

## **Dialects in the Arabian Gulf: A social class or region? - A sociolinguistic perspective**

MUNIRAH ALAJLAN

*King's College, London*

Arabic is considered to be a significant example of diglossia where two varieties of the same language coexist; a High variety which is the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) taught in schools and used in media, and a Low variety which is the local vernacular (Badawi, 1973). Danet and Herring (2007) point out "Arab countries are characterized by diglossia (Ferguson, 1972): high-prestige, written literary, classical Arabic coexists with a low-prestige, local spoken variety, that is ordinarily not written" (p. 10).

To date, relatively few studies have looked at non-western societies, particularly, in the Gulf area regarding low and high varieties of the Arabic language (Ingham 1997, Holes, 2010, AlRasheed, 2012). This research attempts to view the Arabic language specifically the variety used in the Gulf region and the different varieties within each dialect, in terms of social class and other variables such as gender, educational level, and ethnic origin which have an impact on the use of language. Within the Gulf region, the dialects of Arabic spoken are called Gulf Arabic (GA) and each country (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain) has its own variety.