

Language Policy

Robert Kirkpatrick *Editor*

English Language Education Policy in the Middle East and North Africa

 Springer

Language Policy

Volume 13

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The last half century has witnessed an explosive shift in language diversity not unlike the Biblical story of the Tower of Babel, but involving now a rapid spread of global languages and an associated threat to small languages. The diffusion of global languages, the stampede towards English, the counter-pressures in the form of ethnic efforts to reverse or slow the process, the continued determination of nation-states to assert national identity through language, and, in an opposite direction, the greater tolerance shown to multilingualism and the increasing concern for language rights, all these are working to make the study of the nature and possibilities of language policy and planning a field of swift growth.

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Contents

Introduction: English Language Education Policy in MENA	1
Robert Kirkpatrick and Osman Z. Barnawi	
English Education Policy in Bahrain – A Review of K-12 and Higher Education Language Policy in Bahrain	9
Amir Abou-El-Kheir and Paul MacLeod	
English Education Policy at the Pre-university Stages in Egypt: Past, Present and Future Directions	33
Muhammad M. M. Abdel Latif	
English Education in Iran: From Ambivalent Policies to Paradoxical Practices	47
Ferdows Aghagolzadeh and Hossein Davari	
English Education Policy in Israel.	63
Iair G. Or and Elana Shohamy	
English Language Education Policy in Kuwait	77
Marta Maria Tryzna and Hussain Al Sharoufi	
English Language Teaching in Libya After Gaddafi	93
Abed Aloreibi and Michael D. Carey	
English Education Policy and Practice in Morocco.	115
Mohammed Errihani	
English Education Policy in Oman	133
Khalid Salim Al-Jardani	
The English Language Teaching Situation in Palestine.	147
Robert Bianchi and Anwar Hussein - Abdel Razeq	

Qatar’s English Education Policy in K-12 and Higher Education: Rapid Development, Radical Reform and Transition to a New Way Forward	171
Paul MacLeod and Amir Abou-El-Kheir	
English Education Policy in Saudi Arabia: English Language Education Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current Trends, Issues and Challenges.	199
Osman Z. Barnawi and Sajjadullah Al-Hawsawi	
Education Interrupted: English Education Policy from the Rubble in Syria	223
Rabia Hos and Halil Ibrahim Cinarbas	
English Education Policy in Turkey	235
Yasemin Kirkgöz	
English Education Policy in Tunisia, Issues of Language Policy in Post-revolution Tunisia	257
Samira Boukadi and Salah Troudi	
National Pride and the New School Model: English Language Education in Abu Dhabi, UAE	279
Fiona S. Baker	

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Introduction: English Language Education Policy in MENA

Robert Kirkpatrick and Osman Z. Barnawi

Abstract This chapter discusses some of the research perspectives—alongside issues of national language policies—and considers the need of English language ability for educational and economic goals; the impact of the increasing use of English in the region on culture identity and other languages; current English education policies and national curriculums and teacher education, pedagogies, and evaluation. While English has become a major element in the spread of political, social and educational norms as well as nurturing economic globalization, giving impetus for the study of English throughout the MENA region, this has also led to lessening of the importance of other foreign languages, such as French due to the belief in the value of English as the international language. There is also some resistance from conservative parties who fear that English education may erode traditional culture and religion. Moreover, the allocation of resources for the study of English is uneven among the various countries- partly due to the unequal economic situations and the general state of education in each country.

Keywords English language policy • Education policy • Education in MENA

1 Language Policy Research

.....policy is never simply implemented but is interpreted, mediated and recreated. This is so because the practitioners whose task is to implement the policy come with their own contexts, value system, histories and experiences. Once again interpretation is a matter of struggle, dispute and compromise as different interests get prioritized or marginalized (Bowe et al. 1992: 22).

The nature of policy in educational settings can be better realized when researchers, educators, and practitioners examine it through various levels, including historical, ideological, socio-cultural, political, economic, and institutional perspectives.

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At the same time, putting policy into practice in a given social and educational context is a matter of struggle, fears, tensions, negotiations, and resistance, owing to the various competitive interests.

The introduction to the last volume, *English Language Education Policy in Asia* (ELEPA), discussed both traditional and contemporary approaches to research in the field of language policy and planning (Kirkpatrick and Bui 2016). It was noted that while earlier approaches to language policy and planning had focused on identifying national language problems, finding a solution and assessing the success of the policy, recent researchers in the field (e.g., Ricento and Hornberger 1996; Paciotto and Delany-Barmann 2011; Canagarajah 2011; Shohamy 2006; Tollefson 2013) have taken a critical approach and are concerned with the ramifications of language policies on social justice, economic equality, identity and language endangerment (e.g., Coleman 2011). There is also now more micro-level involvement and interest in classroom practices and teacher roles (see McCarty 2002; Shohamy 2010) and the ways communities react to language education policies. There are also approaches to English education policy research that have paid close attention to “on the ground” analysis of how global, social, political and economic forces shape and reshape certain discourse communities (Davis 2014; Davis and Pyak 2015).

The chapters in this new volume, as with ELEPA, include both recent and historical research perspectives—alongside issues of national language policies—and consider the perceived need of English language ability for educational and economic goals; the impact of the increasing use of English in the region on culture identity and other languages; current English education policies and national curriculums and teacher education, pedagogies, and evaluation.

2 Globalization, Economy and English Language Spread

As discussed by Tsui and Tollefson, globalization relies on technology and English; and to keep up with these changes “all countries have been trying to ensure that they are adequately equipped with these two skills” (2007, p. 1). With this in mind, English has become an essential element in the spread of political, social and educational norms as well as nurturing economic globalization. At the same time, these elements have given a massive impetus for the study of English throughout the world, including the MENA region. English facilitates access to markets and services, aids in “managing the flow of resources” (Heller 2010, p. 103) and is considered by some governments as an accessory in the solving of social problems and poverty and even as a unifying force nation wise (Tsui and Tollefson 2007; Coleman 2011). These perceived benefits have led to many governments in the region introducing English into the curriculum at increasingly lower ages, together with a degrading of the importance of other foreign languages, due to the belief in the overarching value of English as the international language as well as the language of ‘global academic excellence’ (Sapiro 2010) and ‘corporatization of higher education institutions’ (Piller and Cho 2013).

Within higher education in many Middle Eastern countries English ability has become synonymous with success in academic disciplines and an ambitious student is often advised to gain either a degree at an overseas institution – or at least study in a university where English is the medium. Faculty members who publish in recognised English academic journals are seen as competing on the world stage: something highly valued in recruitment and promotion within tertiary instituting in the region. Governments in the Arabian Gulf countries

have, at varied levels, adopted an English medium instruction policy, imported English medium educational and training products and services, franchised international programmes, offered generous financial support and incentives to overseas institutions to establish branch campuses locally, and undertaken major initiatives worth billions of dollars to reform and internationalize their HE systems (Le Ha and Barnawi 2015, p. 4).

The usefulness of English is so accepted that parents pressure institutions to provide English education and even at preschool level successful private kindergartens offer 2–4 year olds immersion or at least bilingual English programs throughout the region. Of course it is not only national governments and locals behind the push towards English. As noted in the ELEPA volume English has been advantaged through its use in international schools, multinational companies, Hollywood movies and the internet (Appleby 2010; Heller 2010; Gray 2012; Luke 2011). Seargeant and Erling (2011) and Phillipson (2012) have noted this furtherance of English is also assisted by the USA and Britain (the British Council has centers in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestinian Territories, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE) (see also Kirkpatrick and Bui (2016) for more accounts of these issues).

Overall the success of English is closely allied with its value as a means to employability, professional mobility, social usefulness and fulfilment. With the increase of social media and the web, the growth of English as a second lingua franca in the Middle East is bound to continue into the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that the spread of English education within the MENA region has several implications. English education canacerbate social disparity due to, for instance, the ability of wealthier citizens to enrol their children in English programs from an early age. This may leave those who do not have the advantages of an English education limited in their social life and being employable in lower paying jobs than their English fluent peers. As Tollefson and Tsui (2004, p.2) note, the

Medium-of-instruction policy determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities, and which groups are disenfranchised. It is therefore a key means of power (re) distribution and social (re) construction, as well as a key arena in which political conflicts among countries and ethnolinguistic, social and political groups are realized.

Latif in this volume explains that:

the MOE needs to find more innovative policies to close the gap between English education in public and private schools on the one hand and within public schools on the other. The existence of such parallel educational systems characterized mainly by the type of English instruction they provide can create future gaps in social interaction and communication, and jobs accessibility.

In reality, however, it is quite challenging to find a balance due to diverse interests and equally diverse results, and the perceived need for English across the MENA countries has created a shadow market of English education in which hundreds of private language institutes “have opened branchesto offer around the clock English classes” (Le Ha and Barnawi 2015, p. 12), financially challenging parents, families and the society at large.

3 Weakening of Culture and Local Languages?

The Asia volume discussed the “possibility of taken-for-granted English language policies not only to weaken the vitality of local languages and cultures but to arouse linguistic conflict and confusion among parents, local communities, and children” (Kirkpatrick and Bui 2016, p. 6). However, while almost every country in Asia has a unique native language, the contexts of the countries in this volume are rather different, with Arabic as the native language of most of the population in all countries except Israel and Iran. One might expect that this dominance of Arabic language in the region would have a mitigating effect on the “hegemony” of English.

Nonetheless patterns among the MENA region emerge which are quite similar: there is still concern about the sway of English, a fear of dilution of culture, and indeed confusion among communities and educators about the usefulness of English and how and when it should be introduced and taught. Of course, as with the countries in ELEPA volume, there is also recognition of the economic advantages of developing English skills and the need for each county to compete in a global economy. There are also major differences in attitude to English within different groups (and between individuals) in each country and between each country within the region.

3.1 The Status of English in the Arabian Gulf Region

Today, “the desire to learn English as a national mission and to internationalize their HE has been clearly articulated in the Gulf countries’ strategies, educational policy reforms and initiatives” as Le Ha and Barnawi (2015, p. 4) argue. Guttenplan (2012) writes about the issues in universities in Qatar where faculty are finding media students need special classes in Arabic to bring them up to a professional level, and notes that many younger Gulf Arabs use “Arabizi”, switching between Arabic and English languages (2012). Kinninmont (interviewed in Guttenplan) finds, due to the need to use English to communicate with the massive numbers of expatriate workers, that Arabic is becoming almost a second language in the region, and that “wealthy and educated youth increasingly speak to each other in English” (2012, p. 10). In the UAE, Baker (this volume) notes that parents sometimes have problems talking with the teachers of their children (who are now taught in English medium schools).

In Saudi Arabia, Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (this volume) explain that English is a medium of instruction in most colleges and universities, especially in the sciences. However, there is resistance from conservative parties, with regard to including English in the primary school curricula, who are fearful that this may “accelerate the Westernization of Saudi society” (Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi, *ibid*).

3.2 The Status of English Language Outside the Arabian Gulf Region

Even outside of the Arabian Gulf region—where there are not the same massive numbers of expatriate workers (who often rely on English as *lingua franca*)—there are still major issues related to the increasing use and educational promotion of English. Given the fraught nature of Iran’s relationship with western powers over the last few decades, English education in Iran is complicated. Aghagolzadeh and Davari note the “ambivalence” of the state toward English and that it is perceived to some extent “as a medium of cultural invasion of the West”. Yet, at the same time English “is officially recognized as one of the two essential elements of literacy in the third millennium” (Aghagolzadeh and Davari, this volume). In Libya Ibrahim and Carey cite Youssef (2012) who suggests that Libyans display a negative attitude towards learning English, due to some anti-American feelings (this volume). When “Libyan students practice English communicatively, their peers do not take them seriously. It is most often perceived as showing off, so it is therefore socially taboo to use English in public” (Ibrahim and Carey, this volume). In Tunisia, Troudi and Boukadi discuss the debate between calls for globalization, openness, and modernity, which enhances the western languages, French and English, as languages of science and technology, on the one hand, and Arabisation, which emphasizes Arabic in order to preserve the traditional culture and identity on the other (this volume). In Israel English is widely used and almost a necessity for success in business and career. However, sections of the society have concerns about its threat to culture. Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men (but not women), are often less proficient in English than their countrymen due to an emphasis on religious subjects during their schooling. Or and Shohamy write that “Many Haredi men discover years after finishing school that they need to know English, and then take courses in order to catch up with their secular peers” (this volume).

4 English Education Policies

The Gulf region has long been suffering from high unemployment or underemployment and most have a high reliance on foreign workers (Hvidt 2013). In response Gulf region countries are, to varying degrees, attempting to change their petroleum

based economies into knowledge based economies, often with English as a key component: plans that have become even more pressing with the drop in oil prices since 2015. Massive oil money surpluses have allowed them to import highly qualified education providers and also to fund their national's tertiary study abroad: factors that are supporting growth in skill levels in English. Of course money alone cannot guarantee educational progress and the variety of outcomes between the Gulf countries are documented in the individual chapters.

