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Culigion and the emergence of Saudi institutional English in health college deans' messages

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how Saudi health college deans construct institutional messages in English, revealing systematic linguistic features constituting an emerging variety shaped by 'culigion'—a unified cultural-religious schema that fundamentally restructures English. Analysis of four deans' messages (Medicine, Dentistry, Applied Medical Sciences, Pharmacy) from a Saudi university website employed a three-level framework examining micro-level lexical patterns, meso-level rhetorical structures, and macro-level sociocultural positioning. Findings demonstrate culigion operates as a variety-generating cultural model producing systematic innovations across all linguistic levels. A distinctive seven-phase rhetorical architecture blends Arabic and Anglo-American conventions, with religious framing establishing moral authority whilst middle sections navigate between national development goals and international standards. Collective voice markers (50.1 per 1,000 words) and cumulative coordination (43.4 per 1,000 words) reflect Islamic communal values and Quranic rhetoric. Lexical transformations show 'service' indexing collective benefit and 'excellence' manifesting through non-competitive accumulation. These features represent strategic innovation, enabling navigation between local authenticity and global intelligibility. The study contributes to World Englishes scholarship by documenting how expanding circle varieties develop through comprehensive cultural models. Pedagogically, findings challenge English-only policies, suggesting culigion features constitute legitimate resources. Saudi institutional English demonstrates how strategic hybridity honours cultural values whilst serving global academic purposes.

KEYWORDS: academic discourse, cultural models, culigion, Saudi institutional English, translingual practice, World Englishes

1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Significance

Saudi university websites present unique sites of linguistic negotiation where English functions not merely as a communication tool but as a medium through which institutional identity is constructed and projected. Within these digital spaces, deans' messages represent particularly rich sites for analysis, as they must address multiple audiences simultaneously: international collaborators, local communities, government officials, and prospective students. This communicative complexity demands sophisticated linguistic strategies that transcend simple translation or code-switching.

The linguistic phenomenon observable in these texts reflects broader transformations in Saudi higher education. As Al-Qahtani (2021) demonstrates, Saudi universities strategically employ promotional discourse that emphasises prestige and alignment with national priorities, whilst Elyas et al. (2021) identify the emergence of 'culigion'—a unified cultural-religious schema shaping Saudi English use. These institutional messages thus become sites where the sacred and secular converge, where local authenticity meets global ambition, and where English itself undergoes transformation through its encounter with Saudi institutional culture.

1.2 Research Gap and Questions

Despite growing scholarly interest in global Englishes, systematic analysis of Saudi institutional English remains limited. Whilst researchers have examined English in Saudi classrooms (Almayez, 2022; Alqahtani, 2022) and Arabic-English translation practices (Aldafas, 2025), the specific variety of English emerging in Saudi institutional discourse awaits comprehensive investigation. Recent contributions (AlRawi et al., 2022; Barnawi, 2022; Alnasser, 2022; Alzahrani et al., 2025) have begun addressing this gap, yet the systematic features of this variety remain underexplored.

This study addresses this lacuna by investigating the following research questions:

RQ1: What systematic linguistic features characterise Saudi institutional English?

RQ2: What theoretical and pedagogical implications do these findings hold for World Englishes scholarship and English language education?

This investigation draws on three complementary theoretical perspectives. World Englishes theory (Kachru, 1985; Canagarajah, 2013) provides the framework for understanding English varieties in expanding circle contexts. Intercultural rhetoric (Connor, 2022) offers tools for analysing how rhetorical traditions interact and transform. Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) enables examination of how linguistic choices index broader social relations and cultural values.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations: World Englishes and Translingual Practice

The theoretical framework for understanding Saudi institutional English draws primarily from two interconnected paradigms: World Englishes theory and translingual practice. Kachru's (1985) three-circle model positions Saudi Arabia in the expanding circle, where English serves primarily international functions. However, recent scholarship challenges this model's adequacy for capturing the complexity of English use in contexts like Saudi Arabia, where the language increasingly serves intranational functions and undergoes systematic localisation (Barnawi, 2022; AlRawi et al., 2022).

