Diversity across the Arabian Peninsula
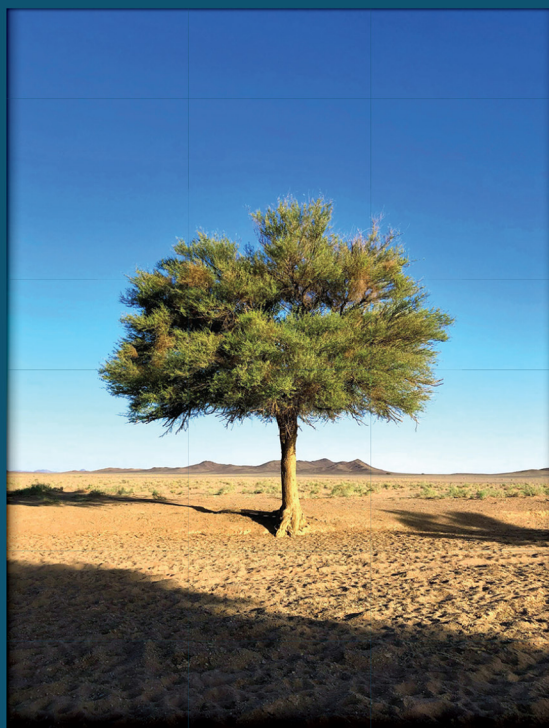## Language, Culture, Nature

EDITED BY FABIO GASPARINI, KAMALA RUSSELL
AND JANET C. E. WATSON

Cover image: Photo by Rabah Al Shammary, titled 'Wild Acacia tree, Ha'il, Arabian Peninsula', July 26, 2021; https://unsplash.com/photos/green-tree-on-brown-sand-under-blue-sky-during-daytime-e-UPgjjEwCM?utm_content=creditCopyText&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=unsplash.
Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

The main fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL and Scheherazade New.

DISTAL AND PROXIMAL RELATIVE PRONOUNS IN CENTRAL FAIFI ARABIC[*]

Abdullah Alfaifi

This paper provides preliminary evidence that relative pronouns in Central Faifi Arabic can possibly denote distality and proximity.[1] The paper contextualises relative pronouns in Central Faifi Arabic by providing a general overview of relative pronouns, with a focus on relative pronouns in Modern Written Arabic and some Arabic dialects. Central Faifi Arabic has three pairs of relative pronouns: *ḏī* and *ḏā, tī* and *tā,* and *awḏī* and *awḏā.* The members of each pair, which differ in only the quality of the final vowel, have been previously regarded as free variants.

 Through a series of tasks performed by fifteen Central Faifi Arabic native speakers, this paper shows that relative pronouns in Central Faifi Arabic are not always in free variation and that they can indicate distality and proximity in the presence of an adverb of place, e.g., *ḥawla* 'there', *ṯamma* 'there'. In other words,

[1] The classification of the dialect as 'Central' is based on Alfaifi (2022).

adverbs of place in the dialect draw out a possible historical distinction between the relative pronouns which have the high vowel /ī/ and relative pronouns which have the low vowel /ā/, where relative pronouns with /ā/ indicate distality and relative pronouns with /ī/ indicate proximity. Thus, while the distal/proximal distinction may not be categorical at present, the results of the tasks performed by native speakers strongly imply that the dialect had this distinction at some point.

1.0. Introduction

Relative pronouns are grammatical words which relate an element in a subordinate relative clause to a noun in the main clause of a sentence (Ryding 2005, 322). In Arabic, relative pronouns can reflect information about an antecedent, such as gender, number, and animacy. One piece of information that relative pronouns have not been said to denote is the location of the antecedent relative to the speaker or listener.

This paper aims to investigate the suggestion that Faifi Arabic relative pronouns are used to indicate distality or proximity, similar to how demonstratives in the dialect reflect this information. The paper first situates Faifi Arabic relative pronouns by providing a brief overview of relative pronouns in Modern Written Arabic and some Arabic dialects (§§2.0–3.0). Faifi Arabic relative pronouns are introduced in §4.0. §5.0 presents a description and discussion of the various tasks that were performed by Central Faifi Arabic speakers. The potential effect of the phonological makeup of words is discussed in §6.0. And, finally, §7.0 summarises and concludes the paper.