The diversity among non-Gulf countries in the region is more pronounced due in part to economic pressures. Following the worldwide trend (Canagarajah 2005; Menken and Garcia 2010) many MENA countries have replaced or are replacing grammar based curricula with communicative language teaching – although this has not been fully implemented due in part to the importance of national exams which tend to be focused on grammar in most MENA countries.

4.1 Teacher Quality

In Egypt, Latif writes that “expanding and enriching in-service teacher training programmes is another requirement for successful English education in Egypt (this volume)”. And the same applies to most countries in the region—although the Gulf countries have been able to mitigate this effect due to the attractive salaries and working conditions for expatriate educators— leading to a large influx of skilled teaching faculty at all levels of education. Needless to say, the benefits of this policy are unevenly spread from country to country, and within each country.

4.2 Testing

Language testing the MENA region has long been controversial. The close relation between the successful implementation of a curriculum and washback from testing is well established. Bianchi, for instance, writes about Palestine that “revision of the *tawjihi* exam to reflect more global and authentic use of English in order to stimulate positive testing washback” (this volume). In Libya “the objective of students and educators in Libya is for students to complete their exams with the highest possible scores (Ibrahim and Carey, this volume). And Latif suggests that “classroom practices are expected to remain unchanged as long as the assessment procedures are not changed to test communicative skills” (this volume). Most national English exams throughout the region evaluate communicative ability only indirectly (a major reason that large scale proficiency exams such as IELTS include separate writing, speaking and listening components, ensuring direct evaluation of each skill). However, despite the clear advantages of more direct testing it is somewhat difficult for exam boards to add these skills to their exams due to the need for large

numbers of trained raters, special technology (in the case of listening tests), and additional time if testing speaking ability. These practical testing issues do not mean that large scale direct testing of communicative ability can never be implemented but it does mean that exam boards need to be open to innovative solutions.

5 Final Remarks

The chapters in this volume show the diversity of English education policy and outcomes and provide a current view of the tensions inherent in the implementation of language policies across the region. The mix of politics, cultures and education are absorbing for academics, and even the interested layman will find much worthy of study.

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English Education Policy in Bahrain – A Review of K-12 and Higher Education Language Policy in Bahrain

Amir Abou-El-Kheir and Paul MacLeod

Abstract The Kingdom of Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy that has a long history dating back over 5000 years. It is the only island-state in the Gulf. It is also the smallest, and has the lowest population, of all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States. Due to Bahrain's long political and trade relationship with Britain (which continue in the new globalized economy), English has been an important part of Bahrain's economic survival. As a result, English is an integral component of the Bahraini education system and is now taught from the first year of schooling. It has also become the medium of instruction in many higher education institutions in the Kingdom. This chapter examines the history of English education in Bahrain, its current developments, and what the future landscape of English language policy in Bahrain may resemble. The chapter also offer suggestions on how to address some of the language and policy challenges that Bahrain is facing. Overall, many of the English language policy decisions in Bahrain are showing signs of success in both the K-12 and higher education sectors.

Keywords Bahrain • Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) • Language policy • Education policy • English as a medium of instruction • K-12 • Higher education

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1 Introduction

1.1 Brief Overview of Bahrain's Development as a Nation

Bahrain has been a strategic location for trade since the Dilmun period more than 5000 years ago (United States. Department of State 1996). From the third to the sixth Century, the island—then known as Tylos—was part of the Persian Empire. From the sixth Century until the ascendancy of the Al Khalifa clan in 1783, it was variously under Persian, Omani and Portuguese control. A crucial point in Bahrain's development was the conversion of a majority of the population to Islam in the seventh Century (Al-Baharna 1968; Global Edge 2014). However, despite Bahrain's ancient history, the emergence of Bahrain as a nation is relatively recent. The Al Khalifa's signed the first of a number of treaties establishing the peaceful relationship between Bahrain and Britain in 1820 (Al-Baharna 1968). Bahrain became a British protectorate in 1861 and remained that way until independence in 1971 (Commins 2012, p.103).

1.2 Current Demographics and Political Situation

Bahrain's current political situation is profoundly influenced by the historical factors surrounding the consolidation of the Al Khalifa's dynastic rule in the nineteenth century. The Al Khalifa's maintained a feudal system whereby the Sunni sheikhs, and related tribes who were encouraged to immigrate to Bahrain, were given dominion over (and collected taxes and tribute from) the indigenous Sh'ias who worked in the date palm plantations and other agrarian roles. This power and status imbalance – which is in stark contrast to the far more homogeneous nature of society in the other Gulf States– is one of the root causes of the political strife that periodically erupts in modern Bahrain (Commins 2012, p.103).

Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy; it converted from Emirate to Kingdom in 2002. The population of approximately 1,281,332 is predominately Muslim. 46 % of the population is Bahraini with 54 % non-Bahraini. (CIA Factbook, Bahrain 2013).

1.3 Bahrain's English Education Policy

English is used extensively in Bahrain. All students are required to learn English, which is taught throughout primary, intermediate, and secondary schools, and is offered at many institutions of higher learning. The government of Bahrain clearly recognizes that having students learn English is extremely beneficial to its economy and its future success.

1.3.1 K-12

Bahrainis are introduced to English in their first year of schooling, which they start when they are 6 or 7 years old (Rixon 2013, p. 15). This is a fairly recent policy since English was first taught at the primary level (3rd grade) in 2000 (Al-Sulaitai and Ghani 2001, p. 20). Before English was introduced, at the primary level, a pilot was performed in 1996/1997 to see if English could successfully be included in primary and intermediate schools (Al-Sulaitai and Ghani 2001, p. 86). After its success, English was formally introduced. Children at the primary level are taught a range of skills including, but not limited to, writing, reading, listening, identifying detail, skimming, understanding dialogues, and using grammar. At the end of the primary cycle (6th grade), students are tested on these skills (Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training [QAAET] 2012, p. 47). Many Bahraini parents, those who are able to afford it, send their children to private language institutes so they can improve their English skills; this is a lucrative business in Bahrain (Rixon 2013, p. 66).

English education continues for students at the intermediate and secondary levels. Along with Arabic, mathematics and science, English has been described as one of “the four core subject areas” for students in secondary schools (QAAET 2012, p. 32). At the secondary level, English concepts are reinforced and students are introduced to more difficult texts. In theory, this system should prepare high school leaving Bahrainis for post- secondary studies, but in practice, high school students are often not well prepared and lack the proper training for university studies (QAAET 2012). Whatever the causes, the general lack of preparation of Baharaini students for higher education and the workplace coupled with low scores on both national exams and international tests (e.g., TIMSS), is a key driver of ongoing educational reform in the Kingdom (QAAET 2012).

1.3.2 Higher Education

At many universities and other institutions of higher learning in Bahrain, Arabic is the official language. Nevertheless, many technical and medical colleges have English as their official language (QAAET 2010). As a result, students without the required English skills to enter these programs tend to gravitate toward the humanities. The majority of Bahrainis choose to study education, humanities and social sciences (60 %) as opposed to medicine, science, engineering, and other technical subjects (25.1 %) (World Bank 2008). The University of Bahrain requires incoming students who have scored lower than 90 % in high school English classes to take a semester long English orientation course; however, university staff members have assessed this course as inadequate (QAAET 2010) For the sake of the economic development of the country, Bahrainis– in general– need to acquire better English skills.

2 The Development of Bahrain's K-12 System

2.1 *Early Development*

2.1.1 **Beginnings to 1933**

As with most countries in the Middle East, the Kuttab or Koranic school were the only educational option for centuries. Shirawi (1987) notes that the records of the early development of education in Bahrain are both incomplete and contradictory.¹ What is agreed upon is that Bahrain's K-12 system started much earlier than in the other Gulf States. From there, differences arise. The government of Bahrain maintains that a group of merchants and prominent citizens known as the "Education Committee" opened the first school, Al-Hidaya Al-Khalifia School for Boys in 1919 (Bahrain, MOE n.d.). This is technically the start of the public school system in Bahrain. However, other sources (Shirawi 1987; Al-Tajir 1982) indicate that the first school established in Bahrain was under the auspices of the Arabian Mission of the American Dutch Reform Church which offered instruction for girls and boys.²

The early development of K-12 schooling in Bahrain (roughly from 1892 to 1930), was marked by the same sectarian divisions, and other conflicts, that persist today. Shias refused to participate in, or allow their children to attend, school taught by Sunnis. The Education Committee opened a second boy's school in 1926. A girl's school was opened in 1928 despite the strong protest of religious leaders. Eventually, in the 1929–1930 school year, a boy's school (the fourth school in Bahrain) was opened for Shia students. A separate Education committee comprised of Shias was formed to run the school. The government subsidized all of these schools to various degrees. Finally, as the two education committees weakened under the stress of internal conflict and government pressure, the government assumed full control of the Education Committee schools in 1930 (Shirawi 1987). However, the Shia schools were still separate. Shia leaders strongly opposed the amalgamation of schools and withdrew their children in protest when this was initially attempted in 1930. After several years of government insistence, all public schools were finally amalgamated under government control in 1933. The start of a modern public school system in Bahrain then dates from the initial takeover of the Sunni Education Committee Schools (Bahrain, MOE n.d.) or the amalgamation of all schools under government control (Al Shirawi 1987).

¹This historical summary depends heavily on Shirawi's work as the original sources she used were unavailable to the current researchers.

²It should be noted however, that the Al Hidayah school was the first school opened by Bahrainis for Bahrainis.

2.1.2 1933–1955 A Period of Growth

During this time, the number of schools and pupils expanded. Village schools were opened starting in 1935 and two technical classes were begun in 1936, which eventually grew in to a technical college. By 1939, the number of students in Bahraini schools reached 1589, nearly triple the number of students in 1930 (Al Shirawi 1987). In 1940, the first secondary school in Bahrain was established in Manama. Its curriculum emphasised the teaching of English language skills even though Arabic remained as the primary language of instruction (Al Shirawi 1987, p. 71–72). Growth of schools continued despite the problems of supplies caused by World War 2 and by a chronic lack of qualified Bahraini teachers. In 1945, the first Bahraini Director of Schools, Ahmed Omran was appointed head of Schools for Boys. By 1947, the education system had expanded to 13 boys' schools with 1750 boys, staffed by 82 teachers while 5 girls' schools, housed 1288 girls, taught by 65 teachers. Just 3 years later, in 1950, the number of male student had jumped to 3282 boys while the number of female students showed a more modest increase to 1763. There was a phenomenal increase in student numbers between 1950 and 1955. By 1955, the number of boys attending school had almost doubled again to 7500 boys in 24 schools with 314 teachers. Similarly, the number of girls attending school nearly doubled to 3386 girls in 11 schools with 125 teachers. (Al Shirawi 1987, p. 79–82).

2.1.3 1956–1986: Further Growth and reform

From the late 1930's through the 1960's, the issues plaguing the Bahraini K-12 system remained constant: (1) Difficulty dealing with the huge expansion of the school system over a relatively short period of time.; (2) The rapid expansion led to a shortage of qualified Bahraini teachers and difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified foreign teachers; (3) Lack of finances and (4) Inadequate school buildings. To remedy this situation, evening training classes featuring English and fundamentals of pedagogy, among other subjects, began in 1951. The British Council also started offering evening English classes and periodic teaching workshops during this time. In addition, the government began sending selected teachers for training both within the MENA region and beyond.

By 1956, the Bahraini education system had grown dramatically, but it had also become fragmented with different directors for the boys', girls' and technical schools. They also followed different imported systems with Infant (primary) schools following the Syrian or Lebanese curriculum; the boy's schools' the Egyptian curriculum; the girls' schools the Lebanese curriculum and the technical schools a combination of British and Egyptian curricula modified for the local context. In order to run this somewhat fragmented system more efficiently, an Education Council was established and the systems were officially integrated in 1958 (Shirawi 1987). In the 1960s, the focus shifted to developing secondary education. In 1962, total students enrolled in schools rose to over 23,000. To help alleviate the ever-growing shortage of teachers, two teacher training colleges were opened: one for

men in 1966; one for women in 1967. English language studies were part of the core curriculum for both these colleges.

By independence in 1971, the total number of students reached over 50,000 (Nahkleh 1976 as cited in Pandya 2006, p.56). In 1974 and 1975 new laws were passed making schooling to the end of middle school both free and compulsory for all Bahrainis, which again increased enrollment. During this time, oil prices rose sharply and a program of expansion and new school construction and curriculum reform was instituted. In the early 1980s reforms were made to the secondary system to better align graduates' skills with industry needs. In 1986, the total number of enrolled students reached 85,867 or 43, 987 males; 41,880 females (Shirawi 1987).