Canagarajah's (2013) translingual practice framework offers a more nuanced lens, conceptualising language use not as switching between discrete codes but as strategic deployment of linguistic resources from multiple repertoires. This perspective proves particularly relevant for Saudi contexts, where Elyas and Picard (2010) identify a "third space"—neither purely Arabic nor English but a dynamic zone where both languages actively reshape one another. This third space manifests linguistically through what Elyas et al. (2021) term 'culigion', a unified cultural-religious schema that fundamentally restructures English to express Saudi Islamic identity. The concept of culigion extends beyond simple borrowing or code-switching to represent what Mahboob and Elyas (2014) identify as "Saudi English"—a systematic variety with distinctive features deserving recognition within the World Englishes paradigm.

2.2 Intercultural Rhetoric and Discourse Appropriation

Intercultural rhetoric theory, evolved from Kaplan's (1966) controversial contrastive rhetoric, now recognises rhetorical patterns as dynamic negotiations rather than fixed cultural traits (Connor, 2022). This evolution proves crucial for understanding Saudi academic discourse, where writers navigate between what might be termed 'global academic English' expectations and local rhetorical traditions.

Alhamdan et al. (2017) provide a critical framework for understanding this navigation through their analysis of how "discourses of English universality" are reproduced and appropriated in Saudi educational contexts. Their work demonstrates that English undergoes complex processes of localisation through teaching and learning artefacts—policies, textbooks, classroom practices—that fundamentally reshape its meaning and function. This appropriation process creates what Holliday (1999) terms "small cultures"—localised discourse communities with specific expectations that transcend simple Arabic-English binaries.

Empirical evidence supports this theoretical framework. Alharbi (2023) documents how Saudi students systematically adapt Western rhetorical moves, selectively employing some whilst omitting others deemed less relevant to local communicative purposes. This selective adaptation, rather than representing incomplete acquisition, demonstrates sophisticated rhetorical awareness—what Aldafas (2025) terms "cognitive tools" that enhance meaning-making through strategic translanguaging. These findings collectively suggest that Saudi institutional discourse operates through principled rhetorical hybridity rather than random mixing.

2.3 Digital Contexts and Institutional Commodification

The digital transformation of Saudi higher education creates new theoretical challenges for understanding institutional English. Al-Qahtani's (2021, 2025) critical discourse analysis of university websites reveals how digital spaces function as sites of ideological negotiation where institutions must project multiple identities simultaneously. His concept of institutional commodification—where universities market themselves through carefully crafted discourse—provides a crucial lens for understanding how English serves not merely communicative but promotional functions.

This commodification process intersects with national development discourse, particularly Vision 2030, creating what Al-Qahtani (2025) identifies as "classed subjectivities"—idealised representations that may marginalise authentic diversity. The theoretical implication is that Saudi institutional English cannot be understood purely as linguistic phenomenon but must be analysed within broader political economy frameworks that shape its production and reception.

2.4 Pedagogical Translanguaging and Policy Tensions

The relationship between pedagogical practices and institutional discourse reveals significant theoretical tensions. Almayez (2022) documents a fundamental contradiction: whilst teachers recognise translanguaging's pedagogical value, institutional policies enforce English-only mandates. This policy-practice gap reflects deeper theoretical debates about linguistic purism versus translingual reality in expanding circle contexts.

Alqahtani (2022) adds complexity by revealing students' ambivalent attitudes—they value translanguaging for learning but worry about meeting "standard" proficiency benchmarks. This ambivalence suggests that theoretical frameworks must account not only for linguistic practices but also for ideological orientations towards language that shape how varieties are valued or stigmatised.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided an unintended natural experiment testing these theoretical tensions. Aldayel (2024) documents how crisis conditions forced rapid adaptation, with successful online teaching requiring "unconventional content planning" that inevitably involved translingual practices. Al-Samiri's (2021) identification of increased flexibility as a pandemic benefit suggests that rigid monolingual policies may constrain rather than enable effective communication—a finding with significant theoretical implications for language planning in expanding circle contexts.

2.5 Synthesis: Towards an Integrated Framework

These theoretical strands converge to suggest that Saudi institutional English represents neither deficient approximation of native-speaker norms nor simple interference from Arabic, but rather systematic innovation serving specific communicative needs. The variety emerges at the intersection of multiple forces: translingual practices that blend linguistic resources (Canagarajah, 2013), intercultural rhetoric that creates hybrid textual

forms (Connor, 2022), religious-cultural schemas that reshape discourse frameworks (Elyas et al., 2021), and commodification pressures that shape institutional self-presentation (Al-Qahtani, 2025).