2.0. Relative Pronouns in Modern Written Arabic

Modern Written Arabic has fourteen relative pronouns. These relative pronouns are classified as *muxtaṣṣa* 'specific' and *ᶜāmmah* 'common or generic' (Mughazy 2009). There are twelve specific relative pronouns which are characterised by having morphologically represented agreement features that reflect the head noun. They distinguish number (singular, dual, and plural), gender, referent character, and the nominative and obliguqe (genitive/accusative) case (Mughazy 2009), although case is distinguished only in the dual (Table 1).

Table 1: Specific Relative Pronouns in Modern Written Arabic (H = human; NH = non-human)

	Feminine	Neutral	Masculine
Singular	*allatī* (H & NH)	—	*allaḏī* (H & NH)
Dual Nominative	*allatāni* (H & NH)	—	*allaḏāni* (H & NH)
Dual Oblique	*allatayni* (H & NH)	—	*allaḏayni* (H & NH)
Plural	*allātī* *allawātī* *allāʾī* (H & NH)	*alʾulā* *alʾulāʾi* (H & NH)	*allaḏīna* (H)

The remaining two relative pronouns, *man* and *mā*, are in the category referred to as common relative pronouns. These are typically not feature-specific, since they do not distinguish number, gender, or case (Mughazy 2009, 61).

3.0. Relative Pronouns in Modern Arabic Dialects

In most Arabic dialects, the Modern Written Arabic relative pronouns are condensed to the relative pronoun *illi,* which is characterised mainly by the geminated /l/ and has several variants with the voiced interdental fricative, as in *allaḏi* and *alliḏi* (Johnstone 1967; Holes 1983; Watson 1993). Some Arabic dialects, predominantly the sedentary dialects spoken in Northern Mesopotamia and Anatolia, have been reported to have relative pronouns with an ungeminated /l/ (Retsö 2003, 265). All of these variants are case-, number-, and gender-neutral (Vicente 2009). While this relative pronoun typically replaces all other relative pronouns, some dialects have it in addition to other relative pronouns. One particular case can be found in Abha Arabic, spoken in the city of Abha in southwestern Saudi Arabia, as described in Behnstedt (2016, 74–75). This dialect has been reported to have the three relative pronouns *ḏā, tā,* and *illi.* Although used rarely, the first two are used for singular antecedents and distinguish the masculine and feminine genders, respectively, while the *illi* relative pronoun is used specifically for plural antecedents.[2]

While the *illī* relative pronoun is perhaps the most common in Arabic dialects, it is not present in all documented varieties. This is especially the case in dialects spoken in the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Several studies have reported other relative pronouns, such as *bu* in Oman; the gender- and number-

---

[2] Al-Azraqi (1998, 277) mentions only *illi* and *ḏā* as relative pronouns in Abha Arabic. Considering that *ḏā* and *tā* are rare to begin with, this may be an indicator that the dialect is undergoing, or perhaps has undergone, a complete shift to the more common *illī* relative pronoun.

neutral *aḏī* in north-western Yemen, Ṣanʿā, Aslaʿ, Gurrān, Jabal aš-Širg, Qaryat Maʿdan Ḥīḏār, and Jabal Ḥubayš; the gender- and number-neutral *ḏī* in the dialects spoken in north-western and central Yemen in the regions of Ḍafār, al-Bayḍāʾ, Radā, Yāfiʿ, and Daṭīnah; and the gender-specific and number-neutral *ḏā* and *tā* in al-Ḥagw in southwestern Saudi Arabia (Rabin 1951, 204; Retsö 2003, 265; Behnstedt 2016, 74). A dialect that has a more intricate system of relative pronouns is the Arabic dialect of Rijal Almaʿ, spoken in the southwest of Saudi Arabia.

As detailed in Asiri (2008), the Arabic dialect of Rijal Almaʿ has four relative pronouns that must agree with the antecedent in terms of number and gender and are used only when the head noun is definite. These relative pronouns are *ḏa,* used with a singular masculine antecedent; *ta,* used with a singular feminine antecedent; *wula,* used with a human plural antecedent; and *ma,* used with a non-human plural antecedent. No relative pronoun in this dialect inflects for case or duality.

Table 2: Relative Pronouns in Rijal Almaʿ

	Masculine	**Feminine**
Singular	*ḏa* (H & NH)	*ta* (H & NH)
Plural	*wula* (H) / *ma* (NH)	*wula* (H) / *ma* (NH)

Examples (1)–(7) below demonstrate how these relative pronouns are used in Rijal Almaʿ (examples from Asiri 2008, 72–73):

(1) *antah*   *rayta*   *m = walad*   *ḏa*   *šarad*
     you.MS   saw   the = boy   REL.MS   ran_away
     'Have you seen the boy who ran away?'