2.1.4 1987–Present

In the mid-1980s another round of education reform was undertaken, this time with the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) and Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALESCO) consultation. A two semester system was adopted and the secondary schooling stream was divided into several streams with a focus on technological, vocational and scientific subjects (Shirawi 1987). Growth of student population slowed during this period: from 1991 to 1999, the number of students rose from just over 100,000 to nearly 130,000 (Al-Sulaiti and Abdul Ghani 2001). From 2000 to 2013 student numbers stayed constant at around 130,000 (Bahrain, MOE 2009).

At the end of the twentieth Century, the structure of Bahrain's education system was divided into four parts: Cycle 1, ages 6–8 and Cycle 2, ages 9–11 are primary; Cycle 3, ages 12–14 is Basic (Intermediate) and Secondary school (not named as a Cycle), is ages 15–17. The system has remained in a similar format from then until the present day (Al-Sulaiti and Abdul Ghani 2001; The Report 2010). While English education is a priority for Bahrain, as it strives to develop a knowledge economy and to expand its role as a regional and international hub for banking and other services, the rhetoric of the strategic plans (Economic Vision, 2030; various reports to UNESCO, 2001, 2011; the King's Project on E-learning) emphasize student preparation for work; the importance of Arabic and Islamic values, the necessity of good citizenship and loyalty to the King and the need to improve information technology skills. English is, by default, under the category of necessary skills for success. The reasons for this are discussed in the next section.

2.2 Limitations and Disadvantages of Bahrain's K-12 Policy Choices

Unfortunately, as noted at the end of the previous section, while the importance of a high-functioning education system is a key aspect of the Bahrain 2030 Economic Vision, English education policy is not separately or explicitly discussed in the

policy documents surrounding the Bahrain 2030 Economic Vision or in the myriad of documents explored during extensive research for the preparation of this chapter. Due to the rhetoric around other aspects of the curriculum it might seem as though English is not currently an area of concern for the MOE in Bahrain.

There are a variety of explanations for this seeming omission. It may not be emphasized in policy documents as Bahrain (with close ties to Britain since the 1820s) has long used English—along with a variety of other languages—to facilitate trade and thus it is deemed unnecessary to elaborate a strategy. It may also be the case that it is politically expedient to emphasize the teaching of Arabic and Islamic studies rather than English.

Nevertheless, English education policy is a concern as evidenced by the emphasis Bahrain's MOE has placed on English in teacher training programs (Haslam 2011) and the move to start teaching English from Grade 1. The Bahrain Teacher's College (BTC) is taught by bilingual Arabic/English professors, and requires completion of a Foundation year (of which English is the core component) for students who are unable to meet the GPA entry requirements for English (Haslam 2011; BTC 2013). The disadvantage of this lack of written policy on English language for K-12 students is that it contributes to the crisis of education that Bahrain – along with most of the other Gulf States—is facing: years of development and reform has yielded a system wherein its young people are not prepared for the challenges of higher education and meaningful private sector employment. A significant part of this under-preparedness is the lack of high level English skills needed for interacting effectively with a largely expatriate workforce and for study in technology and science-related fields and medicine which are taught in English at the tertiary level.

The education system in Bahrain, and the country as a whole, is facing challenges that are historical and long-standing. Bahrain is facing simmering conflicts between the minority ruling Sunnis and the majority Shia population as it has for generations (Commins 2012). Similarly, the same problems identified in the K-12 system in the 1950s (lack of resources, shortage of qualified teachers, high drop-out rates) still plague the system today (Commins 2012). Expansion pressures may have eased, resulting in a reduced need for expatriate teachers. Regrettably, as Kapiszewski (2000) notes, graduates of the teacher's college at the University of Bahrain were employed mainly in the public education system and were not well trained enough to be employed at private schools contributed to an unemployment problem, which is particularly acute among the young and highly educated. Foreign teachers still dominate the teaching profession in Bahrain in areas such as information technology, science and English. This chronic problem was one of the driving forces behind the reform of teaching training in the Kingdom (Bahrain, MOE 2012).

In terms of English language education, Bahrain needed a reform plan that would address the shortcomings in the K-12 system. As will be discussed, in the strengths section below, Bahrain has implemented—and stayed with—a long-term education reform initiative.

2.3 *The Strengths of Bahrain's K-12 System*

As the historical overview shows, Bahrain's K-12 system was established much earlier than anywhere else in the Gulf. Although the expansion was relatively rapid, in Gulf terms, its development was quite slow as it grew over several decades, compared to the rapid expansion of the K-12 systems in neighboring countries such as Qatar and the UAE. As such, Bahrain has been able to maintain a more stable system and avoid ongoing cycles of radical reform. Further, it was one of the first Gulf States to integrate girls' schooling into the system and educates girls and boys equally. In addition, the decision was made to maintain Arabic as the medium of instruction in the K-12 system which avoided much of the difficulties and controversies that have troubled the UAE and Qatar in their attempts to introduce English as the medium of instruction in the K-12 system.

The emphasis on vocational and technical education at the secondary level has helped a portion of the local populace choose an option in secondary school that better fits their needs that allows them to avoid exhausting time attempting a university education, which they currently lack make them successful at the tertiary level. These are weak positives to be noted as strengths.

Despite its much earlier start, Bahrain is still burdened with an education system that is not adequately preparing its young people for success in higher education and the workforce in the twenty-first century (Deloitte, 2013; Kapiszewski 2000; Bahrain, MOE 2008; World Bank 2008). A result of this situation is that the major strength of the Bahrain K-12 system is, ironically, the ongoing reform process. Beginning with the Education Law of 2005 and continuing with the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 in 2008, education reform in Bahrain has been holistic, which has allowed them to avoid the never-ending cycle of new reforms, previously mentioned, that have resulted in many of its Gulf neighbors and other school systems around the world (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014; Bishop and Mulford 1999).

The National Education Reform Initiative (NERI) was launched in 2008 as part of the Bahrain 2030 Economic Plan. The first four projects launched in 2008 were: 1. The opening of the Bahrain Teachers College (BTC); 2. A school improvement programme –first implemented at Umm Kalthoom Intermediate Girls School; 3. the official opening of the new Bahrain Polytechnic (BPT) and establishment of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (Baby 2008; QAAET 2012). As noted, the BTC is part of an effort to improve K-12 teaching in the Kingdom and has a strong commitment to ongoing teacher professional development as well as initial teacher training. Teachers in Bahrain's K-12 system have to undergo 90 h of MOE approved professional development per year as the government strives to raise standards (Haslam 2011).

The QAAET's mandate is to review and report on education providers at all levels and to monitor National examinations. Work is ongoing on a National Qualifications Framework, and the development of a National Curriculum is ongoing. The QAAET has now reviewed all schools in the Kingdom and has begun the

second round of evaluations. While some schools have regressed, a higher percentage of schools are being rated outstanding based on a scale of Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory, and Inadequate. Schools that score at the Inadequate level develop an improvement plan in concert with the QAAET and are subject to frequent review visits until they are re-examined (QAAET 2012). Currently students sit National exams at grades 3, 6, and 9. In 2012, there was also a pilot exam for grade 12. Areas of concern are that scores were overall lower than in 2011 and that girls—as they have every year at every skill and level—outperformed boys. The QAAET plans to research the gender imbalance in scores to seek solutions. (QAAET 2012).

3 The Development of Bahrain’s Higher Education System and Policies

3.1 A Brief History of Higher Education in Bahrain

The history of higher education in Bahrain can be broadly conceived as two currents (Karolak 2012, p. 20–21). The first began in the late 1960s when the Teachers College (1966) and Gulf Technical College (Bahrain Polytechnic) (1968) – the first institutions of higher education in the country – were established. Other institutions that were founded in this phase include the College of Health Sciences (1976), the College of Arts, Science and Education (1979) and the Arabian Gulf University (1979) (Madany et al. 1988, p. 411, as cited in Karolak 2012, p. 20). The University of Bahrain (UoB) was the result of the merging of Bahrain Polytechnic and the College of Arts, Science and Education in 1984. Karolak describes the founding of UoB as the culmination of the first wave of higher education in the country.

The second wave of higher education in Bahrain began in the 2000s. Karolak notes, “12 private institutions were established in the last decade” (2012, p. 20). This wave can be best understood by analyzing the broader worldwide trends of the higher education industry that were taking place at this time, especially insofar as these trends resulted from the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). GATS opened the doors of higher education to international markets and Bahrain was the first Arab country to lift the restrictions of ‘importing or exporting educational services’ (Bashshur 2007 p.17). This agreement led to great benefits, but also produced several challenges. The advantages and difficulties of this document vis-à-vis Bahrain will be analyzed in Sect. 3.3 and 3.4.

3.2 Foreign Education Systems and Higher Education Policies

In Bahrain, since private and international institutions of higher learning must focus on academic programs that address the economic needs of the country before they can acquire accreditation, humanities are largely undervalued whereas applied

sciences are strongly emphasized. Another emphasis of these universities is to help their graduates develop the needed English language skills to meet market demands (Karolak 2012). These policies are based on two main determinations.

Firstly, the Ministry of Education considers that training students in science and technology will be more beneficial to Bahrain's economy than allowing institutions to devote more resources to the humanities (Karolak 2012). Secondly, the Ministry of Education also reports that students in Bahrain prefer to study humanities rather than applied/technical subjects (Karolak 2012). In a recent doctoral study conducted in Qatar (Abou-El-Kheir 2014), university students voiced a similar preference for Liberal Arts studies. However, as the majority of jobs on the market are in technically related fields, graduates generally do not have the requisite skills to compete for positions (Karolak 2012).

Additionally, private sector employees have been hesitant to hire Bahraini nationals due to a lack of English language competency. So far, the international universities have been able to meet the nationalization objectives in some private sector fields and have made positive strides in others (The Report: Bahrain 2010; Wilkins 2011). Consequently, these policies (of favouring the hard sciences to the soft sciences, and the adoption of foreign and private universities) shape the landscape of higher education in the country by attempting to ensure that programs in the humanities do not skew the balance of the education sector. This trend, however, is not unique to Bahrain and other Arab countries. For example, Reilly (2010) discusses a similar decline in degrees granted in liberal arts fields, and a greater focus on professional degrees, in the United States.

With its emphasis on developing analytical skills, which help students to become independent thinkers, the Western education style stands in contrast to the recent education trend in the Middle East, which esteems memorization and the importance of recognizing hierarchy rather than critical thinking (G-Mrabet 2010; AHDR 2003). Specifically, numerous institutions in Bahrain have adopted Western styles of education because they believe that there is a direct correlation between Western education and students' success and their ability to solve problems (G-Mrabet 2010).

In addition to the twelve private and international universities that have opened in Bahrain since 2000, the proportion of international students at universities in Bahrain has risen to 21 % (Hamzah 2013). This percentage is significantly higher than the proportion of international students in universities in the UK (14 %), Germany (13 %), and the US (4 %) (Hamzah 2013). The influx of international students in recent years, which will be explored below, has had both positive and negative effects on Bahrain.

3.3 The Accreditation Policy

Bahrain's accreditation policy, along with its focus on the applied sciences and of bringing in foreign and private institutions, is another significant aspect of their higher education policy. The primary purpose of the accreditation policy is to

prevent the educational landscape from being saturated with programs in the humanities as these programs are not aligned with the Kingdom's economic goals (The Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain [n.d.](#)). This in turn encourages students to pursue scientific, technological, and industrial careers, all of which, as earlier mentioned, are advantageous to the nation's economic growth in the modern world. Through a Royal Decree in 2005, the Higher Education Council was created to oversee the accreditation policy. The Council's responsibilities include granting educational licences and setting and monitoring performance and outcomes (Al-Khalili 2008; Higher Education Council [n.d.](#))

As mentioned above, one of the principal motivations for importing Western style education is that it is perceived to be more conducive to yielding scientific discoveries and advancing technologies whereas the existing education trends in the Arab world are 'highly didactic, teacher-directed, and not conducive to fostering analytical free thinking' (Faour 2011). The hope is that this switch will inspire students to become lifelong learners, and encourage them to develop the necessary skills needed to become contributing members of their countries' (G-Mrabet 2010). Scientific facts are discovered by testing known theories, coming up with creative ideas, and meticulously analyzing data. New ways of thinking emboldens students to be critical of information, to test it, to engage in dialogue with their teachers, and to be innovative. All of these skills and characteristics are essential for citizens in a nation that emphasizes the applied sciences and a knowledge-based economy (Griffiths and Maraghi 2011; Faour 2011).

Karolak (2012) notes several advantages of the GATS' policies in Bahrain, including a wider variety of education options and innovative collaboration. One of these results is that Bahrain is setting itself up to become an international education hub. This is being done through a partnership between Bahrain Economic Development Board (EBD) and Kuwait Finance & Investment Company (KFIC). The plans include establishing scientific laboratories, foreign branch campuses and a world-class research center (Dou and Knight 2014). This in turn has led to some positive results. For instance, out of the 32,327 students that were enrolled in higher education in 2012, 7000 were international students (Higher Education Council website [n.d.](#)). Having a higher percentage of expatriate students exposes nationals to new ideas and cultural perspectives, which often enriches students' experiences and has the potential to foster international cooperation.

