate in the study. Therefore, we followed the «social network» model which has proven to be successful in studies on other immigrant groups in the Middle East [e.g., Al-Khatib, Al-Ali 2010, Al-Khatib 2001]. Overall, it took us around six months to reach a reasonable number of participants who showed willingness to participate in the study and who represented varying age, gender, occupation and educational backgrounds. We were able to draw almost an equal number of participants from the two gender groups. However, due to cultural reasons and to protect the privacy of women, the researchers were not able to address them directly; rather, it was our assistants who interviewed women and gathered the information from them.

Tables 1-4 report the socio-biographical characteristics of the informants, i.e., age, gender, occupation, and educational background.

*Table 1*: Distribution of the sample by age

| **Age** | **No. of respondents** |
|---|---|
| 5-10 | 0 |
| 11-20 | 37 |
| 21-30 | 35 |
| 31-40 | 18 |
| 41-50 | 4 |
| 51-60 | 4 |
| 61+ | 2 |
| Total number of respondents | 100 |

*Table 2*: Distribution of the sample by gender

| **Gender** | **No. of respondents** |
|---|---|
| Males | 54 |
| Females | 46 |
| Total number of respondents | 100 |

*Table 3*: Distribution of the sample by occupation

| **Occupation** | **No. of respondents** |
|---|---|
| Students | 40 |
| Teachers | 4 |
| Civil servants | 4 |
| Police | 3 |
| House wives | 22 |
| Drivers | 4 |
| Nurses | 4 |
| Craftsmen | 5 |
| Mechanics and technicians | 5 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Traders | 2 |
| Shop assistants | 3 |
| Retired | 1 |
| No occupation | 3 |
| Total number of respondents | 100 |

*Table 4*: Distribution of the sample by educational background

| **Educational background** | **No. of respondents** |
|---|---|
| Illiterate | 3 |
| Grade 1-9 | 15 |
| Grade 10-12 | 52 |
| Two years college | 16 |
| Four years college or above | 14 |
| Total number of respondents | 100 |

### 4.2. Procedure and data collection

The data we examined here were collected by means of a questionnaire, interviews, and personal observations. The data were collected with the assistance of some of our students who belong to the same Saudi Hausa community and with the support of some of our Hausa neighbors who facilitated the distribution of the questionnaire and made it possible for us to interview Saudi Hausa informants. The researchers used different types of communication aids/ tools such as mobile phones, e-mails, and face to face interviews. The interviews took place in different settings and places such as homes, workplaces, gardens, family gatherings.

The questionnaire used in this research was fashioned after that of Al-Khatib [2001]. The questionnaire was designed to collect data on language use in different domains, attitudes, and degree of proficiency in both Arabic and Hausa.

The questionnaire consisted of four main sections. The first section examined the informants' language proficiency in Arabic and Hausa while the second section investigated language use in different contexts. The third section covered respondents' attitudes towards both Arabic and Hausa. The fourth section explored the role of gender in the process of language shift or maintenance.

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1. Language proficiency

Table 5 represents the 'Can' questions that assess the informants' proficiency in both languages: Arabic and Hausa. The table elicits data on informants' abilities to listen, speak, read, and write in both languages. The informants were asked to rate their language ability in the four language areas on a three-point scale. The possible question responses were 'Yes', 'No', or 'A little'.

*Table 5*: Response percentages: Language proficiency in Arabic and Hausa

| Numbers | Language Skills | Yes % | No % | A little % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Can you understand a conversation in Hausa? | 50 | 27 | 23 |
| 2 | Can you engage in a conversation in Hausa? | 43 | 39 | 18 |
| 3 | Can you read Hausa? | 19 | 69 | 12 |
| 4 | Can you write Hausa? | 14 | 76 | 10 |
| 5 | Can you understand Arabic? | 98 | 0 | 2 |
| 6 | Can you read Arabic? | 96 | 3 | 1 |
| 7 | Can you write Arabic? | 95 | 4 | 1 |

The findings obviously show that the respondents rated their language abilities in Arabic significantly higher than their Hausa language proficiency. 98% of the respondents could understand a conversation in Arabic whereas only 50% could understand a conversation in Hausa.