(2) *gābalt*   *im = brat*   *ta*   *lisa*   *yasmaʿ*
     I_met   the = girl   REL.FS   couldn't   hear
     'I met the girl who couldn't hear.'

(3) *sāfara*   *m＝rajil*   *ḏa*   *šarayt*   *sayyāratūh*
     travelled   the＝man   REL.MS   I_bought   his_car
     'The man, whose car I bought, travelled.'

(4) *waštari*   *m＝bayt*   *ḏa*   *yabīʿ*   *jārna*
     I'll_buy   the＝house   REL.MS   is_selling   our_neighbour
     'I'll buy the house that our neighbour is selling.'

(5) *antu*   *raytu*   *m＝šajarat*   *ta*   *gaṭaʿaw*
     you.PL   saw   the＝tree   REL.FS   they_cut
     'Have you seen the tree that they cut?'

(6) *gābalt*   *im＝ʿuwāl*   *wula*   *saragu*   *m＝maḥall*
     I_met   the＝boys   REL.PL(H)   stole   the＝shop
     'I met the boys who stole from the shop.'

(7)   *im＝bagar*   *ma*   *bāʿ (~ bāʿaha)*
     the＝cows   REL.PL(NH)   he_sold
     'The cows that he sold.'

An interesting phenomenon is that anaphoric pronouns are typi-
cally absent in relative clauses when they are coreferential with
the head—compare the verbs in the examples in (1) and (2)
above. However, anaphoric pronouns must be expressed in pos-
sessive pronouns, as in the example in (3).

   This phenomenon in the Rijal Almaʿ dialect may relate to
the Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977).

4.0. Relative Pronouns in Faifi Arabic

In the same general region of the Arabian Peninsula is another
dialect that has a different set of relative pronouns. This dialect
is Faifi Arabic, spoken in the Faifa Mountains near the southwest-
ern border of Saudi Arabia (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Map of the Faifa Mountains in Saudi Arabia (Google Maps 2023)

As detailed in Alfaifi (2016, 250), Faifi Arabic has three pairs of postnominal relative pronouns, which are overt when the head noun is definite. When the head noun is indefinite, the relative pronoun is omitted. The three pairs are *ḏī* and *ḏā*, which are used with a masculine singular head noun; *tī* and *tā*, which are used with a singular feminine head noun; and *awḏī* and *awḏā*, which are used with feminine and masculine plural head nouns.[3]

 All six relative pronouns (Table 3) can appear with animate or inanimate nouns. As with relative pronouns in Rijal Almaʿ, relative pronouns in Faifi Arabic do not inflect for duality or case.

---

[3] Alfaifi and Behnstedt (2010, 60) recognise only *ḏī*, Behnstedt (2016, 74–75) recognises only *ḏā*, *tā*, and *awḏā*, and Alfaife (2018, 117) recognises only *ḏī*, *tī*, and *awḏī*. Considering that Faifi Arabic has been shown to comprise several subdialects (Alfaifi 2022), these works may have been describing different varieties.

Table 3: Relative Pronouns in Faifi Arabic

	Masculine	**Feminine**
Singular	*ḏī/ḏā* (H & NH)	*tī/tā* (H & NH)
Plural	*awḏī/awḏā* (H & NH)	*awḏī/awḏā* (H & NH)

As the examples below show, relative pronouns in Faifi Arabic are overt only when the head noun is definite (8).

(8)   *lagīt*   *m=źawwāl*   *ḏī*   *xarbānin*
        I_found   the=mobile_phone REL   broken
        'I found the mobile phone that is broken.'

(9)   **lagīt*   *źawwālin*   *ḏī*   *xarbānin*
        I_found   a_mobile_phone   REL   broken
        'I found a cell phone that is broken.'

(10) *ḏī*   *źawwada*   *ḏī*   *yistāhil*   *jāyza*
       REL   made   this   deserves   award
       'Whoever made this deserves an award.'

(11) *m=bint*   *tī*   *gāman*
       the=girl   REL   stood_up
       'The girl who stood up.'

(12) *m=walad*   *ḏī*   *gāma*
       the=boy   REL   stood_up
       'The boy who stood up.'

