

Documenting Farasani Arabic

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1 Background: While previous studies have investigated different varieties of the Arabic language in the field of linguistics, there have been no studies, dictionaries or other grammatical resources. Investigating the Arabic dialect Farasani, spoken in the Farasan islands located in the Red Sea off the coast of Saudi Arabia. Farasani is spoken by roughly 20,000 people and is considered a minority language of low prestige. This study presents the beginnings of the first detailed documentation of Farasani from a functionalist perspective, including elements of its phonology and morphosyntax as well as a brief history of the islands and sociolinguistic factors affecting the Farasani speaking community.

2 Outline: The first portion of this research study introduces a concise description of the Farasani people and history of the islands in regards to its occupation by the Ottoman Empire and contact with East Africans from Eritrea. It also touches upon the stigmas held by those of other Arabic speakers on the mainland of Saudi Arabia and the current perception of the younger generation of Farasani speakers who largely undervalue their language. The second portion of this study incorporates a detailed description of Farasani phonology based on a compilation of 1000 Farasani words collected from data from native speakers. It gives details about allowable syllable structures, consonant clusters, sonority sequencing in Farasani, and a comparison of consonant phonemes with Jizani Arabic, a geographically and characteristically similar dialect to Farasani, and Modern Standard Arabic, respectively. Finally, this study provides a functionalist description of Farasani's morphosyntax, specifically discussing the major word classes and morphological typologies in Farasani. Additionally, verb phrase operations, word order, the alignment system, and multi-clause constructions are discussed.

3 Implications: This investigation into the basic phonology and morphosyntax of Farasani is an important first step towards the continued documentation of this understudied and under documented language. Though the current scope of this project is descriptive, the data and generalizations made will be interesting those working within generative, comparative, and historical frameworks.