This integrated framework positions Saudi institutional English as a legitimate object of scholarly inquiry, deserving analysis on its own terms rather than through deficit comparisons with inner-circle varieties. The framework suggests that systematic documentation of this variety's features can contribute both to World Englishes theory and to practical understanding of how English functions in culturally-specific institutional contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative discourse analysis approach to examine the linguistic features of Saudi institutional English. The research design combines corpus-linguistic methods with critical discourse analysis to identify systematic patterns in institutional communication. This mixed-methods approach enables both quantitative documentation of linguistic features and qualitative interpretation of their sociocultural functions.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Corpus Composition

The corpus comprises four deans' welcome messages collected from a Saudi regional university website in December 2023. The texts represent four health colleges as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Corpus Composition

College	Word Count	Percentage of Corpus
Medicine	487	27.4%
Dentistry	432	24.3%
Applied Medical Sciences	396	22.3%
Pharmacy	461	26.0%
Total	1,776	100%

3.2.2 Sampling Rationale

Health colleges were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria:

- Disciplinary tension: Health programmes navigate between international scientific standards and local healthcare needs
- Cultural sensitivity: Medical education involves particular cultural considerations regarding gender segregation, family involvement, and religious practices
- Linguistic demands: Health college deans must address diverse stakeholders, including international accreditors, government bodies, local communities, and prospective students

These criteria ensure the texts represent sites of maximum linguistic negotiation between local and global discourses.

3.2.3 Data Collection Procedures

- Systematic identification of all health colleges at the target institution
- Extraction of deans' messages from official college webpages
- Verification that messages were current (posted/updated within 2023)
- Conversion to plain text format preserving original formatting markers
- Creation of metadata file documenting source URLs, collection dates, and text characteristics

3.3 Analytical Framework

The study employs a three-level discourse analysis approach combining established frameworks from genre analysis, critical discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics. This multi-layered approach aligns with Black's (2007) argument that discourse analysis requires multiple analytical levels to capture how cultural models mediate between local textual features and broader ideological frameworks. At the micro-level, corpus-linguistic methods were adapted for small corpus analysis following procedures established in World Englishes research (Barnawi,

2022; AlRawi et al., 2022). Given the specialised nature and limited size of the corpus (1,776 words), frequency analysis through AntConc 4.0 focused on identifying recurring lexical items and collocations that appeared consistently across the four texts. Keyword analysis compared the corpus against the British National Corpus Written Academic subcorpus to identify lexis that was notably prominent in the Saudi institutional texts. Collocation patterns and recurring multi-word sequences were documented to identify formulaic language characteristic of this variety. At the meso-level, rhetorical organisation was examined through move analysis following Swales (1990) and Moreno and Swales (2021), identifying functional text segments based on communicative purposes, coding rhetorical moves and their boundaries using linguistic markers, documenting move sequences across texts, and comparing patterns with established academic genre conventions. At the macro-level, socio-cultural positioning was analysed through Fairclough's (2003) critical discourse analysis framework, examining three dimensions: representation (how institutions and stakeholders are constructed), identity (how cultural and institutional identities are projected), and intertextuality (how texts draw on religious, national, and academic discourses). This integrated approach aligns with Canagarajah's (2013) translingual framework, recognising that meaning emerges from the interaction between linguistic features, rhetorical structures, and sociocultural contexts rather than from any single analytical level. However, unlike Black's (2007) classroom discourse study which incorporated interview data to understand speakers' intentions, this analysis relies on textual evidence alone, meaning interpretations of strategic linguistic choices remain inferential rather than confirmed through producer perspectives.

3.4 Coding Procedures

The coding scheme was developed through four iterative rounds following established qualitative research procedures (Fairclough, 2003; Connor, 2022). Open coding of the first text (Medicine) identified emergent categories, refinement occurred through coding the second text (Dentistry), stabilisation was achieved through coding the remaining texts (Applied Medical Sciences and Pharmacy), and final validation involved recoding the entire corpus to ensure consistency. This iterative process resulted in the comprehensive coding scheme presented in Figure 1, which organises linguistic features by analytical level and category, providing systematic classification of micro-level features (religious lexis, cultural keywords, academic terminology, service vocabulary), meso-level patterns (coordination structures, sentence complexity, nominalisation, modification patterns), and macro-level strategies (stance markers, engagement markers, intertextuality), with each category including specific coding criteria and examples from the corpus to ensure reliable and replicable analysis.