As mentioned in Alfaifi (2016, 251), the Faifi Arabic relative pronouns *ḏī*, *tī*, and *awḏī* are homophonous to the proximal demonstratives *ḏī* 'this (M)', *tī* 'this (F)', and *awḏī* 'these', respectively, as shown in the following examples in Table (4).

Table 4: Homophony Between Relative Pronouns and Demonstratives

mwalad	*ḏī*		*mwalad*	*ḏī*	*gāma*
the = boy	this		the = boy	who	stood_up
'this boy'			'the boy who stood up'		
mbint	*tī*		*mbint*	*tī*	*gāman*
the = girl	this		the = girl	who	stood_up
'this girl'			'the girl who stood up'		
mawlāḏ	*awḏī*		*mawlāḏ*	*awḏī*	*gāmū*
the = boys	these		the = boys	who	stood_up
'these boys'			'the boys who stood up'		
mbanāt	*awḏī*		*mbanāt*	*awḏī*	*gimna*
the = girls	these		the = girls	who	stood_up
'these girls'			'the girls who stood up'		

In certain contexts, this homophony can potentially cause ambiguity, as shown in the pairs in Table 5. Ambiguity in this case is resolved by a very brief pause following the demonstrative, but mainly through intonation, where the demonstratives *ḏī*, *tī*, and *awḏī* tend to be comparatively higher in intonation than relative pronouns.[4]

---

[4] Relevant to the discussion is the fact that demonstratives in Faifi Arabic distinguish proximity to the speaker (*ḏī/ḏayya, tī/tayya, awḏi/awḏayya*), distality from the speaker (*ḏaylī, taylī, awḏaylī*), and distality from the speaker and proximity to the listener (*ḏāla, tāla, awḏāla*). For both demonstratives and relative pronouns, singular forms are characterised by initial /ḏ/ for the masculine gender and /t/ for the feminine gender. For plurals, /aw/ generally indicates gender-neutral demonstratives and relative pronouns. See Alfaifi (2016, 162–214) for a thorough discussion of the Faifi Arabic demonstratives.

Table 5: Potential Ambiguity as a Result of Homophony

mwalad	*ḏī*	*gāma*	*mwalad*	*ḏī*	*gāma*
the = boy	this	stood_up	the = boy	who	stood_up
'this boy stood up'			'the boy who stood up'		
mbint	*tī*	*gāman*	*mbint*	*tī*	*gāman*
the = girl	this	stood_up	the = girl	who	stood_up
'this girl stood up'			'the girl who stood up'		
mmawlād	*awḏī*	*gāmū*	*mmawlād*	*awḏī*	*gāmū*
the = boys	these	stood_up	the = boys	who	stood_up
'these boys stood up'			'the boys who stood up'		
mbanāt	*awḏī*	*gimna*	*mbanāt*	*awḏī*	*gimna*
the = girls	these	stood_up	the = girls	who	stood_up
'these girls stood up'			'the girls who stood up'		

5.0. Distal and Proximal Relative Pronouns in Central Faifi Arabic

As mentioned previously, Faifi Arabic has three pairs of relative pronouns: *ḏī* and *ḏā, tī* and *tā,* and *awḏī* and *awḏā.* The previous literature on the Faifi subdialects suggests that each pair is in free variation in the dialect and that the difference is only phonological (Alfaifi 2016, 250). This section presents details about an experiment that aimed to investigate the possibility that relative pronouns in the central dialect of Faifi Arabic, a dialect which appears to have all six relative pronouns, distinguish distality and proximity when the adverbs of place *hnī* 'here', *ḥawla* 'there', and *ṭamma* 'there' are present in the same phrase.[5]

---

[5] As detailed in Alfaifi (2016, 299–303), the adverbs of place *ṭamma* and *ḥawla,* both meaning 'there', differ in that the latter is used to denote a visible location far from the speaker and close to the listener, while the former refers to an invisible location far from both the speaker and listener.

5.1. Methodology

This subsection describes the method used in this study, including the sampling of respondents, a description of the instrument, the types of tasks the subjects were asked to perform, and the purpose of each task.