Overall, there remain some challenges. Many of the initiatives by prospective institutions have been delayed indefinitely (Dou and Knight 2014). The reasons for this are unclear; however, it may be due to the current political situation and unrest in the Kingdom, the many instances of lack of academic freedom in higher education recently expressed (discussed below in Sect. 5.2) or a combination of these and other concerns the invited universities may have.

3.4 Limitations of Bahrain's Higher Education Policies

In general, the accreditation policy in Bahrain is a positive policy that is meant to foster the country's economic development; however, it has its limitations. This policy may lead to the impression that the majority of the nation's educational budget should be used to cultivate the sciences rather than the humanities. This presupposition is misleading for the simple reason that development in the scientific and technological spheres implies an ability to effectively communicate with colleagues, researchers, scientists, engineers, etc. Therefore, language and communication studies as well as other liberal arts are equally fundamental to the economic sustainability of nations. Many institutions (and scholars) support teaching liberal arts subjects and contend that they provide the needed tools to survive and thrive in a modern society (Reilly 2010). Accordingly, although focusing on skills needed for a successful labour force is a step in the right direction, policy makers, legislators, and educators need to open for further debate and study, the advantages given to institutes that stress the applied sciences over the humanities. To echo Faour (2011), 'while necessary and important, this emphasis on the "technical" aspects misses a basic human component'.

Additionally, the emphasis on Western models of education should be tempered by the realization that attention to one's cultural roots is imperative for the flourishing of a nation. For this reason, it must be remembered that traditional educational methods are not entirely without merit, and it can be argued that some elements of these methods are necessary. After all, Western countries also emphasize memory and hierarchy (i.e. in connection to their elected representatives, historical figures and heads of state) in their cultural, social, and historical studies. It is imperative that national educators at certain times and in certain contexts use traditional methods of education so as to protect the country's identity.

According to Juliana G-Mrabet, there have been numerous instances in which foreign educators have imposed their Western perspectives, norms, and biases onto their Middle Eastern students (G-Mrabet 2010). Expatriate educators need to be sensitive to the cultural values and norms of their Bahraini students.

Further, although, as discussed above, having a large international student body has many benefits, it does raise concerns over the quality of educational standards and consumer rights (Martin 2007). In addition, if it has not done so already, the presence of international students may engender a desire for Bahrainis to study abroad. While this is not problematic in and of itself, due to the expenses involved, it could potentially lead to a situation in which "access to transnational education" would be "limited to privileged social classes," thereby deepening social stratification (Martin 2007). One possible solution to mitigate this problem would be for the government to expand its merit-based scholarship program to Bahrainis who wish to study abroad, which currently only funds ten students (Crown Prince's International Scholarship Program n.d.).

3.5 Bahrain's Higher Education Policies Compared to Its Closest Neighbours

While Bahrain's policies are similar to its GCC neighbours (Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait), there are discernable differences in Bahrain's educational performance and those of other GCC states, as well as how much the respective governments contribute to public education. The issue of emulation of Western educational practices is the same in the other Gulf countries (and throughout most of the Arab world). However, because of the higher percentage of international students at Bahraini universities, the advantages and disadvantages of having an international presence on Bahrain's campuses are accordingly more pronounced than on the campuses of its neighbours.

One of the differences between Bahrain and some of the other GCC countries is the amount of money the government invests in its public education sector. Bahrain's expenditure on education was reported as 2.6 % of its GDP in 2012 (The World Factbook). This percentage is similar to that of Qatar that spent 2.5 % (2008). In contrast, Saudi Arabia spent 5.1 % (2008) of its GDP on education, Oman 4.3 % (2009), and Kuwait 3.8 % (2006). Generally speaking, around 5 % or more of developed countries' GDP is devoted to education. While the percentage of Bahrain's GDP devoted to education could be increased, it is important to realize that simply increasing a nation's GDP expenditure on education will not solve its problems. If Bahrain's funding of education is gradually increased, it is imperative that the government/Ministry of Education use these funds strategically to achieve the educational goals of becoming 'A first rate education system [that] enables all Bahrainis to fulfil their ambitions' and to 'provide Bahrainis with the skill, knowledge and values they will need to become employees of choice for high-valued added positions', as laid out in the Economic Vision 2030 (The Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain n.d.).

Despite the relatively low percentage of GDP that Bahrain devotes to education, its academic performance is generally better than the performance of the rest of the GCC. According to a 2006/2007 report of the World Economic Forum, Bahrain scored higher in every single higher education related index than Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (World Economic Forum 2006, cited in McGlennon 2006, p. 3). Among its surrounding geographical counterparts, Bahrain contains a healthy educational system, but when one compares Bahrain to other countries on a global scale, a different story emerges. According to Sulaf Zakharia, "Bahrain needs to upgrade its capacity in university-industry research collaboration (where it now ranks 124th [out of 148 participating countries])...and the quality of its research institutions (120th)" (Zakharia 2007, p. 156). Though from a global perspective, the challenges Bahrain's higher educational system faces seem daunting, when compared to other countries in the Gulf, it contains many positive features which can be built upon.

4 Controversial Issues in English Language Policy in Bahrain

4.1 *K-12 system*

Paradoxically, the development of the BTC, a seeming strength is also a controversial issue. The Bahraini government chose the National Institute of Education from Singapore to provide curriculum and other guidance for the BTC and to provide a framework for large-scale curriculum reform. The controversy arises when the efficacy of this kind of policy borrowing is questioned as scores on National Examinations have not risen significantly several years into the reform. Is this due to the relatively short time reforms have had to work? Or is it due to elements in the Singaporean curriculum that are incompatible with the Bahraini context? (Haslam 2011; Kirk 2014; QAA 2012).

As noted above, by teaching English in the school system from grades 4–12 (expanded to grade 1 in 2012, QAA 2012) and clearly subordinating the learning of English both in emphasis and number of hours taught, the Bahraini MOE has avoided the criticism and the controversy that has been levelled at Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The Qatari education reform Education for a New Era (EFNE) came under strong criticism as it was perceived that the emphasis on English—installed as the medium of instruction from 2002 until 2013 when the Supreme Education Council bowed to growing public dissatisfaction and changed back to Arabic—was devaluing Arabic (Romanowski et al 2013). Conversely, Saudi policy was criticized for not including adequate emphasis on English language studies in the K-12 curriculum as they offer only 4 h per week from grade 7 up to graduation (Charise 2007; Chughtai 2004).

While the Ministry of Education did garner criticism in 2011 when it announced a lengthening of the school day at the secondary level—and ignored parents' angry protests—this move was made to bring Bahrain into line with UNESCO's recommended standards for hours of instruction. Most controversy about education in Bahrain is a result of international attitudes toward Bahrain's response to anti-government protests. For example, the Scottish Qualifications Agency came under attack for renewing a contract with Bahrain in 2012 as protests were ongoing (Toumi 2011; Briggs 2013a, b).

4.2 *Bahrain's K-12 Vision Compared to Its Gulf Neighbors*

Most of the Gulf States have relatively similar approaches to how English is taught in schools. They have similar hours of instruction and divisions of grade levels. Oman, Qatar and the UAE start English instruction earlier than Bahrain while Saudi Arabia does not start English instruction until the end of Middle School (Grade 7). They all have Rentier economies focused on petroleum production with a reliance

on foreign workers, high levels of youth unemployment, with Nationals largely disdaining—or being under-prepared for—private sector employment (Deliotte 2013; Hvidt 2013; Karolak 2012; World Bank 2008).

As a result, they all have developed similar long term strategic plans: Bahrain (Economic Vision 2030); Kuwait, Oman (the Nation Vision for Oman’s economy: Oman 2020), Saudi Arabia (National Vision 2020) and Qatar (National Vision 2030). These plans focus on economic, technological and educational development designed to transform the Gulf’s petroleum-based economies into knowledge economies (World Bank 2008). In order to achieve these goals, large-scale education reform with policy borrowing—and wholesale importation of foreign education providers—has been the norm, particularly in the UAE and Qatar (e.g., Haslam 2011; Kirk 2014).

4.3 Higher Education Systems: The Economic Necessity of English Versus the Cultural, Religious and Historical Imperatives to Promote Local Language

Since the oil boom, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States have had a lot of exposure to native English speakers. Economically, English is an important language for Arabs in general, but especially so in Bahrain, and the rest of the GCC. Knowing English enables students to have a much broader range of access to scientific and medical literature than if they only know Arabic (Rugh 2002), and many companies are reluctant to hire Bahrainis because of their poor English skills (Karolak 2012). Furthermore, knowing English is necessary since ‘at most Arab universities, courses in medicine, engineering and science are taught in English’ (Rugh 2002, pg. 5). In addition to the need to know English to perform well academically, Bahrainis also need to have an adequate grasp of English to be able to communicate in the business sector. The situation strongly indicates that English is necessary for the economic development of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The imperative to learn English brings with it a number of cultural challenges. If English is emphasized to such an extent that Arabic and native dialects are marginalized, there is a real possibility that Bahrainis may soon start to forget their cultural heritage. Clive D. Holes observes a growing phenomenon in the GCC states:

It is even commonplace nowadays to hear Gulf Arabs, in particular young women, talking to each other entirely in English, face to face or on their mobile phones. On a trip down to any shopping mall in Dubai, Bahrain, Kuwait or Doha, one hears Gulf Arabs conversing in a bewildering mixture of Arabic, Arabic and English, or just English. And the English one hears is not the stilted, school-book English of old, but fluent and idiomatic and – as often as not – American-accented (Holes 2011, pg. 139).

Of course, just because a person is capable of conversing in English does not mean that Arabic will be forgotten; however, as Holes notes, it is often the case that

people who converse in the way described above usually fit a particular economic profile (i.e. middle-class), and are often embarrassed at their lack of accurate Arabic grammar (Holes 2011, pg. 140). Students in the Arab world are usually proud of their English skills, but they often do not manifest the same pride in communicating effectively in their own native language.

Another related issue is whether Arabic or English should be the primary language of instruction at the post-secondary level. One solution which aims at striking a balance between the necessity of learning English, on the one hand, and the cultural duty of fostering Arabic and other national dialects on the other, is for Arab universities to teach technical and scientific courses in English and traditional courses (i.e. Islamic studies, history, etc.) in Arabic. This method is used in Lebanon and Egypt (Rugh 2002, pg. 4). This pattern can also be observed in the international institutions in Bahrain.

4.4 Cultural and Linguistic Conflicts Resulting from Bahrain's Policy of Importing Higher Education Institutions and Policy

The University of Bahrain offers courses in Arabic and English, but the official language of the university is Arabic. However, like many Arab universities, the University of Bahrain teaches many of its courses in English, since the individual colleges have decided to make English their official language. In its 2010 assessment of the University of Bahrain, the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) expressed concern that in those colleges that use English, there were no minimum English standards for incoming students (QAAET 2010, pg. 7). At the same time, there was no mention of minimum Arabic language requirements for incoming students in the QAAET report. Perhaps this is because the QAAET assumes that incoming native students already have an adequate grasp of Arabic, or perhaps because Arabic is not as important in the technical colleges as it is in those colleges where Arabic is primarily used. Whatever the reason, there seems to be a particular bias in favour of the English language as opposed to Arabic. This poses a problem since, as noted above, GCC students, including Bahrainis, are often less adept at communicating academically in Arabic than in English.

The English language does seem to be encouraged above Arabic in Bahrain as well as other GCC states (Al-Issa 2011, p. 63). Furthermore, since international business is often conducted in English, graduates of universities in Bahrain and other GCC states often find that they do not use Arabic frequently. Holes recounts asking an Emirati accounting student who was studying in the U.K. "if he ever read or wrote anything in Modern Standard Arabic," to which he replied, "Never" (Holes 2011, pg. 142). Holes concludes that this does not necessarily mean that Arabic is dying, but rather that the landscape of Arabic usage is shifting (2011). Nevertheless, this anecdote might be an indication that students in Bahrain and

other GCC states are moving away from using Arabic as a normal means of academic communication, unless it is in a familial or local context. Whether this means that Arabic and the Bahraini culture are under serious threat or that, as Holes claims, it is merely a neutral linguistic shift, has yet to be determined. The stress placed on English over Arabic, however, is something that can be counterbalanced by fostering Arabic language studies and emphasizing the necessity of acquiring excellent communication skills in Arabic (as well as English) in addition to attaining technical and scientific training and knowledge.