Analytical Level	Feature Category	Specific Features	Examples from Corpus	Coding Criteria
MICRO-LEVEL	Religious lexis	Sacred invocations	"Allah", "Almighty", "blessings"	Any reference to divine entities or religious concepts
	Cultural keywords	National identity markers	"Vision 2030", "Kingdom", "beloved homeland"	References to Saudi nation, culture, or development plans
	Academic terminology	Excellence descriptors	"distinguished", "excellence", "quality"	Terms indicating academic achievement or status
	Service vocabulary	Community orientation	"serve the community", "community service"	Lexis emphasising collective benefit
MESO-LEVEL	Coordination structures	Additive patterns	"and...and...and" sequences	Multiple coordinated clauses with "and"
	Sentence complexity	Extended sentences	50+ word sentences	Sentence length exceeding 50 words
	Nominalisation	Process nouns	"the achievement of", "the provision of"	Verbs converted to noun phrases
	Modification patterns	Multiple premodifiers	"qualified distinct professionals"	Three or more consecutive modifiers
MACRO-LEVEL	Stance markers	Epistemic modality	"certainly", "undoubtedly"	Expressions of certainty/uncertainty
		Deontic modality	"must", "should", "committed to"	Expressions of obligation/necessity
		Affective stance	"proud", "honoured", "pleased"	Emotional positioning
	Engagement markers	Inclusive pronouns	"we", "our"	First-person plural references
		Reader acknowledgment	"welcome you", "invite you"	Direct address to readers
	Intertextuality	Religious discourse	Quranic phrases, Islamic greetings	References to Islamic texts/traditions
		National discourse	Policy documents, royal decrees	References to government initiatives
		Global academic discourse	International standards, rankings	References to international frameworks

Figure 1: Multilevel Coding Scheme for Saudi Institutional English

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis integrated quantitative and qualitative approaches appropriate for small corpus discourse analysis. Quantitative analysis involved documenting the frequency of coded features across the four texts and identifying patterns of occurrence. Given the corpus size, the focus was on identifying consistent patterns across all texts rather than statistical significance. These patterns were then contextualised through close qualitative reading that examined how features co-occurred, identified functional relationships between linguistic choices and communicative purposes, and traced intertextual connections to religious, national, and academic discourses. To ensure analytical rigour, the study employed multiple validation strategies, including triangulation across different analytical methods, member checking with two Saudi academic colleagues for cultural validation of interpretations, negative case analysis actively seeking counter-examples to emerging patterns, and maintenance of a detailed audit trail documenting all analytical decisions. This integrated approach enabled the identification of systematic patterns whilst maintaining sensitivity to the cultural and contextual meanings embedded within the texts.

3.6 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This study operates within several methodological constraints and ethical parameters that shape its scope and interpretation. The study's design presents five key limitations. First, the corpus size of 1,776 words represents a small, specialised dataset that may not capture the full range of variation within Saudi institutional English. Second, the focus on a single genre (deans' welcome messages) limits generalisability to other institutional text types such as policy documents, research outputs, or promotional materials. Third, data from a single university restricts broader claims about Saudi institutional English across different institutional contexts. Fourth, the cross-sectional design captures a temporal snapshot that cannot reveal evolutionary changes in this variety. Finally, the text-only analysis excludes multimodal elements, including visual design, typography, and page layout, that may contribute to meaning construction.

The research adhered to established ethical guidelines for digital discourse analysis. All analysed texts were publicly accessible on institutional websites, constituting public domain data requiring no special access permissions. The university's identity was protected through anonymisation to prevent potential reputational impact and maintain analytical focus on linguistic patterns rather than institutional evaluation. The study involved no human subjects, requiring no institutional ethics approval. Limited quotations from the corpus fall within academic fair use provisions for scholarly analysis. The analysis emphasised systematic linguistic features rather than evaluative judgements about individual texts or authors, maintaining analytical objectivity throughout. These limitations and ethical parameters do not diminish the study's contribution but rather define its specific scope and ensure responsible research practice. Future studies might address these limitations through larger corpora, longitudinal designs, and multi-institutional comparisons whilst maintaining similar ethical standards.