Interestingly, 96% and 95% of Saudi Hausa could read and write in Arabic respectively. However, they rated their Hausa speaking ability higher than their writing or reading abilities. While 43% could engage in a conversation in Hausa, only 19% and 14% of them could read and write in Hausa respectively. This could be attributed to the fact that there are no schools in Mecca that offer the curriculum delivered in Hausa. Arabic is the official language of Saudi Arabia and it is the language of instruction in schools. On this matter, Gracia [2003: 27-28] writes: «when coupled with schooling that pays no attention to teaching reading and writing in the ethnic home language, resultant exposure to that language is minimal and productive skills in the language are severely limited».

It can be said then that the Saudi Hausa's language proficiency in Hausa has been decreasing with each generation, while there has been a remarkable increase in Arabic proficiency. This leads to the conclusion that the Saudi Hausa have been going through a language shift.

### 5.2. Language use

*Table 6*: Response percentages: Language use in different domains

| Questions | Only Arabic % | Mostly Arabic % | Arabic and Hausa % | Mostly Hausa % | Only Hausa % | No response % | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What language do you use when you write personal letters? | 78 | 3 | 19 | – | – | – | 100 |
| What language do you use when you speak with your neighbors? | 67 | 12 | 20 | 1 | – | – | 100 |
| What language do you use when you speak with your children? | 71 | 4 | 22 | 1 | 2 | – | 100 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What language do you use with your parents and the elderly? | 48 | 2 | 42 | 1 | 7 | – | 100 |
| What language do you use at home with your brothers and sisters? | 73 | 5 | 19 | 2 | 1 | – | 100 |
| What language do you use during Hausa social occasions? | 56 | 6 | 28 | 5 | 5 | – | 100 |
| What language do you use when you meet friends in the neighborhood? | 62 | 13 | 17 | 3 | 5 | – | 100 |
| What language do you use when you meet friends at school or at university? | 88 | 1 | 11 | – | – | – | 100 |
| What language do you use most commonly when you are angry? | 72 | 5 | 15 | 1 | 7 | – | 100 |
| What language do you use when invoking or praying? | 96 | 1 | 3 | – | – | – | 100 |
| What language do you dream in? | 85 | 2 | 10 | – | 3 | – | 100 |

Table 6 shows that the majority of the respondents tend to use Arabic in all contexts, though to varying degrees. Questions 3 and 5 show that there is a general trend among family members to communicate with each other in Arabic. Specifically speaking, 71% of the respondents tend to use 'only Arabic' when speaking with their children, whereas 2% of them tend to use 'only Hausa'. Moreover, 73% of the respondents tend to use 'only Arabic' at home when speaking to their brothers and sisters, whereas almost none of them (1%) tend to use 'only Hausa'. It seems that parents do not have the willingness and desire to pass on or teach Hausa to their children. This is a serious indication that Hausa is going to rapidly fade away with the next generation. This result is consistent with Fishman's [1991: 2000b] assertions that a basic principle to ensure the maintenance of an ethnic language is to enforce and encourage its use at home and in the community.

With regards to the community, and as indicated in questions 2, 6, 7, 8, it is obvious that Saudi Hausa use Arabic as a medium for social participation with neighbors (67%); during Hausa social occasions (56%); with friends in the neighborhood (62%); and with friends at school or at university (88%). If we argue that the use of Arabic in questions 2 and 8 is to fulfill social needs, that is

to communicate effectively and be better understood by Saudi Arabians, then the limited use of Hausa in Hausa social occasions − «only Hausa» (5%), «mostly Hausa» (5%), «Arabic and Hausa» (28%) − could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, Hausa speakers have regressed in their spoken use of their ethnic language and Arabic has replaced it. Secondly, there has been a change in the Hausa identity. The Arabic language is prestigious and the use of Hausa is stigmatized by the community. As Mugaddam [2006: 129] puts it, «immigrant indigenous language speakers tend not to use their own languages publicly in the host environment, in order to avoid the stigma associated with these languages». By speaking and communicating in Arabic they show that they are part of the Saudi nation or how they say it in local terms «*ahel albalad*», i.e., the locals. To quote one of our students whom we interviewed about this issue, he said that «though I look black or African, my blood is Saudi; Saudi Arabia is my hometown. I was born in Mecca and my grandparents fought with King Abdulaziz at that time to unify the Saudi nation».