5 The Future of Education Policy in Bahrain

It is difficult to predict where education reform and English Language policy will go in Bahrain. On the one hand, Arabic as a medium of instruction seems unlikely to change. On the other, it would seem that given the low level of scores on the National Examinations and the need for university foundation programs concentrating on English (E.g., BTC, Gulf University), that the provision of English language education is overdue for specific attention and reform. Conversely, given that the education reforms to date are progressing in a holistic and orderly manner yet are yielding minimal increase in test scores, it may be that the government and the populace will lose patience and radically change the reform approach or start over again as Qatar and the UAE before them have done. As Hvidt (2013) notes, all of the Gulf monarchies have a tendency to suddenly alter well planned and implemented policies when subjected to societal pressure. At this point, one hopes that Bahrain stays the course until the comprehensive reforms have had a real chance to be properly evaluated.

5.1 The Future of Higher Education in Bahrain: Positive Developments

The prospects of higher education in Bahrain are promising on a number of levels, but are not without challenges. An encouraging indication of the development of higher education is that there has been a significant increase in tertiary enrolment over the past several decades. In 1970, 1.4 % of Bahrain's population was enrolled in tertiary education. This rate increased to 12.8 % in 1985 and to 34.4 % in 2003 (World Bank 2008, p. 15). The tertiary enrolment rate in Bahrain is expected to increase to 57.6 % by 2020 (Alpen Capital 2010, p. 36). While these numbers are excellent indicators of progress, they only reveal part of the picture.

The distribution of university students by their fields of study shows that there is a disparity between the government's emphasis on sciences and medicine and Bahrainis' abilities to get into these programs or their interests in these fields.

According to the MENA Development Report of 2008, 60 % of those enrolled in tertiary education in Bahrain were in education, the humanities, or social science programs in 2002; in contrast, only 28 % of students were enrolled in medicine, scientific, technical, and engineering programs (World Bank 2008). According to the report, “This pattern of enrolment is historically consistent with a policy of absorbing most university graduates into civil service jobs, but is ill suited to a development strategy that draws on private initiatives and dynamic manufacturing and service sectors” (World Bank 2008,). According to Gawdat Baghat, “There is a fundamental need to...focus more on science and less on humanities” (Baghat 1999). From the standpoint of the proportion of students enrolled in these separate programs, Baghat is correct, but his conclusion needs to be qualified. Whereas there needs to be a larger focus on the sciences so that the proportions between the sciences and humanities can become more balanced, there also exists the need to improve the language and communication skills of graduates, both in English and Arabic.

With the founding of many private universities in Bahrain in the early 2000s came increased concerns about the lowering of academic standards, presumably with the motivation of acquiring a higher number of students. For this reason, the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) was founded in 2009. This event was a major development for higher education in Bahrain.

The Secretary-General of Higher Education Council (HEC) in the Bahraini Ministry of Education, Dr. Riyad Hamzah, states that there are numerous positive developments in Bahrain’s higher education, which will lead to a successful future. In particular, he reports that the HEC is in the process of drawing up an accreditation system which will analyze all institutions of higher education in Bahrain. He also asserts that MIT will cooperate with Bahrain to help facilitate academic growth. Hamzah’s vision is to educate students in such a way that they are able to become entrepreneurs or to be successful in commercial or technological industries (Hamzah 2013, p. 159).

5.2 Challenges to the Future of Higher Education in Bahrain

Dr. Mike Diboll, who taught in Bahrain from 2007 to 2011, believes that academic freedom is threatened in Bahrain. Additionally, he points to a number of cases in which human rights were abused in connection to academia (Diboll 2012a). He states that, “What were once legitimate topics of reform discussion became dangerous political statements. For instance, where there was once openness about the existence of failing schools, saying so now became an act of treason” (Diboll 2012b).

In response to the government crackdown on the university students’ protests in Bahrain in 2011, Diboll resigned from his post and left Bahrain. Numerous similar claims to those of Dr. Diboll have been documented. For instance, Tétreault (2011) reports that ‘In Kuwait and Bahrain I heard stories from students that revolved

around the lack of academic freedom accorded to the students and, in Bahrain, also of a lack of academic freedom for professors' (p. 65). Many other occurrences of the absence of academic freedom have been reported as well.

Since 2009, a total of ten letters have been sent by the Presidents of the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) voicing their deep concerns about the ongoing persecution of professors, staff and students in Bahrain (MESA [n.d.A](#)), and in 2011, MESA (MESA [n.d.B](#)) awarded Bahraini professors, staff and students with their annual, "Academic Freedom Award" for '...speaking out, documenting abuses, and engaging in myriad other forms of resistance, have struggled against a range of brutal assaults by the Bahraini government upon academic freedom and upon the autonomy and integrity of the country's educational institutions' (np). There have also been numerous articles in the University World News detailing similar abuses.

On January 13, 2012, Diboll wrote a letter attempting to dissuade the University of Edinburgh from signing an agreement with the Bahrain Ministry of Education, citing human rights violations and an educational atmosphere where academic freedom is not respected. Whether Diboll's argument was successful in convincing University of Edinburgh or not, the university did not go through with the agreement.

Bahrain's Ministry of Education and the government of the Kingdom of Bahrain need to address the issue of academic freedom and they should re-evaluate how they deal with academics and students who disagree with their policies or practices. In order for Bahrain to continue to develop academically, it needs to open up the path to genuine academic freedom and must respect the rights of professors and students in its universities and institutes of higher learning. Diboll notes that although Bahrain "continues to want to bolster its legitimacy through prestigious international links," he hopes that other universities will emulate the University of Edinburgh by rejecting any such transnational educational accords (Diboll [2012b](#)).

The future of higher education rests in the hands of the government of the Kingdom of Bahrain. It is capable of significantly diminishing the credibility of their educational system if allegations such as these persist; however, it is also capable of ushering in a new era of academic freedom, educational reform, and national prosperity.

6 Conclusion

Bahrain has the oldest K-12 system in the Gulf and was the first in a number of areas including girls' education. Working to overcome a K-12 system that leaves its graduates to a great extent unprepared for higher education and work in the private sector, it has initiated a large-scale school reform project focusing on teacher preparation, the development of a national curriculum, the improvement of ICT and the systematic evaluation and improvement of schools.

Higher Education in Bahrain has come a long way since the first public schools opened in the early twentieth century. Universities and institutes of higher learning

have been founded in large numbers since 1968, and the education industry has rapidly expanded since the turn of the millennium. While this expansion of the private education sector threatened to cheapen academic degrees by lowering standards, the QAAET was founded in 2009 so that academic standards would be enforced. Furthermore, as a percentage of the total population, the number of Bahrainis enrolled in universities has surged over the past several decades. With international cooperation, test scores and literacy rates among the highest in GCC states, and new means of overseeing academic progress in the QAAET, Bahrain's educational system has many promising positive features.

In contrast to these positive developments, Bahrain faces numerous challenges in its quest to develop its educational infrastructure. These include poor English language preparation, poor academic performance when weighed against other nations of the world, the temptation to lose sight of the importance of mastering Arabic, threats to academic freedom in the aftermath of the 2011 uprising, and a catalogue of human rights abuses. In light of these challenges, the following general conclusions may be drawn:

1. Bahrain should ensure that its students know how to communicate effectively in Arabic as well as in English.
2. The government of Bahrain and the Ministry of Education should protect academic freedom and respect human rights of students and teachers.
3. Instead of comparing itself to GCC states or other Middle Eastern nations, whose academic performances are generally mediocre, Bahrain should focus on comparing itself to global competition so that it can strive for academic excellence.
4. The government may want to consider increasing the percentage of its GDP it devotes to education.
5. Western educators should to be trained in cultural sensitivity.
6. Certain elements of traditional educational methods should be practiced in particular contexts so that Bahrain's cultural heritage can be preserved.

If implemented, these recommendations have the potential to direct Bahrain on a path of greater economic prosperity, international recognition, and national pride.

The present time is a crucial point in the history of education in Bahrain. Now that a number of public and private institutions of higher learning have been founded in Bahrain, the third wave will determine whether Bahrain will choose to embrace academic freedom and whether it will safeguard its cultural heritage even as it embraces some aspects of Western educational practices. The decisions the government of Bahrain makes regarding these issues will have a lasting impact on the nation's educational, economic, and cultural landscape.

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English Education Policy at the Pre-university Stages in Egypt: Past, Present and Future Directions

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Abstract English has been taught in Egyptian schools since the 1860s. For about a hundred and fifty years, the status of English in Egyptian schools has changed from an optional subject to a compulsory one. This chapter highlights the English education policy at the pre-university stages in Egypt. The chapter starts with providing an overview of the historical place of English education in Egyptian schools. It also reviews the policy reforms of English education in Egypt in the last few decades, including establishing schools with intensive English instruction, introducing English education to primary graders, adopting new policies in English language teacher recruitment and education, and curricular reforms. The factors influencing these policy reforms are discussed. The chapter ends with offering some future perspectives of English education policy in Egypt.

Keywords English education • Language policy • Education policy • Egyptian education • Egyptian schools • English instruction

1 Introduction

English is currently the main foreign language used in Egypt. Not only is English used as a lingua franca in everyday situations in Egypt, but it also is used overwhelmingly in online communication among Egyptian Internet users (Warschauer et al. 2002). Due to the vital role of English in Egyptians' lives, it is taught as a core subject to 1–12 graders.

English has been taught in Egyptian schools for about a hundred and fifty years. During this period, Egyptians' attitudes towards English have changed from regarding as “a necessary evil during the British occupation” to viewing it “a practical vehicle for educational, economic and...social mobility” (Imhoof 1977, p. 3). The last two decades in particular have witnessed a remarkable increase in the numbers

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of Egyptians learning English. Thus, “the history of English in Egypt is a rich one, and English continues to be used in more and more domains, forms, and functions’ in contemporary Egypt” (Schaub 2000, p. 236).

The several policy reforms made to English education in Egypt have subsequently been influenced by these social-attitudinal as well as other political and global factors. This chapter reviews the English education policy reforms at the pre-university stages in Egypt and discusses the factors influencing each reform type. The chapter particularly focuses on the English education policy reforms made in the last few decades. Before reviewing and discussing these reforms and highlighting their future implications, the chapter presents an overview of the historical place of English education in Egyptian schools in the next section.

2 The Historical Place of English Education in Egyptian Schools

English language education in Egypt dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century. The place of English as a taught foreign language in Egyptian schools has been influenced by the political and social changes Egypt witnessed. English was first introduced, along with French, Turkish, Persian and Italian, as a taught foreign language in the few schools available in Egypt at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Due to the subsequent Othman and French rules of Egypt at that time, the British culture was not as influential in the Egyptian life as the Turkish and French ones. As a result, French and Turkish remained the two most widely taught foreign languages in Egypt until the end of the 1870s.

With the British colonization of Egypt in the 1880s, English assumed the place of Turkish as the second most widely taught foreign language, while French held the first place for two decades until English dominated at the beginning of the twentieth century. From that time on, English has been the foreign language taught at Egyptian schools and- later on- at universities (Schaub 2000). At the beginning of the twentieth century, English was made as the medium of instruction in public schools but it was replaced by Arabic in 1925 (Ministry of Education (MOE) 1964). Consequently, English was only taught as a foreign language at the pre-university stages in Egypt.

With the flourishing of the nationalization movement in Egypt, the teaching of English at the primary stage in Egyptian schools was cancelled in 1945 for the purpose of giving Arabic- Egyptians’ mother tongue- more educational attention. According to the MOE’s (1964) report, the vast majority of foreign teachers of English were replaced by Egyptian ones in 1951. The 1952 revolution brought about new developments to English education in Egypt. Adopting the 1952 revolution principles, Egypt’s consecutive governments have tried to enable all Egyptians have free access to education (Langsten and Hassan 2008). Meanwhile, the nationalization

movement in Egypt was further enhanced by the 1952 revolution and as a result teaching English to primary graders was neglected until the early 1990s.

The attempts made by Egypt's governments to make education accessible to all Egyptians have undoubtedly influenced English education. The policies focusing on providing education to the largest possible number of Egyptian population resulted in a lower quality of the educational outputs. Intuitively, English education quality was negatively influenced, among other things, by such policies. With the lack of providing English education to pre-middle school graders and the lower quality of education in public schools, parents have had to help their children attend private schools which avoid these two shortcomings.

At the present time, 8 % of students in Egypt attend private schools (ElMeshad 2012). These schools are not owned by the Egyptian MOE but supervised by it, and most of them offer students an intensive study of English from the kindergarten stage. The English language instruction they offer range from an advanced language course added to the national language curriculum, to a whole different curriculum composed of several intensive English courses with other school subjects taught in English as well. Thus, these private schools can be categorized as follows in terms of the English language education offered: (a) *private ordinary schools* whose curriculum is the same as that of the government schools, but they teach an additional advanced English course and attend more to meeting students' personal or religious needs; (b) *private language schools* which teach the national curriculum in English and offer students an intensive study of English arts, and (c) *private international schools* following the British or American educational system.