5.1.1. Respondents

A total of fifteen Faifi Arabic speakers participated in this study. Speakers either currently live in the central region of the Faifa Mountains (n = 9) or reside in other regions in Saudi Arabia, but originally descend from subtribes in the same region (n = 6). All speakers reported that they use Faifi Arabic on a daily basis. Ten of the fifteen speakers were male and five were female. The participants' ages ranged from 19 to 68 (mean = 39.3). Data were collected in two phases with identical instruments and tasks. Eight subjects were recruited in the first phase and seven in the second.

5.1.2. Instrument

For the purpose of this experiment, a list of 44 phrases with and without adverbs of place and relative pronouns were used. These phrases were divided into five groups, with each group of phrases serving as stimuli for a specific task. The first group consisted of twelve phrases that had a definite head noun and a relative pronoun, but no adverb of place. The second group had eight phrases that contained a definite head noun, a verb, and an adverb of place, with the relative pronoun omitted. The third group consisted of eight phrases with a definite noun, a relative pronoun,

and a verb, but without an adverb of place. The fourth group consisted of eight phrases that contained a definite head noun, a relative pronoun, and a verb, but the adverb of place was omitted. The last group of phrases consisted of phrases that had definite head nouns, relative pronouns, verbs, and adverbs of place. All stimuli were typed in Arabic to reflect the Faifi pronunciation of words. Modern Written Arabic glosses accompanied each stimulus in case subjects had any difficulty reading the Faifi Arabic pronunciation.

5.1.3. Tasks

The fifteen subjects were asked to complete a series of three forced-choice tasks, one meaning-differentiation task, and one grammaticality-judgment task. In the first forced-choice task, the speakers were asked to insert adverbs of place (*hnī* 'here', *ḥawla* 'there', or *ṭamma* 'there') at the end of each incomplete relative clause. In the second forced-choice task, the speakers were provided with relative clauses with the adverbs *ḥawla* and *hnī*, but with no relative pronoun and were asked to insert a relative pronoun given the context. In the third forced-choice task, the same speakers were presented with verbal clauses containing the six relative pronouns and were asked to determine whether they detected a difference in meaning. In the fourth task, the speakers were presented with the same verbal clauses and were asked to insert an appropriate relative pronoun. In the fourth task, the speakers were asked to judge the grammaticality of each clause.

All tasks were performed in the same succession for each speaker, starting with Task 1 followed by Task 2, Task 3, Task 4,

and finally Task 5. In all forced-choice tasks, speakers were instructed to select only one option. In each task for each subject, the order of the presented choices (i.e., relative pronoun or adverb of place) was randomised. The results of these tasks are presented and discussed in the next section.

5.2. Results

In this section, the results are presented in the order the tasks were performed by the participants.

5.2.1. Task 1

In this task, the speakers were provided with twelve incomplete relative clauses. The participants were asked to add one adverb of place at the end of the clause from three possible adverbs: *ḥawla* 'there' *ṭamma* 'there', or *hnī* 'here'. The purpose of this task was to see which adverb of place (distal and proximal) was matched with which relative pronoun.

Table 6: Task 1 Results

Relative Clause	*ḥawla / ṭamma* 'there'	*hnī* 'here'
mwalad ḏā... 'The boy who is...'	15	0
mwalad ḏī... 'The boy who is...'	2	13
mbint tā... 'The girl who is...'	15	0
mbint tī... 'The girl who is...'	0	15
mwaladayn awḏā... 'The two boys who are...'	15	0
mwaladayn awḏī... 'The two boys who are...'	2	13
mbintayn awḏā...	11	4

Relative Clause	ḥawla / ṭamma 'there'	hnī 'here'
'The two girls who are…'		
mbintayn awḏī… 'The two girls who are…'	0	15
mawalād awḏā… 'The boys who are…'	15	0
mawalād awḏī… 'The boys who are…'	5	10
mbanāt awḏā… 'The girls who are…'	15	0
mbanāt awḏī… 'The girls who are…'	3	12

As Table 6 shows, for most relative clauses, the speakers matched the relative pronouns *ḏā*, *tā*, and *awḏā* (/ā/-relative pronouns) with the adverbs *ḥawla* (or *ṭamma*) 'there' (/ā/-adverbs of place), and matched *ḏī*, *tī*, and *awḏī* with the adverb *hnī*. The table shows the number of responses for each relative clause.

5.2.2. Task 2

In this task, the speakers were provided with eight incomplete relative clauses with a definite head noun and one of the adverbs *ḥawla* or *hnī*.