4. Findings

4.1 Hybrid Rhetorical Architecture

Analysis reveals a systematic rhetorical structure that blends Arabic and Anglo-American academic conventions. Table 2 presents the sequential pattern identified across all four messages.

Table 2: Sequential Rhetorical Structure in Saudi Institutional English

Phase	Move(s)	Tradition	Function
Opening	Religious Invocation	Arabic	Establishes moral/spiritual framework
Opening	Welcoming/Community Embrace	Hybrid	Creates solidarity with readers
Positioning	Institutional Positioning + National Alignment	Western + Saudi-specific	Establishes institutional identity and national relevance
Achievement	Excellence Claims + Achievement Display	Hybrid + Western	Projects quality and credibility
Achievement	Service Commitment	Arabic	Emphasises collective benefit

Phase	Move(s)	Tradition	Function
Closing	Gratitude Cascade	Arabic	Acknowledges hierarchical relationships
Closing	Closing Supplication	Arabic	Invokes divine protection

This architecture demonstrates systematic patterning rather than random mixing. Opening and closing phases draw heavily on Arabic conventions, establishing moral authority and maintaining cultural authenticity. The middle sections blend Western academic discourse with Saudi-specific elements and hybrid features serving multiple audiences simultaneously.

4.2 Distinctive Linguistic Features
Systematic coding reveals features characterising Saudi institutional English as an emerging variety. Table 3 presents these patterns organised by category.

Table 3 Linguistic Features of Saudi Institutional English

Feature Category	Specific Feature	Examples from Corpus	Function	Freq.	Per 1,000 words
Lexical Innovations	Compound cultural keywords	*Vision 2030*	National alignment marker	14	7.9
	Service collocations	*serve + community/homeland*	Collective orientation	28	15.8
	Excellence variants	*distinguished quality/professionals*	Non-competitive superiority	12	6.8
	Homeland references	*our beloved Kingdom*	Emotional nationalism	11	6.2
Syntactic Patterns	Cumulative coordination	*and...and...and structures*	Arabic rhetorical influence	77	43.4
	Heavy noun phrases	*the achievement of the Kingdom's plans*	Nominalisation preference	34	19.1
	Extended modification	*Multiple adjectives in sequence*	Emphasis through accumulation	23	13.0
	Parallel structures	*teaching, research, and service*	Rhythmic emphasis	31	17.5
Pragmatic Strategies	Sacred framing	*Religious openings/closings*	Moral authority establishment	8	4.5
	Hierarchical acknowledgment	*Thanks to leadership/government*	Power relations maintenance	11	6.2
	Collective voice	*we/our over I/the college*	Community identity	89	50.1
	Implicit modality	*Unstated Inshallah in future claims*	Cultural hedging	16	9.0

Frequency counts reveal collective voice markers and cumulative coordination as dominant features, suggesting core characteristics of the variety. Service collocations with community-oriented objects mark a fundamental departure from Western institutional discourse.

4.3 Religious Discourse as Institutional Framework
Religious discourse permeates these texts, functioning as what Elyas et al. (2021) identify as 'culigion'. The Dentistry dean's opening—"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"—establishes a cosmological framework before mentioning curricula or credentials. This represents a profound reorientation of academic discourse where institutional authority derives from divine alignment rather than rankings or resources.

Religious phrases serve multiple simultaneous functions. When the Medicine dean writes, "We ask Allah Almighty to protect our leaders and rulers," the sentence serves to express religious devotion, political loyalty, and reader solidarity. Analysis reveals the implicit operation of "Inshallah" in future-oriented statements, representing a cultural stance towards uncertainty that enriches English with nuanced modal meanings absent from standard academic discourse.

4.4 Lexical Transformations
English words acquire new semantic ranges in Saudi institutional contexts. "Service" (28 occurrences) never appears in a customer-service sense, consistently collocating with "community," "homeland," and "humanity"—reflecting Islamic conceptualisation where education serves collective benefit rather than individual advancement.