With the existence of such parallel educational system differing mainly from the governmental one in providing students with intensive English instruction and/or using English as the medium of instruction for other school subjects, the Egyptian MOE has had to undertake a series of policy reforms to improve English education in public schools. This is what will be discussed in the next section.

3 Policy Reforms of English Education in Egyptian Public Schools

These policy reforms were undertaken to improve English education in the Egyptian public or governmental schools included: establishing other types of schools providing intensive English instruction, introducing English education to primary graders, adopting new policies in English language teacher recruitment and education, and curricular reforms. The following subsections give a brief description of these policy reforms and show the extent to which they have brought about the desired changes in English education in the Egyptian governmental schools.

3.1 Establishing Other Types of Schools Providing Intensive English Instruction

In response to some parents' needs for providing their children with intensive English instruction not offered by public governmental public schools, the Egyptian MOE established two types of schools: National Institutes schools and experimental schools. National Institutes schools are not privately owned and are run by the General Society of National Institutes, a governmental educational body. Some of these schools are originally British ones that were nationalized in the 1950s after the evacuation of the British forces from Egypt, whereas other schools are owned by social institutions, not individuals, but all of these are run by the General Society of National Institutes. The National Institutes' schools can be described as semi-private ones with high language standards and fees close to those of private school (ElMeshad 2012). These schools, however, are very few in number and found in five Egyptian cities only (Cairo, Giza, Alexendria, Port-Said and Minia).

As for experimental schools, these were established in 1979 for the purpose of introducing an educational governmental alternative to private language schools. The subjects of these schools are the same as the ones provided in ordinary governmental schools but many of them are taught in English. In the 1980s, the number of these schools grew slowly but it increased rapidly in the 1990s. At present, there are about 1000 experimental schools in Egypt, the vast majority of which are in urban areas. These schools provide all K-12 students with intensive English instruction, and their fees are close to those of the best private language schools in Egypt.

Apart from these two types of schools, the Azhar Institutes Sector- an educational body focusing on Islamic-oriented curriculum but following the directions of the MOE in teaching English- has also introduced some experimental institutes in which students can study extra English courses. Like the National Institutes and experimental schools, the Azhar experimental institutes only exist in urban areas and require exceptional fees from students attending them.

3.2 Introducing English Education to Primary Graders

The Egyptian MOE brought about a further policy development to enhance English education in governmental schools by introducing English to primary graders. This policy was undertaken through two stages: in 1993 when English education was introduced to fourth and fifth primary graders (at that time the primary stage consisted of 5 years only), and in 2003 when it was decided to teach English to all primary 1–6 graders. Introducing English to primary graders required taking further steps at the levels of English language teacher education policies and restructuring curricula. These two issues are further highlighted below.

3.3 Adopting New Policies in English Language Teacher Recruitment and Education

In the last few decades, several major developments have been made to English language teacher recruitment and education policies in Egypt. Before the mid 1980s, English language teachers whose university major was either English language teaching or English literature were not a majority among this teacher population in the Egyptian public schools. Besides, the teachers with the English literature university major were larger in number than the ones with the English language teaching major at this time. On the other hand, the larger part of the teachers recruited to teach in such schools did not study English as a university major. Thus, the vast majority of the English language teachers recruited in the Egyptian public or governmental schools before the mid 1980s did not have a university educational qualification or certificate in teaching English.

To overcome the problem of scarcity of English language teachers during this period, the MOE had to recruit university graduates majoring in areas such as history, geography, psychology and philosophy as teachers of English at prep, and general and vocational secondary schools. This recruitment policy was adopted based on the assumption that graduates majoring in these areas study some English texts as part of their university study, and thus they are expected to have good mastery of English. To compensate for these newly-recruited teachers' expected English pedagogical performance weaknesses, the MOE had to provide them with short in-service training courses. With the introduction of English education at the primary stage in the early 1990s, it adopted a similar strategy by assigning already recruited non-English-major teachers to teach it to fourth and fifth primary graders and supporting them with in-service training.

The establishment of more faculties of education in the 1980s and 1990s allowed the Egyptian MOE to recruit an increasing number of graduates majoring in English language teaching. By the mid 1990s, the MOE stopped recruiting university graduates not majoring in English to teach it in governmental schools. The 1990s also saw the establishment of faculties of education's basic education English departments which prepare prospective primary school teachers of English. The MOE has begun recruiting the graduates of these departments to get them gradually replace the already recruited non-English major teachers who were temporarily assigned to English to primary graders.

In the last decade, there has been an increasing emphasis on recruiting teachers of English with a relevant educational certificate or qualification, and qualifying recruited teachers of English educationally. About 10 years ago, the MOE started to give more priority to recruiting university graduates majoring in English language teaching than to recruiting those majoring in English literature. At the end of the last decade, this priority has become a recruitment and professional development requirement. Accordingly, the MOE initiated a new policy that necessitates an English language teaching qualification as a prerequisite for recruiting teachers, and requires all recruited teachers with non-educational university degree to get a university certifi-

cate in teaching English. The Azhar Institutes Sector and private language schools also followed the same policy. Currently, the majority of recruited teachers of English in Egypt have met this educational qualification requirement; those who have not it yet are to get such qualification within 2 years of their tenure.

It is worth mentioning that the area of in-service English language teacher training in Egypt have also undergone some developments in the last two decades. Since the early 1990s, more in-service training programmes have been offered to teachers working in governmental schools at all the pre-university stages. These programmes focus on enhancing teachers' English linguistic and pedagogical skills. The majority of these professional development training courses are offered by the MOE, while a few programmes are supported by international aid agencies such as The World Bank, The European Union, and The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (El-Fiki 2012).

A further step in in-service teacher education was taken in 1993 when the MOE started sending teachers of English in short-term training missions, lasting for 3–6 months, in the USA or UK. According to the National Centre for Educational Research and Development's (NCERD) (2001) report, the MOE sent a number of 1455 in-service teachers and supervisors of English to these overseas training programmes between the academic year 1993–1994 and 1998–1999. Meanwhile, the NCERD's (2008) report explains that in total 3428 Egyptian teachers of English were sent in these short-term training missions from 1993 to 2008. According to this latter report, the highest numbers of delegated Egyptian teachers of all school subjects during this period were in the areas of teaching science and English, respectively. The MOE continued sending training missions in the last decade as well, but due to the political instability Egypt witnessed between 2011 and 2013, these missions stopped for three academic years starting from 2010 to 2011. The MOE has recently invited applications for new rounds of in-service teacher training missions and it is hoped these will not stop again.

Some questions have been raised about the effectiveness the professional development or in-service training programmes provided to English teachers in Egypt. For example, Ginsburg and Megahed (2011) found that the more recent reform in-service teacher training initiatives of 2002 funded by USAID and World Bank did not achieve the goals intended due to the lack of adequate coordination between the funding organization and the red tape found in the Egyptian MOE and local institutions. Similarly, El-Fiki's (2012) study revealed that some institutional features tend to determine how much teachers will actually change their pedagogical performance after receiving their in-service training. While no previous studies have traced the changes in the performance of the delegated teachers of English taking short-term training programmes overseas, Monk et al. (2001) reported a study which may have some relevance. Examining the reported changes to classroom practice and activities of Egyptian science and mathematics teachers following a 12-week in-service programme in the United Kingdom, the authors found that teachers who were able to distance themselves from the constraints perceived by others reported improvements in their pedagogical performance. The above three studies generally indicate that some contextual barriers that may hinder the optimal change in the performance of teachers of English in Egypt after receiving in-service training.

Table 1 A chronological summary of the textbook series taught in Egyptian governmental schools in the last few decades

Educational stage	Textbooks series taught and the academic years of their use			
Primary stage	1993/1994–2002/2003	2003/2004–2012/2013	2003/2004–2012/2013	2013–present
	Hello! (<i>first series</i>)	Hand in Hand	Hello! (<i>second series</i>)	Time for English
	Primary 4 & 5	Primary 1, 2 & 3	Primary 4, 5 & 6	Primary 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6
Prep stage	1966/1967–1984/1985	1986/1987–1995/1996	1996/1997–2004-2005	2005/06–present
	Living English	Welcome to English	Hello! (first series)	Hello! (second series)
Secondary stage	1971/1972–1985/1986	1986/1987–1998/1999	1999/2000–2007/2008	2008/09–present
	Practice and Progress	Excel in English	Hello! (first series)	Hello! (second series)

Adapted from Haridy (2012)

3.4 English Curricular Reforms

English curricula taught in governmental schools in Egypt have been changed several times in the last few decades. The factors accounting for the changes made to these curricula included bringing about a methodological or cultural change in textbooks, restructuring English education in a given educational stage, and adopting a specific educational movement. Table 1 provides a chronological summary of the textbook series taught at the three educational stages in the last few decades. As the table shows, four textbook series have been used at the primary stage since 1993. The MOE started using an earlier series of *Hello!* (West & Hearn, 1993) with fourth and fifth graders when English was taught to them. With introducing English education to first, second and third graders in 2003, the *Hand in Hand* series (El-Naggar et al. 2003) was taught to them until 2013. Meanwhile, after the inclusion of the sixth grade at the primary stage, the earlier version of the *Hello!* series taught to fourth and fifth graders since 1993 was replaced with its updated version (West & Hearn, 2003) but this the latter one was used with 4–6 pupils. The difference between the first version of the *Hello!* series and the second one is that the latter is more communicative and standards-based. Developing the *Hand in Hand series* was also guided by the educational standards movement in Egypt (El-Naggar 2004). Both the *Hello!* and *Hand in Hand* series were replaced in 2013 by the *Time for English* one (Rivers & Toyama, 2010) which is currently taught to all primary school graders in Egypt.

Four English textbook series have been taught to prep school students in Egypt since the late 1960s: *Living English* (Abdalla et al. 1967), *Welcome to English* (Bates & Higgins, 1986), *Hello!* (the first series) (Thompson & Dallas, 1996) and *Hello!* (the second series) (Thompson & Dallas, 2005). Likewise, four text series

have been taught to secondary school students in Egypt since the early 1970s: Practice and Progress (Alexandar, 1967), Excel in English (Alexandar, 1986) Hello! (the first series) (Haines & Dallas, 1999) and Hello! (the second series) (Haines & Dallas, 2008). As can be noted, bringing about a change in English textbooks taught to students attending a particular stage was accompanied by a further curricular change at another one. Thus, all the changes made to English curricula in the three stages were related to each other. These changes were not limited to replacing a given textbook series with another, but also included textbook methodological features.

Despite these synchronizing curricular changes, there were some exceptional cases in which a particular curriculum change did not match the other. For example, Haridy (2012) noted that the content of *Living English* and *Welcome to English* textbook series- taught to prep school students from 1966 to 1987- was of Egyptian cultural orientations, but this was not the case with the content of *Practice and Progress* and *Excel in English* series- taught to secondary students from 1971 to 1999. This clearly shows that at that time the MOE planned to use curricula of an Egyptian culturally-oriented content with prep school students, and global-culturally-oriented ones with secondary school students. In other words, it seems that the MOE may have found this graded approach was an optimal one to teaching native culture and foreign cultures in English curricula. The MOE, however, has adopted another approach since 1999 by using more Egyptian-culturally-oriented textbook series at the secondary stage.

There have also been some changes in the language teaching methodological trends characterizing the textbooks series used. The textbook series used at the prep and secondary stages until the mid-1980s depended more on the structural approach and neglected communicative language teaching. The *Welcome to English* and *Excel in English* series used at the prep and secondary stages, respectively, include more communicative activities. These communicative activities increased to a greater extent in the first versions of the *Hello!* series used at the primary, prep and secondary stages in the 1990s. With the emergence of the standards movement in Egypt in the last decade, the *Hello!* series was reshaped to be much more communicative. Thus, the standards movement did not only guide the MOE to use the *Hand in Hand* series with primary graders but also contributed to using updated versions of the *Hello!* series with prep and secondary school students.

The standards movement in Egypt dates back to 2003 when the MOE organized the National Standards of Education which issued a 3-volume document in 2003 for educational standards in five areas, one of which was curriculum content and learning outcomes (MOE Standards Document 2003). This document was further extended in 2006. In relation to English language teaching, the standards set out in the 2003/2006 Egyptian MOE Standards Documents focus on communication as a main domain for teaching English as a foreign language. According to the document, “students must use English for social purposes. They need to socialize with peers and teachers, and use English for their enjoyment...The focus of language instruction is on functional, communicative English and all the four language skills are emphasised” (Vol. 2, p. 145). The document includes several standards

emphasising communicative language teaching. For example: learners use English to interact inside the classroom; learners share and elicit personal information from others; learners express facts, opinions and emotions in English; learners work cooperatively with peers to achieve goals and help others in the process of learning.

