**Cultural Adaptation Guide**

**Purpose**

This document explains how I adapted the mental health voice assistant to align with Omani Arabic dialect, values, and societal norms. The goal is to ensure every interaction feels locally grounded, emotionally respectful, and culturally appropriate.

**Dialect Accuracy**

To make the assistant feel natural and familiar, I focused on:

* Using **Omani Arabic** as the core dialect for both speech-to-text and text-to-speech.
* Allowing **code-switching** between Arabic and English, which is common in casual speech.
* Avoiding expressions or phrases that are regionally uncommon or overly formal.

I tested the transcription model (FasterWhisper) and TTS (gTTS with Arabic locale) with sample clips to validate accent handling.

**Cultural Sensitivity**

Mental health conversations require extra care, especially in a conservative, family-centered context. So, I made sure the assistant:

* Avoids taboo topics (e.g., politics, sex, drugs) by engineering safe prompts and responses.
* Includes emotionally grounded and respectful responses. For example, using expressions like:
  + "استعن بالله" (Seek help from God)
  + "إن شاء الله الأمور تتحسن" (Things will improve, God willing)
* Understands the value of family, modesty, and religious coping methods.

Where appropriate, the assistant gently integrates spiritual encouragement while still maintaining a therapeutic tone.

**Therapeutic Language Choices**

The assistant uses terms familiar to Arabic-speaking users. For example:

* Depression → الاكتئاب
* Anxiety → القلق
* Hope → الأمل

These terms verified through LLM-generated responses to ensure empathy and accuracy.

**Design Decisions**

* **Prompt Engineering**: The LLM prompt includes rules about cultural respect, religious alignment, and emotional support. It avoids judgmental tones.
* **Fallback Responses**: If the assistant is unsure, it uses polite redirection rather than hallucination.
* **Safety Flags**: Some Arabic phrases that suggest distress are monitored for escalation.

**Limitations**

* The assistant does not fully distinguish between all Gulf dialects.
* The TTS voice is Modern Standard Arabic due to tool limitations, though I use Omani phrasing.
* More local testing is needed to cover rural vs. urban speech patterns.

*As I am not a native Arabic speaker, especially not fluent in the Omani dialect, I relied on* ***ChatGPT-4o*** *and* ***FasterWhisper*** *to provide and validate Arabic phrases and cultural nuances. I reviewed and cross-checked the outputs to ensure consistency and appropriateness, but I welcome feedback from native speakers for further refinement.*