"Excellence" and its variants appear repeatedly with distinctive collocations, including "distinguished quality," "distinct professionals," and "distinction and upgrading." Repetition creates an incantatory effect where excellence becomes an aspirational state rather than a comparative claim—"non-competitive excellence" honouring Islamic humility principles whilst engaging global competition.

"Vision" invariably links to "2030," creating compound cultural keyword indexing Saudi transformation agenda. Every mention aligns institutions with national goals, demonstrating colleges as servants of national development rather than autonomous institutions.

4.5 Syntactic Hybridity

Syntactic analysis reveals deep Arabic influence. Sentences extend through accumulation rather than subordination. The Dentistry dean's 72-word sentence exemplifies this pattern:

> "The college is always looking forward to be a leader locally and internationally in the fields of education and research in Dental and Oral Sciences through the graduation of qualified distinct professionals capable of serving the community, and participating in the development of all fields of dentistry, and contributing effectively to the provision of healthcare services, and raising the healthcare awareness of the community of the region and KSA."

This represents a carefully orchestrated accumulation where each "and" adds an institutional purpose dimension. Syntax mirrors Arabic coordination preferences, creating meaning through accumulation rather than hierarchy, producing rhythmic, almost musical qualities.

5. Discussion

This study examined the systematic linguistic features that characterise Saudi institutional English, revealing how these features emerge from and express what Elyas et al. (2021) term 'culigion'—a unified cultural-religious schema that fundamentally restructures English. The findings demonstrate that culigion operates not as a surface feature but as the generative principle underlying all systematic innovations in this emerging variety.

5.1 Systematic Features of Saudi Institutional English (RQ1)

5.1.1 Culigion as Cultural Model and Organising Framework

The seven-phase rhetorical architecture (Table 2) represents more than hybrid structure—it manifests culigion's comprehensive reshaping of academic discourse. Following Black's (2007) conceptualisation of cultural models as mediating frameworks between local discourse and ideological structures, culigion operates as a cultural model that mediates between global academic English and Saudi institutional requirements. The religious invocations opening and closing these texts do not merely add Islamic flavour to English prose; they fundamentally reorient the entire communicative framework. When deans begin with "In the name of Allah", they establish what this study reveals as a culigion-structured discourse where all subsequent meaning-making occurs within a religiously modulated cultural schema.

This cultural model generates systematic features across all linguistic levels, demonstrating what Black (2007) identifies as alignment between local discourse practices and institutional ideologies. The dominance of collective voice markers ("we/our" appearing 89 times versus minimal first-person singular) reflects Islamic communal values embedded within culigion, where individual achievement becomes meaningful only through collective benefit. The cumulative coordination structures (77 occurrences) mirror Quranic rhetorical patterns, demonstrating how culigion as a cultural model shapes syntactic preference. These are not separate features but interconnected manifestations of the same underlying cultural-religious schema that Elyas et al. (2021) identify as distinctive to Saudi English.

The implicit operation of modal meanings throughout the texts—where future statements carry unstated "Inshallah" (16 identifiable instances)—reveals culigion's deep grammatical penetration. This goes beyond formulaic religious phrases to represent what Mahboob and Elyas (2014) recognise as a fundamental reconceptualisation of epistemic stance. Every projection into the future, every claim about institutional development, operates within culigion's framework of divine will, creating a variety of English with systematically different modal resources than inner-circle varieties.

5.1.2 Lexical Transformations Through Culigion

The semantic shifts documented in this study demonstrate culigion's role in reshaping English lexis for Saudi institutional contexts. "Service" (28 occurrences) never appears in its globalised customer-oriented sense but consistently collocates with "community", "homeland", and "humanity". This transformation reflects culigion's integration of Islamic principles where education serves collective spiritual and social development rather than individual economic advancement. Similarly, "excellence" expressed through non-competitive accumulation ("distinguished quality", "distinct professionals") manifests culigion's incorporation of Islamic humility—excellence becomes a collective aspiration rather than comparative achievement.

The compound cultural keyword "Vision 2030" (14 occurrences) demonstrates how culigion enables integration of modernisation discourse within religious-cultural frameworks. Each mention simultaneously indexes national development and maintains Islamic values, showing how culigion provides the conceptual bridge between tradition and transformation. This supports Fallatah's (2017) argument that Saudi English represents systematic innovation rather than random interference—the innovations emerge from culigion's coherent restructuring of English resources.