Overall, the standards movement has a major influence on reconstructing English language curricula taught at the three pre-university stages in Egypt in the last 10 years. However, the question yet to be answered is: has this movement brought about the desired changes in language education in Egypt? The answer is that standards have not been effectively implemented yet in English language education at the pre-university stages in Egypt. In fact, two main factors account for the failure of the effective implementation of these standards in English language education in Egypt: (a) the measurability of standards-based performance descriptors; and (b) the testability of the various components in standards-based English curricula. Many of the English learners' performance descriptors conceptualized in the 2003 MOE Standards Document and its 2006 revised version are not measurable. In other words, there is very little likelihood for mirroring these performance descriptors in English textbooks, implementing them in classroom practices or even finding possible ways for examining how they demonstrated by language learners. The following performance descriptors are examples of the non-measurable ones included in the 2003 MOE Standards Document:

- Learners use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to achieve the learning outcomes in listening.
- Learners use ICT to achieve the learning outcomes in speaking.
- Learners practice higher level thinking skills while speaking.
- Learners develop cognitive/meta-cognitive strategies to facilitate reading.
- Learners use simple media sources in oral communications.
- Learners use technology resources (internet, electronic dictionaries, thesaurus) to locate and identify the meaning of new words.
- Learners appreciate the similarities and differences between the values, beliefs and practices of both the national and target cultures.

The testability issue is also a barrier to the effective implementation of the standards in English language education in Egypt. Despite the fact that this increasing emphasis on standards has generally helped in reconstructing English language textbooks used in Egyptian schools as has been explained above, a parallel reform has not been made to the examination system of English in Egyptian governmental schools. The written exams students sit for in these schools mainly test their abilities in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and writing. These exams completely neglect testing students' listening and speaking abilities. That is why this standards-based communicative curricular reform is not expected to serve as a catalyst for changes in English instruction in Egyptian schools.

Abdel Latif (2012) reported a study that supports this last hypothesis. Using a teacher questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation, he examined how the second version of *Hello!*- a standards-based communicative textbook series- has

changed Egyptian secondary school teachers' classroom practices. The results indicate that the standards-based curricular reform in secondary school English in Egypt has not brought about the desired changes in teachers' practices. Teachers were found to allocate much more instructional time and effort to grammar and vocabulary than to the other language skill components. This means that the standards-based communicative textbook series is taught non-communicatively. The interviews and questionnaire showed five factors have influenced teachers' practices: washback, culture of teaching, inadequate time, students' low English level, and lack of equipment and materials. Of all these factors, washback has been the most influential one. The main conclusion of Abdel Latif's (2012) study is that for this standards-based communicative curricular reform to serve as a catalyst for changes in English language education in Egypt, there has to be another parallel reform in students' examination system.

It is worth mentioning that in addition to the English textbook series mentioned above, the MOE has also assigned readers to secondary schools students and recently- to third prep graders. Most of the readers used are mainly simplified versions of internationally known novels. If curricular reforms at the levels of English textbooks used in Egyptian public schools were motivated by the need to cope with worldwide trends in language education, the MOE's selection of such readers was influenced by Egypt's social orientations in a given period. For example, teaching Austen's (1813) *Pride and Prejudice* to secondary school students in the late 1980s aimed at fostering their manners, upbringing, morality, and education. In the mid 1990s, *Pride and Prejudice* was replaced with Dickens (1854) *Hard Times* to highlight how industrialization can cause social and economic pressures. Meanwhile, introducing Verne's (1864) *Journey to the Center of the Earth* to third prep graders in the late 1990s stemmed from the need to enhance their science fiction. Recently, the MOE have tried to contribute to social and political reform in Egypt by teaching Swift's (1726) *Gulliver's Travels* and Dickens's (1838) *Oliver Twist*- two novels highlighting social criticism issues- to secondary school students. Accordingly, it can be argued that Egypt's social and cultural circumstances have influenced the teaching of particular readers to its prep and secondary students.

4 Conclusion: Future Perspectives

The above review shows the increasing attention that has been given to English education in Egyptian governmental schools. To cope with the type of intensive English instruction offered by private schools on the one hand and with the increasing use of English as a global language, the Egyptian MOE has adopted some reform policies to foster the quality of English education in public schools. These reforms included: founding national institutions and experimental schools providing intensive English instruction, introducing English education to primary graders, creating new policies in English language teacher recruitment and education, and bringing about some curricular changes and reforms. Establishing experimental

schools in particular and introducing English to primary graders may be among the main policy reforms that contributed greatly to improving English education in Egypt. Though the two reforms helped narrow the gap between public and private school students in English acquisition, they are not without shortcomings. Experimental schools are only accessible to a small proportion of Egyptian students who reside in urban areas only and can afford their fees, and thus the English acquisition gap is still wide between private school students and the large proportion of students attending public schools. As for English education in public primary schools, it is still far lagging behind its counterpart in private schools. A main shortcoming of the governmental primary English education type is that it is not preceded by teaching English to kindergarten pupils. That is why more effective reforms should be made to pre-prep school English in Egypt.

Despite the recent reform made to prep and secondary school English curricula, the wide gap in English communication skills between public and experimental schools has not been narrowed yet. With such teaching context in which washback effect is so decisive, this standards-based communicative reform is likely to encounter attitudinal obstacles on the part of both teachers and learners who attend more to what is tested than to what is not. Further, classroom practices are expected to remain unchanged as long as the assessment procedures are not changed to test communicative skills (Kellaghan and Greaney 1992; Weir 1993). Integrating communicative skills in English school exams will not only bring about the desired changes in teachers' practices, but it will also result in making an improvement in Egyptian students' overall English proficiency. With integrating both listening and speaking skills in school English exams, Egyptian students will likely increase their use of English outside the school context and in everyday situations as a way of improving their communicative skills and preparing for their English exams. Accordingly, changing the English examination system in public prep and secondary school is the most powerful way to fostering communication skills acquisition. When assessment is used as a vehicle for driving instructional practices, teaching and testing become essentially synonymous (Menken; 2008; Qi 2005; Shohamy 2001). Meanwhile, overcoming other obstacles to the successful implementation of curriculum reform- such as large classroom size, lack of English classroom facilities- is necessary because the examination system cannot be singled out as the only determinant of classroom practices (Wall 2000).

English teacher education and recruitment in Egypt is an area that still needs more developmental policies. Teacher pre-service education programmes need to be enriched particularly with regard to fostering teachers' linguistic skills. Recruitment policies should incorporate using more standardized specifications for the future English teacher. Meanwhile, expanding and enriching in-service teacher training programmes is another requirement for successful English education in Egypt.

More importantly, the MOE needs to find more innovative policies to close the gap between English education in public and private schools on the one hand and within public schools on the other. The existence of such parallel educational systems characterized mainly by the type of English instruction they provide can create future gaps in social interaction and communication, and jobs accessibility. This, in

turn, can cause future social problem resulting mainly from social inequity. Therefore, Egypt is in a dire need for an educational system that provides its pre-university students with equal and efficient opportunities for learning English. It is hoped that the above suggested policies will pave the way for a further greater reform in English education in Egypt.

At last, it is worth noting that this chapter has not discussed the policy reforms made to English education in the secondary technical (hotel, industrial, agricultural or commercial) schools the special education schools in Egypt. The reason for not covering this issue is that there have hardly been any policy reforms made to English education in these schools with the exception of changing the textbooks from time to time. Apart from this, no concrete English education policy reforms have been made at the level of recruiting teachers, training them, or even changing the English language instruction quantitatively or qualitatively. Given the lack of English education policy reforms in these two types of schools, the Egyptian MOE should pay much more attention to closing this gap.

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English Education in Iran: From Ambivalent Policies to Paradoxical Practices

Ferdows Aghagolzadeh and Hossein Davari

Abstract The present chapter, describing the socio-political, cultural and ideological contexts within which the Iranian education system is located, first provides an overview of the ups and downs of English language education in Iran during two distinct phases: before and especially after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Then, drawing on critical perspectives on language policy and planning, it attempts not only to introduce the process of formation and evolution of the available documents which directly or indirectly deal with English education, but also tries to identify the orientation of the Iranian state's language policy through analyzing such documents as well as examining the practices which are mostly inconsistent with policies. Moreover, due to the significant deficiency of English education in the public sector, which has still not met the learners' needs, the role of the private sector mainly shouldering responsibility for the English education is addressed. Finally, the chapter speculates in brief on possible future trend of English education in Iran and outlines the probable challenges which might result from the tensions between the internationalization and domestication of English uncovered in two rival sectors, i.e. the private and public education systems.

Keywords English education • Iran • Language policy and planning • Private sector • Public education system • Paradoxical practices • Future trend • Internationalization • Domestication

1 Introduction

It is impossible to present an account of English education policy and practice in Iran, including past, present and probable future trends, without first scrutinizing the political, socio-cultural, historical and ideological context of the

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country. This account therefore begins by attempting to provide a vivid, albeit brief, picture of Iranian society.

Iran, a country of approximately 80 million, consists of people with diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. It has been the cradle of many civilizations, and Islam has been the predominant religion. Despite the living presence of some notable minority languages such as Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, etc., Persian is overwhelmingly used as the official language in all aspects of everyday life, including education, government, media and so on. Like most of its neighbors in the Middle East region, Iran belongs to what Kachru (1985) called the “expanding circle” countries with regard to the use and status of English.

While in recent decades, Iran has globally acquired a reputation as an anti-Western and anti-imperialistic country, English, as one of the most outstanding features of Western imperialism which sometimes is regarded as the language of “enemies,” namely the United States and United Kingdom (see, Borjian 2013; Davari and Aghagolzadeh 2015), is considered by far the first and most important foreign language in Iranian society.

Iran, which was under the geopolitical and cultural influence of the West in general and the United States in particular through the Islamic Revolution in 1979, has followed an anti-imperialistic ideology in different realms, including education. Reviewing the past and present status of English in this society indicates that the rise and fall of this language corresponds notably to different sociopolitical variables such as power, economy, ideology, policy and so forth. However, this sociopolitical context with its ups and downs with respect to English – a context that could arguably be considered unique to Iran (see, Borjian 2013) – has been largely neglected in the field of English language policy studies. In an effort to partially fill this gap, this chapter, making use of the related theoretical frameworks on the topic, attempts to offer the reader a clear picture of English education policy and practices in Iranian society and address its ebbs and flows that correspond to socio-political motives and changes.

2 Discussions on English Language Policy

The decade leading up to the turn of the millennium brought a resurgence of interest in the field of language policy and planning, fueled in large part by the imperious spread of English (Hornberger 2006). Subsequently, streams of work in this field have called greater attention to the role and function of English as an emerging important language in the global arena. This language, with its different symbols and meanings (Shohamy 2006), accompanied by various classifications and perspectives in the field of language policy studies, has been of great importance and a focal point of academic research. While from the mainstream perspective, known as *laissez faire* language policy (see, Phillipson 2003), English is recognized as a language of prestige and globalization and is seen gaining status via the plans and

policies of some nation-states and territories including Hong Kong and Singapore (Crystal 1997), from the critical perspectives, English is regarded as a symbol of imperialism (Phillipson 1992; Ricento 2000), and its spread has been faced with some resistance (Canagarajah 1999).

As the field of language policy has expanded to include an increasingly diverse body of research, the scope of investigation into *educational language policy* or *language education policy*, which tends to rely as much on sociological and educational theory and methodology as it does on socio- or applied linguistics and early language planning and language policy work (Johnson 2013), has simultaneously expanded too. Meanwhile, due to the increasing importance of the English language in any education system worldwide, language education policies, which have been historically used to manage national languages at the expense of minority languages, have tended toward managing and making decisions on English education as a foreign, second or international language. According to Shohamy (2006), the decisions often include issues such as: which language(s) to teach and learn in schools? When (at what age) to begin teaching these languages? For how long (number of years and hours of study) should they be taught? By whom, for whom (who is qualified to teach and who is entitled or obligated to learn) and how (which methods, materials, tests, etc.)? (see also, Kaplan and Baldauf 1997).

As a general rule, such decisions are more important in countries with centralized education system, especially the ones in which English is known as a foreign language and consequently English classrooms serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that takes place. In such situations, decisions regarding language education policies, made mostly by central authorities, serve as a mechanism for carrying out explicit or implicit national language policy agendas. It is worth noting, as Shohamy (2006) points out, that while language education policies are sometimes stated explicitly through official documents such as curricula or mission statements, in many instances, they are not stated explicitly, but rather derived implicitly by examining a variety of de facto practices. Thus, such policies are more difficult to detect as they are “hidden” from the public eye. It is in these situations that language education policy needs to be discerned from actual language practices through the study of some elements including textbooks, teaching practices, testing systems and so forth.

Understanding the importance of this criterion in any language policy studies as well as attending to the fact that no language education policy can stand alone but is rather connected to political, cultural, social and economic dimensions, the present chapter studies and analyzes the essence of English education policy in Iran on the basis of such a theoretical framework.