The results also indicate that 78% of Saudi Hausa tend to use Arabic in writing their personal letters, whereas 19% tend to use Arabic and Hausa but none of them only use Hausa. This finding is consistent with our previous claim that there is no additional/ language specific educational support given to the Saudi Hausa. Therefore, their writing and reading skills are severely limited. We can also infer that the language inherited from parents and elderly people is passed on orally, and not in the written form.

Finally, it is not surprising that Arabic is the language used when praying and invoking. This is a common shared practice among Muslims, Arabs or non-Arabs, all over the world. Arabic has «respective claims to authenticity as the language of the Qu'ran» [Clyne 2003: 65]. Accordingly, Arabic is the language of prayer and worship.

### 5.3. Language attitudes

Table 7 illustrates the respondents' attitudes towards Arabic and Hausa. The term 'attitude' here refers to the values speakers hold towards their ethnic language as part of their unique identity as well as the real actions taken by that speech community to maintain their ethnic language such as promoting the use of the ethnic language at home. Accordingly, the more value ethnic minorities attach to their language, the more likely their language is to be maintained.

*Table 7*: Response percentages: attitudes toward Arabic and Hausa

| No. | Questions | Arabic % | Hausa % | Both % | Yes | No | Total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | What language is more beautiful? | 68 | 1 | 31 | – | – | 100 |
| 2 | What language is more useful to you? | 79 | 3 | 18 | – | – | 100 |
| 3 | What language would you prefer to use when you talk to others? | 84 | – | 16 | – | – | 100 |
| 4 | What language can you express yourself better in? | 91 | – | 9 | – | – | 100 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Is it important for you to speak Arabic? | – | – | – | 100 | | 100 |
| 6 | Is it important for you to speak Hausa? | – | – | – | 29 | 71 | 100 |
| 7 | Is Hausa dying in your home? | – | – | – | 86 | 14 | 100 |
| 8 | Is Hausa dying in your community? | – | – | – | 77 | 33 | 100 |

According to the table, it is apparent that the respondents marked Arabic as more important and useful than Hausa. 68% and 79% of the respondents evaluated Arabic as more beautiful and useful than Hausa. We assume that the respondents' positive attitudes towards Arabic are to fulfill both social and psychological needs, specifically, a) to integrate and assimilate into Saudi society; and b) to achieve extrinsic rewards such as getting a better job.

In question 4 it is clear that there is a marked shift from Hausa towards Arabic as Arabic is the respondents' main language of communication. 91% of the respondents confirmed that they could express themselves better in Arabic. Also, the respondents placed great importance on the need for them to speak Arabic, whereas Hausa was not given that importance. 100% believed that it is important for them to speak Arabic, whereas 71% stated that it is not important for them to speak Hausa. This confirms that Hausa attitudes towards their language are negative and such a result goes hand in hand with Baker [1992: 10] who states that «the status, value, and importance of a language is most often and mostly easily (though imperfectly) measured by attitudes to that language».

In questions 7 and 8 it can be assumed that the participants are aware of the fact that Hausa is facing a shift towards Arabic. 86% stated that Hausa is dying at home while 77% also confirmed that it is dying in the community.

To conclude, these findings support claims from previous studies that emphasized the importance of attitudes in promoting either the maintenance or decline of an ethnic language [see, for example, Fat 2005, Letsholo 2009].