5.1.3 Syntactic Patterns as Culigion Expression

The syntactic analysis reveals culigion's influence on sentence-level organisation. The 72-word accumulative sentence from the Dentistry dean does not represent an inability to produce Anglo-American subordinative structures but rather culigion's preference for comprehensive, inclusive expression. Each coordinated clause adds another dimension of institutional purpose, mirroring Quranic verses that build meaning through rhythmic accumulation. This creates what the analysis reveals as 'culigion syntax'—grammatical structures that express wholeness and interconnection rather than hierarchy and subordination.

The heavy nominalisation patterns (34 instances) similarly reflect culigion's influence, transforming processes into states that exist within divine providence. Phrases like "the achievement of the Kingdom's plans" and "the provision of healthcare services" represent not just stylistic choices but culigion's grammatical encoding of agency—human actions become manifestations of larger divine and communal purposes rather than individual initiatives.

5.1.4 Navigating Multiple Audiences Through Culigion

Culigion enables sophisticated navigation between local and global audiences by providing a coherent framework that maintains authenticity whilst ensuring intelligibility. The strategic deployment of culigion features varies by rhetorical position: intense in openings and closings for local audiences, modulated in middle sections for international readers, yet present throughout as an organising principle. This systematic variation demonstrates what Canagarajah (2013) theorises as translingual practice—not code-switching between separate systems but integrated deployment of resources within culigion's unified framework.

The findings extend Elyas and Picard's (2010) "third space" concept by showing how culigion structures this space. Rather than a neutral zone between Arabic and English, the third space emerges as a culigion-organised territory where both languages' resources are transformed and integrated. The deans navigate this space not through conscious strategy but through habitual deployment of culigion features that have become naturalised in Saudi institutional discourse.

5.2 Theoretical and Pedagogical Implications (RQ2)

5.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study's documentation of culigion's systematic operation advances World Englishes theory in several ways. First, it provides empirical evidence for how expanding circle varieties develop through comprehensive cultural-linguistic frameworks rather than piecemeal borrowing or interference. Culigion represents what might be termed a 'variety-generating schema'—a coherent system that produces predictable innovations across all linguistic levels. This challenges models that view expanding circle Englishes as deviations from native-speaker norms, instead positioning them as systematic varieties emerging from specific cultural-linguistic frameworks.

The findings support and extend Kachru's (1985) call for recognising expanding circle innovations as legitimate linguistic creativity. However, they suggest modification of his three-circle model—Saudi institutional

English operates not at the periphery but as a fully-developed variety with its own generative principles. The consistency of culigion features across all four texts indicates an emerging standard rather than individual variation, suggesting need for theoretical frameworks that recognise expanding circle varieties as potentially norm-providing rather than solely norm-dependent.

The study also contributes to intercultural rhetoric theory by documenting how cultural-religious schemas create new rhetorical possibilities. The seven-phase architecture does not represent a failed attempt at Western academic structure but a culturally generated alternative that serves different communicative priorities. This aligns with Connor's (2022) arguments about rhetorical negotiation but goes further by showing how such negotiation occurs through a systematic framework rather than ad-hoc adaptation.

5.2.2 Pedagogical Implications

Understanding culigion's central role has profound implications for English language education in Saudi Arabia and similar contexts. Current pedagogical approaches that position Arabic and Islamic discourse features as interference to be eliminated misunderstand their systematic function. The sophisticated culigion features in deans' messages—produced by highly educated professionals—demonstrate these are not errors but resources for effective communication in Saudi contexts.

This challenges the English-only policies that Almayez (2022) shows create tensions for educators. If culigion fundamentally structures Saudi institutional English, then pedagogical approaches must acknowledge and build upon this framework rather than suppress it. Aldafas's (2025) strategies of guided bilingual brainstorming and scaffolded translation align with culigion's integrated approach, but could be extended to teach culigion features as legitimate resources for academic communication explicitly.