Table 7: Task 2 Results

Relative Clause	ḏī, tī, awḏī 'who (MS, FS, PL)'	ḏā, tā, awḏā 'who (MS, FS, PL)'
mwalad… harraźa ḥawla 'The boy… talked there.'	0	15
mwalad… harraźa hnī 'The boy… talked here.'	10	5
mbint… harraźan ḥawla 'The girl… talked there.'	3	12
mbint… harraźan hnī 'The girl… talked here.'	11	4
mawalād… harraźū ḥawla 'The boys… talked there.'	0	15

Relative Clause	*ḏī, tī, awḏī* 'who (MS, FS, PL)'	*ḏā, tā, awḏā* 'who (MS, FS, PL)'
mawalād… harraźū hnī 'The boys… talked here.'	12	3
mbanāt… harraźna ḥawla 'The girls… talked there.'	0	15
mbanāt… harraźna hnī 'The girls… talked here.'	13	2

The subjects were asked to insert an appropriate relative pronoun from a list that included all six relative pronouns. Unlike the first task, this task aimed to see which relative pronoun was chosen with the provided adverb of place. The results of this task are summarised in the table above.

As shown in the table above, the majority of speakers matched the relative pronouns *ḏī, tī,* or *awḏī* with the adverb *hnī*; and matched the relative pronouns *ḏā, tā,* and *awḏā* with the adverb *ḥawla*. However, this seems to be the case only with relative clauses that end with a place adverb; cf. the results of Task 3 next.

5.2.3. Task 3

In Task 3, speakers were presented with eight relative clauses in four pairs without adverbs of place at the end. The purpose of this task was to see whether the subjects detected any inherent difference between the relative pronouns when an adverb of place is not present in the clause.

The results from this task (Table 8) show that with relative clauses that do not end with an adverb of place, most speakers did not differentiate between the six relative pronouns when they were asked if they could detect a difference in meaning between the clauses in each pair.

The three participants who indicated a difference in meaning noted that the relative pronouns in these phrases implied how far in the past the action took place.

Table 8: Task 3 Results

Relative Clause	Different Meaning	Same Meaning
mwalad ḏā harraźa 'the boy who talked' *mwalad ḏī harraźa* 'the boy who talked'	3	12
mbint tā harraźan 'the girl who talked' *mbint tī harraźan* 'the girl who talked'	3	12
mawalād awḏā harraźū 'the boys who talked' *mawalād awḏī harraźū* 'the boys who talked'	3	12
mbanāt awḏā harraźna 'the girls who talked' *mbanāt awḏī harraźna* 'the girls who talked'	3	12

Since all phrases in this task are in the past tense, the relative pronouns with the vowel /ī/ implied that the verb *harraźa, harraźan,* or *harraźū* took place more recently in the past than the same verbs preceded with relative pronouns with the vowel /ā/.

However, as shown in the results of Task 4, when the participants were asked to insert one of the three adverbs of place (*ḥawla, ṭamma,* or *hnī*) after the verbs in Table 8, the responses were very similar to those obtained in Task 1.

5.2.4. Task 4

In Task 4, subjects were provided with the same list of clauses in Task 3 and were asked to attach one of the three adverbs of place (*ḥawla, ṭamma* 'there', or *hnī* 'here') at the end of the clause. Compared to Task 1, which also asked subjects to insert an adverb of place, this task aimed mainly to compare the responses in Task 3 with the responses in this task when the subjects were presented

with identical clauses to those in Task 3, immediately after determining whether these clauses are different in meaning or not.

Table 9: Task 4 Results

Relative Clause	ḥawla / ṭamma 'there'	hnī 'here'
mwalad ḏā harraźa… 'The boy who talked…'	15	0
mwalad ḏī harraźa... 'The boy who talked...'	2	13
mbint tā harraźan… 'The girl who talked…'	15	0
mbint tī harraźan… 'The girl who talked...'	2	13
mmawalād awḏā harraźū… 'The boys who talked…'	12	3
mmawalād awḏī harraźū… 'The boys who talked...'	1	14
mbanāt awḏā harraźna… 'The girls who talked…'	13	2
mbanāt awḏī harraźna… 'The girls who talked…'	1	14

As shown in Table 9, in most responses, the participants chose the one of the two adverbs *ḥawla* or *ṭamma* 'there' in the relative clauses containing the relative pronouns *ḏā, tā,* and *awḏā,* and chose the adverb of place *hnī* 'here' in relative clauses with the relative pronouns *ḏī, tī,* and *awḏī.*