### 5.4. Gender and language shift

*Table 8*: Response percentages: language use in different contexts by gender

| **Questions** | **Only Arabic** | | **Mostly Arabic** | | **Arabic and Hausa** | | **Mostly Hausa** | | **Only Hausa** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **M** | **F** | **M** | **F** | **M** | **F** | **M** | **F** | **M** | **F** |
| What language do you use when you write a personal letter? | 74 | 82 | 6 | 0 | 20 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| What language do you use when you speak with your neighbors? | 57 | 78 | 9 | 15 | 32 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| What language do you use at home with your children? | 57 | 87 | 7 | 0 | 30 | 13 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| What language do you use at home with your parents? | 37 | 61 | 4 | 0 | 44 | 39 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| What language do you use at home with your brothers and sisters? | 65 | 83 | 6 | 4 | 24 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| What language do you use when you meet friends in weddings and social occasions? | 37 | 78 | 11 | 0 | 41 | 13 | 9 | 0 | 2 | 9 |
| What language do you use when you meet friends in the neighborhood? | 57 | 67 | 13 | 13 | 19 | 22 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 2 |
| What language do you use at work or at university? | 81 | 96 | 2 | 0 | 17 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| What language do you use most commonly when you are angry? | 67 | 78 | 2 | 9 | 20 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 9 | 4 |
| What language do you use when invoking/ praying? | 94 | 98 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| What language do you dream in? | 81 | 89 | 4 | 0 | 9 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 |

Table 8 sheds light on the role the speaker's sex plays on language shifting. Specifically speaking, the most recent studies on language maintenance and language shift among immigrant communities in the Middle East have observed that females lead the language shift; they were likely to shift their speech faster than men were [cf. Al-Khatib 2001].

As illustrated in table 8, although both males and females are moving to the same target: namely, they both tend to use Arabic more than Hausa in all communication contexts, Saudi Hausa women are more innovative than men in shifting towards Arabic. This result can be noticed by the respondents' answers to all questions. For example, in answering questions 4 and 6, 37% of men tend to use Arabic when they speak with their parents and in social settings, however, 61% and 78% of women do so respectively. This means that there is a clear rush from the women's side towards the use of Arabic.

A further analysis of table 8 reveals that men are more proficient in Hausa than women in all four language areas. Accordingly, we can assume that Saudi Hausa women are less dedicated to their language than men. However, both men and women are more proficient in speaking and listening than in reading and writing. Moreover, table 8 demonstrates that both men and women are proficient in all four language domains of Arabic and that both genders are aware of its intrinsic and extrinsic importance.

## 6. Conclusion

In this article we examined the notion of language maintenance and shift amongst Saudi Hausa in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, this research has revealed that Hausa speakers in Saudi Arabia are clearly shifting towards the use of Arabic. Based on the respondents' answers to the questionnaire and information disclosed in interviews with the Saudi Hausa population, we can attribute such a shift to the following reasons:

Firstly, the negative attitudes that Saudi Hausa hold towards their ethnic language and the reduced appreciation they have towards it have led to a shift towards Arabic. Of course, when the minority language is seen as a symbol of identity, then the chances of its survival and maintenance are greater. The majority of Saudi Hausa have forgotten their Hausa roots, customs and traditions. Above all, most if not all of them have never visited their native country and have no desire to do so. Moreover, the majority of them have forgotten their national songs, dances, and food.

Secondly, the reduced use of Hausa at home and in the community. As we have seen from the results, little effort is being done by parents to encourage the use of Hausa with their children. Therefore, we expect that the next Saudi-Hausa generation's proficiency of their ethnic language will be severely limited. This is consistent with Fishman's [1991: 2000b] assertions that in order to maintain an ethnic language, it must be enforced at home and in the community.

Thirdly, the language shift has been accelerated due to the need of the Saudi-Hausa people to integrate into the dominant Saudi Arabian community and find improved employment. It is important to say here that there is pressure on Saudi-Hausa to integrate into the dominant community. This can be seen in the lack of institutional support that is provided for them. One important factor that has led to the immersion of Hausa into the Saudi society was that many Saudi Hausa were granted Saudi nationality during the eras of King Faisal Bin Abdul-Aziz (1964-1975) and King Khalid Bin Abdul-Aziz (1975-1982).

Finally, demographic factors seem to have accelerated the shift process. Saudi-Hausa live in Mecca which is a cosmopolitan city and they do not separate themselves from the majority. They live side by side with the majority of the Saudi Arabian population. An interesting point, however, that arises in this research is that endogamous marriage does not seem to help Saudi-Hausa to maintain their language. In most cases, Saudi-Hausa get married to each other. However, such an endogamous marriage seems unlikely to help the maintenance of their language and culture.

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