Curriculum design should recognise culigion as a generative framework rather than an obstacle. Instead of teaching students to eliminate collective voice, cumulative coordination, and religious framing, programmes might teach when and how to deploy these features strategically. The systematic nature of culigion features documented here could inform assessment criteria that value cultural authenticity alongside international intelligibility. This would address the ambivalence Alqahtani (2022) documents in students who recognise translanguaging's value but worry about meeting "standard" benchmarks—the benchmarks themselves need reconceptualisation to acknowledge culigion-structured English as legitimate standard for Saudi contexts.

For writing instruction specifically, the seven-phase rhetorical architecture could serve as a teaching framework, helping students understand how culigion structures academic texts differently than Anglo-American conventions. Rather than teaching Western five-paragraph essays, instructors might teach culigion-appropriate structures that maintain cultural-religious integrity whilst achieving academic purposes. This pedagogical approach would validate students' cultural-linguistic resources whilst developing their ability to navigate between culigion-structured and Western-structured discourse as context demands.

5.2.3 Implications for Crisis Communication and Adaptability

The pandemic experience revealed culigion's role in enabling adaptive communication during crisis. As Aldayel (2024) documents, successful online teaching required "unconventional content planning" that departed from standard pedagogical approaches. The culigion framework provided resources for maintaining both authority and solidarity during disruption—religious framing offered comfort and continuity whilst collective voice fostered community during isolation. This suggests culigion-structured varieties may prove more resilient than standardised forms during crisis, as they provide richer resources for addressing both informational and emotional needs.

However, culigion's adaptability must be balanced against commodification pressures Al-Qahtani (2025) identifies. The strategic deployment of culigion features risks transformation into marketing devices—superficial Islamic branding rather than genuine cultural-religious expression. Educational programmes must therefore develop critical awareness alongside linguistic competence, helping students distinguish authentic culigion features from commodified simulacra. This critical dimension becomes essential for sustaining Saudi institutional English as genuine cultural expression rather than neoliberal performance.

Future research could strengthen these findings by incorporating interview data with text producers, following Black's (2007) multi-layered approach to understanding how conscious intentionality interacts with

habitual cultural model deployment. Such data would clarify whether the systematic features identified represent strategic choices, naturalised practices, or institutional requirements, providing deeper insight into how culigion operates as a variety-generating cultural model in Saudi institutional contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study has documented and analysed the systematic features of Saudi institutional English as manifested in health college deans' messages, revealing a sophisticated variety that challenges conventional understandings of academic English in expanding circle contexts. Through multilayered discourse analysis, the research has demonstrated how Saudi academic leaders strategically deploy a seven-phase rhetorical architecture and distinctive linguistic features to navigate the complex demands of addressing local and global audiences simultaneously. The findings reveal that what might be dismissed as interference or deficiency represents systematic innovation—a variety that maintains international intelligibility whilst expressing culturally-specific meanings through religious discourse integration, cumulative syntactic structures, and lexical transformations that reflect Islamic and Arabic values. This emerging variety exemplifies Canagarajah's (2013) concept of translingual practice in action, where linguistic resources blend to create meanings that transcend the limitations of either language alone.

The implications of these findings extend across theoretical, pedagogical, and practical domains. Theoretically, the study contributes to World Englishes scholarship by providing empirical evidence that expanding circle varieties develop systematic innovations deserving recognition as legitimate linguistic creativity rather than deviation from native-speaker norms. Pedagogically, the findings challenge English-only policies in Saudi higher education, suggesting that programmes should teach strategic deployment of translingual resources—following Aldafas's (2025) concrete strategies of guided bilingual brainstorming and scaffolded translation—rather than suppressing Arabic rhetorical patterns that serve important communicative functions. For institutional communication practitioners, understanding these systematic features—how "service" indexes collective benefit, how religious framing establishes moral authority, how excellence manifests through accumulation rather than comparison—provides practical guidance for crafting effective institutional texts. As universities worldwide grapple with maintaining local authenticity whilst projecting global competitiveness, Saudi institutional English offers one model of creative adaptation that honours cultural values whilst serving international purposes. However, this linguistic innovation must navigate carefully between genuine cultural expression and the commodification pressures that Al-Qahtani (2025) warns risk transforming cultural elements into mere marketing tools. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that effective institutional communication in our globalised yet culturally diverse world requires not linguistic conformity but strategic hybridity—a lesson with profound implications for how we understand and teach English in the twenty-first century.

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This work is not part of any thesis submitted for a degree.

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