5.2.5. Task 5

In the last task, the participants were asked to judge the grammaticality of eight phrases, where the relative pronouns *ḏā, tā,* and *awḏā* were matched with the adverb *hnī*; and the relative pronouns *ḏī, tī,* and *awḏī* were matched with the adverb *ḥawla.*

Table 10: Task 5 Results

Relative Clause	Grammatical	Ungrammatical
mwalad ḏā harraźa hnī 'the boy who talked here'	15	0
mwalad ḏī harraźa ḥawla 'the boy who talked there'	15	0
mbint tā harraźan hnī 'the girl who talked here'	15	0
mbint tī harraźan ḥawla 'the girl wo talked there'	15	0
mmawalād awḏā harraźū hnī 'the boys who talked here'	15	0
mmawalād awḏi harraźū ḥawla 'the boys who talked there'	15	0
mbanāt awḏā harraźna hnī 'the girls who talked here'	15	0
mbanāt awḏī harraźna ḥawla 'the girls who talked there'	15	0

The matching of the relative pronouns containing /ā/ with adverbs of place containing the vowel /ī/ and vice versa is the opposite of the matching determined by the majority of speakers in Tasks 1, 2, and 4. The purpose of this task was to see whether pairing these relative pronouns and adverbs affected the grammaticality of these clauses.

While some native speakers noted that these sentences sounded slightly unnatural or did not have a natural flow, all speakers deemed the relative clauses in Table 10 grammatical. The unnatural element in these relative clauses was perhaps caused by the matching of /ī/-final relative pronouns with /a/-final adverbs of place and /ā/-final relative pronouns with the /i/-final adverb of place.

6.0. Potential Effect of Phonology

Overall, and based on the results discussed above, it appears that the choice of /ī/-final or /ā/-final relative pronouns is not always random and appears to extend beyond the gender-number distinction found in Modern Written Arabic, at least when solely considering the results of these tasks. This is especially clear when the relative clause is followed by one of the three adverbs of place in Faifi Arabic: *ḥawla* 'there', *ṭamma* 'there', and *hnī* 'here'.

Another point to make regarding these tasks is that it is possible that there was a phonological effect that cued the speakers to pair these relative pronouns and adverbs in a similar fashion, almost unanimously. These pairings may have been affected by the phonological components of the words in each phrase, specifically the vowels. This is supported by the results of the matching tasks of the relative clauses *mwalad ḏī...* and *mbintayn awḏā...* in Table 6; and *mwalad... harraźa hnī*, and *mbint... harraźan hnī* in Table 7. Additionally, in Table 9, when both the verb and the relative pronoun have the low vowels [ā] or [a], all respondents chose either *ḥawla* or *ṭamma* as the most suitable adverb of place.

On the other hand, an alternative explanation is that the vowel quality in relative pronouns and adverbs of place may have significance in relation to the proximity of the objects or entities being referred to, where the presence of the high front vowels /ī/ and /i/ reflects proximity.

In Faifi Arabic, demonstratives such as *ḏī*, *tī*, and *awḏī* all containing the high front vowels /ī/ and /i/, are used to express

proximity to the speaker. Conversely, the demonstratives *ḏaylī,*
taylī, awḏaylī, ḏāla, tāla, and *awḏāla,* which contain low vowels,
are employed to denote distality from the speaker. This pattern
of vowel usage in the demonstratives may reflect their spatial
relationship with the speaker.

The same pattern can also be observed in the Arabic dialect
of Rijal Almaʿ (Asiri 2009, 163). In this dialect, the proximal
demonstratives consistently feature the high front vowels /i/ and
/ī/ and are represented by terms like *ḏiyh, tijh, wulīh,* and *mahnīh.*
Conversely, the distal demonstratives are characterised by the
presence of low vowels: *ḏahnah, tahnah, wulahnah, wulāx,* and
mahnah.

This consistent correlation between the presence or ab-
sence of the vowels /i/ and /ī/ and the proximal or distal nature
of the demonstratives in both Faifi Arabic and the Arabic dialect
of Rijal Almaʿ lends support to the idea that vowel quality plays
a role in expressing proximity and distality. It suggests that the
use of high front vowels may be a phonetic feature used across
dialects to indicate proximity, while the use of low vowels indi-
cates distality from the speaker.

7.0. Summary and Conclusion

This paper has compared relative pronouns in Central Faifi Ara-
bic to relative pronouns in other Arabic varieties. Many of the
facts about relative pronouns in Faifi Arabic had been previously
discussed in detail in Alfaifi (2016) and briefly in Alfaife (2018).
The main contribution of this paper, however, is to show,
through a series of tasks performed by Central Faifi Arabic

speakers, that relative pronouns in the subdialect can be divided into two groups: distal relative pronouns and proximal relative pronouns. This grouping is present only when an adverb of place is present. In other words, adverbs of place in the dialect draw out a possible historical distinction between relative pronouns which have the high vowel /ī/ and relative pronouns which have the low vowel /ā/. However, when the relative pronouns with /ī/ and adverbs of place with /a/ were matched, the speakers did not report the phrases to be ungrammatical, which indicated that this grouping of relative pronouns as distal and proximal is not categorical at present, but perhaps indicates that the dialect had this distinction at some point.

Future research will aim to collect audio recordings of Faifi Arabic speakers, especially speakers of the varieties with both /ī/-final and /a/-final relative pronouns. The recordings will be collected in a natural setting without probing stimuli. Future research will also investigate the observations raised by some of the participants that relative pronouns interact with verbs by carrying meaning about the temporal distality or proximity of the verb.

References

Al-Azraqi, Munira A. 1998. 'Aspects of the Syntax of the Dialect of Abha (South West Saudi Arabia)'. PhD dissertation, Durham University.

Alfaife, Saleem M. 2018. 'A Grammar of Faifi'. MA thesis, California State University, Long Beach.

Alfaifi, Abdullah. 2022. 'Aspects of the Phonology of a Faifi Arabic Dialect'. PhD dissertation, Indiana University.

Alfaifi, Abdullah A., and Peter Behnstedt. 2010. 'First Notes on the Dialect of Ǧabal Fayfāʾ (Jazan Province/Saudi Arabia)'. *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 52: 53–67.

Alfaifi, Ali H. 2016. 'Aspects of the Morphosyntax of the Faifa Dialect of Saudi Arabic: A Descriptive Study'. PhD dissertation, Ulster University.

Asiri, Yahya. 2008. 'Relative Clauses in the Dialect of Rijal Alma (South-West Saudi Arabia)'. *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 38: 71–74.

———. 2009. 'Aspects of the Phonology and Morphology of Rijal Almaʿ Dialect: South-West Saudi Arabia'. PhD dissertation, University of Salford.

Behnstedt, Peter. 2016. *Dialect Atlas of North Yemen and Adjacent Areas*. Leiden: Brill.

Google Maps. n.d. Map of Southwestern Saudi Arabia and Northwestern Yemen. https://goo.gl/maps/bNVBWcu8ab8rRTWN6

Hassan, Abbas. 1975. *Al-Naḥw al-Wafi*. Vol. 1. Cairo: Dar Al-Maʾaarif.

Holes, Clive. 1983. 'Bahraini Dialects: Sectarian Differences and the Sedentary/Nomadic Split'. *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 10: 7–38.

Johnstone, Thomas M. 1967. *Eastern Arabian Dialect Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keenan, Edward L., and Bernard Comrie. 1977. 'Noun Phrase Accessibility and Universal Grammar'. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8/1: 63–99.

Mughazy, Mustafa. 2009. 'Relative Clause'. In *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, edited by Kees Versteegh, Mushira Eid, Alaa Elgibali, Manfred Woidich, and Andrzej Zaborski, IV: 60–70. Leiden: Brill.

Rabin, Chaim. 1951. *Ancient West-Arabian: A Study of the Dialects of the Western Highlands of Arabia in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.* London: Taylor's Foreign Press.

Retsö, Jan. 2003. 'Relative-Clause Marking in Arabic Dialects: A Preliminary Survey'. In *Approaches to Arabic Dialects*, edited by Martine Haak, Rudolf de Jong, and Kees Versteegh, 263–73. Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 38. Leiden: Brill.

Ryding, Karin C. 2005. *A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Vicente, Ángeles. 2009. 'Relative Pronoun (Arabic Dialects)'. In *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics* IV, edited by Kees Versteegh, Mushira Eid, Alaa Elgibali, Manfred Woidich, and Andrzej Zaborski, 70–72. Leiden: Brill.

Watson, Janet C. E. 1993. *A Syntax of Sanʿani Arabic*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.