It is worth noting that reviewing the Iranian literature on the topic reveals that there is a dearth of research addressing English language education policy in Iran. This might be due to the fact that first, there is an undeniable absence of local expertise on the issue, and second, the issue is new to the Iranian applied linguistics community. Thus, it is not surprising to see that the few studies that have touched on the issue have not gone beyond historical accounts.

3 The Ups and Downs of English in Iran

Drawing from the writings of Beeman (1986), Tollefson (1991), Aliakbari (2002), Hayati and Mashhadi (2010), Mazlum (2012), Atai and Mazlum (2013), Davari (2013), Borjjan (2013), and Davari and Aghagolzadeh (2015), here the story of English is studied in two distinct phases: Pre- and Post-revolutionary Iran.

3.1 *English in Pre-revolutionary Iran*

During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979), Iran experienced extensive collaboration with the West on economics and education, as well as political and cultural affairs. Throughout this period, practical steps were taken toward establishing a modern society, and the sphere of education was not an exception to the rule. In fact, in response to the needs of the national economic reform agenda and the country's push for modernization, new aims for education were formulated with an orientation toward the outside world, especially the West. Undoubtedly, in such a new context, English and English education received much more attention, and the emergence of this language's status as Iran's number one foreign language dates back to this period (see, Borjjan 2013; Farhady et al. 2010).

According to Tollefson (1991), between the mid-1950s and late 1978, English steadily expanded to become the most common second language in Iran and became the major language of business, military, higher education and the media. In his view, it is impossible to analyze the fate of English after 1978–1979 without first achieving a basic understanding of the language's role in Iran under the Shah.

In short, the main features of the English language's growing presence in this period can be introduced as follows:

3.1.1 **American and British Associations**

As noted, in this period, much value was assigned to English and English language education. In such a situation, a turning point in the educational activities of the American and British missions took place.

The first of these missions to begin operating in Iran was the British Council, the most famous and the oldest British international organization for educational and cultural relations. According to Borjjan (2011), its operation under the Pahlavis can be categorized into two distinct phases: the introductory phase (1942–1952) and the expansion phase (1955–1978).

Following the start of its activities in 1942, as Borjjan (2013) notes, the British Council's initial heyday in Iran did not last very long, and its operation came to an end in 1952 in the midst of the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute.

In the second phase of expanding operation, beginning in 1955, the British Council resumed its activities with a more vigorous focus on English language education. In this period, it offered general English courses and international English proficiency exams, conducted teacher training summer workshops, provided consultation to Iran's Ministry of Education and promoted English for specific purposes (ESP) methodology and textbooks at university levels (Yarmohammadi 2005). According to Borjian (2013), by June 1978, the Council's level of representation in Iran ranked among the top three countries in the world.

Alongside these British endeavors, growing American efforts to officially contribute to development of English led to the establishment of the Iran-American Society (IAS) in 1950. Adopting a mission to develop and expand the use of English in Iran, this Society recruited many American instructors to teach English language to Iranian students. In line with its mission, IAS provided some grants for English language teachers and professors to study English literature and teaching methodology in American universities. It also held some training seminars for teachers who had not studied in United States (Strain 1971, cited in Khajavi and Abbasian 2011). This society, as Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) note, set up branches in major cities such as Tehran and Shiraz, with instructors mostly from the United States and Britain.

3.1.2 Private English Institutes

With the growing attention given to English, private English institutes came also into existence. Expanding their operations, they established growing number of branches in large cities and shouldered the responsibility of English expansion, especially in provincial cities and among well-off families. The use of Center-produced ELT textbooks with its special Anglo-American cultural content provided the enthusiastic learners with new interesting sources.

3.1.3 Schools

While French, like in many parts of the world, had enjoyed a kind of monopoly as the first foreign language in Iran since the late nineteenth century, in this new atmosphere, which was accompanied by close relationship between the Iranian government and the West, the gap between English and French became much wider in favor of English, and finally English replaced French, becoming the primary foreign language.

During this transition, as Borjian (2013) notes, Iranian schools faced some serious problems. Two factors constituted significant challenges: first, the absence of appropriate textbooks, and second, the lack of qualified English teachers. In such a situation, although the public schools failed to achieve notable successes with respect to English education, the fact that French lost ground to English in the country's school system marked an unprecedented achievement for English.

3.1.4 Universities

In this phase, higher education was also fundamentally reformed. Newly established universities employed American and British instructors so as to promote the English language in an academic setting. Aliakbari (2002) observed that the presence of native speaking teachers and the contributions of American and British institutions were so abundant and extensive that certain national universities were commonly referred to as American universities. According to Borjjan (2013), perhaps the zenith of the 1960s educational reforms was the creation of Pahlavi University in Shiraz in 1962, along the lines of American universities. Not only was English considered a basic requirement for entering or starting the major courses, but English also replaced Persian as the main language of instruction. In addition, without a doubt, as Yarmohammadi (2005) points out, the cooperation of American educational planners in developing ESP textbooks at Iranian universities was also promising.

In all, the drive toward “internationalization” and “modernization,” as a salient policy of the Pahlavi dynasty, situated English in an increasingly pre-eminent position in such a way that this policy made the idea of English as a precondition for prosperity and development gradually gain support in Iranian society.

3.2 *English in Post-revolutionary Iran*

English in post-revolutionary Iran has passed through a host of ups and downs and gone to extremes.

Putting an end to a long-lasting and rooted monarchy, the Islamic Revolution strenuously opposed the West in general and specifically the United States as the main supporter of the fallen kingdom. In such a situation, it was not surprising to see that in the first years of the revolution, as Aliakbari (2002) writes, due to the perception of parallelism between the English language and the United States, this language encountered waves of hostility.

In this case, Tollefson (1991) writes that the Revolution sought to nationalize the use of English. In his words, the end of English domination was associated with the changing structure of power. At least, there is no doubt that in the early years of the Revolution, post-revolutionary reactions to English went to extremes. For instance, within such a climate, the negative attitude toward English led to closing the private English institutes, as well as purging the ELT textbooks. As Borjjan (2013) notes, during the early years of the Revolution, the questions as to what to do with English and whether it should stay in school and university curricula or be entirely banned were at the center stage of a heated debate among the new ruling powers of the country.

Debates around “to teach or not to teach English” finally led to teaching English, but mostly in its localized and homegrown form (see Davari and Aghagolzadeh 2015). A review of the ups and downs of English in public and private arenas in

post-revolutionary Iran reveals the relation between this language and political motives and tendencies.

3.2.1 American and British Associations

The Iran-American Society, as the first private international institute with the most notable contribution to the promotion of English, was also closed down and it has not been permitted to return to Iran ever since. Some years after the Revolution, as Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) note, through its nativization, the name of the Iran-American Society was changed to the Iran Language Institute (ILI), as its objectives and curriculum were redefined according to the ideological orientation of the newly established government.

Because of mounting unrest on the threshold of Islamic Revolution, its British counterpart – which according to Borjjan (2013) by June 1978 had offices and centers in some large cities with a total of 18 London-appointed staff, 98 local staff, 53 London-recruited English teachers and 38 Council-recruited staff – withdrew its staff from Iran in late 1978. Not long after the establishment of the Islamic government, all the branches of the Council were shut down one after another.

In 2001, in the midst of the reformist administration (1997–2005), as a phase which was accompanied by a visible changeover of the political conditions in Iran, the British Council was officially invited to resume its activities. Organizing ELT workshops, transferring the latest ELT resources and methodology, administering IELTS test, collaborating with private sector, etc. were the most significant tasks of this Council, which remained in operation until 2009, namely in the midst of the Ahmadinejad presidency (2005–2013) (for a detailed account of its operation, see Borjjan 2011, 2013).

3.2.2 Private English Institutes

While in the early years of the Islamic Revolution, private English institutes were forcibly closed down, in the second decade of the Revolution, the gradual appearance of such institutes was quite evident. In the third decade onward, this picture changed drastically in such a way that from that time on their operation came to be known as a lucrative industry and big business. In fact, in contrast to the early years of the Revolution, English education in the private sector swung to the other end of pendulum. The majority of institutes mushrooming all over the country, even in small towns and some villages, adopt commercially Center-produced, but pirated textbooks; there has also been a major shift of emphasis from the traditional teacher-centered approach such as audio-lingualism to the common communicative approaches.

Essentially due to the significant deficiency of the public education system, which cannot meet the learners' needs, this sector, as a secondary body of public education, has attracted an increasing number of learners. As Hayati and Mashhadi

(2010) note, after several years, in response to the undeniable necessity of learning English, many private institutes were established across the country for this purpose, given that the public schools could not meet the rising demand. A variety of English courses are now available at private institutes for learners of various ages through different curricula. Regarding their operations, Borjian (2013) draws attention to the fact that one of the most distinctive characteristics of English education in post-1990 Iran has been the empowerment of this sector, which in turn has been responsible for the importation of the “international” model of English education into the country. For instance, with respect to textbooks, curricula and methodology, they keep an eye open for the Center-produced ones. In this regard, the latest Center-produced curricula are adopted; the most recent teaching methods and methodology are followed and the Western cultural load of the teaching materials and course books are explicitly offered and publicized. In a more precise word, native-speakerism is being sought as an ideal situation in this sector.

3.2.3 Schools

After the Islamic Revolution, it is first worth noting, as Farhady et al. (2010) write, that due to the conservative trend of Iranian officials toward English, in addition to the existence of ties between Iran and European countries along with the absence of political relations with the United States, educational policymakers formulated a plan to promote the learning and teaching of five foreign other languages in schools – German, French, Italian, Spanish and Russian. Following this decision, the national curriculum committee prepared textbooks for all these languages to be used at schools. However, due to insufficient number of teachers and a low number of student applicants for these languages, English has remained the most dominant foreign language taught at high schools.

Given that English is still the only foreign language choice in practice, the development of new English textbooks for schools constitutes the most significant contribution of English localization in the education system. While the English textbooks developed by Pre-revolutionary Ministry of Education were replaced by newly developed nativized ones in the first years of the Revolution, the structure of English language teaching in schools has remained much the same as it was during the previous educational system.

Today, English is compulsory in the 6-year junior and senior high school curriculum. The curriculum is a top-down one, centrally administered by the Ministry of Education, which dictates all the decisions regarding the textbooks and exams. In contrast, as Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2003) write, in almost all private schools functioning within the three levels of general education –namely primary, junior and high school – English receives striking attention and probably extra hours of practice. In their views, the quality of the English program and the skill of the teachers working in each school is considered such a crucial factor that it may determine the families’ choice to send their children to one or another school. Moreover, the desire to begin English learning at an early age has led to the introduction of English as a subject in kindergartens.

In all, especially during the last decade, English education in schools has been a widely discussed issue at the national level. In fact, with the increasing spread of English and the emergence of the communicative approach to English teaching, the need for changes in national curriculum has arisen.

Even a cursory examination of the textbooks taught during the successive years reveals that despite the growing importance of communicative skills in any English education program, over the course of Post-revolutionary period, the methods, contents and aims of teaching English have not undergone essential changes, and their main focus has been reading, grammar and vocabulary. Textbooks have tended to repeat themselves. With little sense of evolution and exploration, students mostly consider these textbooks boring, ineffective, wasteful and time-consuming. As a result, considerable dissatisfaction among students as well as teachers, especially regarding the textbooks, has been recorded (Haddad Narafshan and Yamini 2011).

Given the growth of the private institutes as the main contributor to the spread of English in its Center version, the public school system has begun to undertake reform and innovation, as traditional methods and materials have been challenged by the demand for communicative and market-oriented approaches. Due to the rising criticism of the inflexible and outdated structure of the textbooks, in spite of the officials' ambivalence, finally the picture is beginning to change. In 2013, the first volume of a six-series English textbook for junior and senior high schools was published under the title of *Prospect*. With this ongoing reform process, which aims to restructure English education through the integration of language skills and language components, it is believed that Iranian students will be better equipped with an ability to communicate. In this new curriculum, English education has been reconceptualized to mainly not only encourage students' active participation in the leaning process and use of the target language in communication, but also encourage teachers to promote students' communicative skills and minimize the use of the mother tongue.

While it is too soon to evaluate and assess the quality and function of the new curriculum, especially the new textbook series, as part of the public curriculum reform process which is aided by the government, it is certain that due to the low availability of competent teachers and limited time, achieving the goals seems out of reach. In addition, since English, especially in many parts of the country, is not immediately relevant to the learners' needs, they usually do not pay serious attention to learning the language and instead devote their efforts to acquiring the minimal competency needed to pass to the next grade level. Undoubtedly, these shortcomings keep pushing English to the margins and can negatively affect the outcomes.

3.2.4 Universities

In higher education, English has gained a partially important status. According to Noora (2008), at the university level, students mostly study English for academic purposes (EAP) and therefore, reading is the most emphasized skill. University

students are required to first take a three-credit General English course, and then they take more specialized English courses in which they focus on their field-related English texts and learn relevant terminology. Contrary to secondary education, at the university level, instructors have the freedom to choose the textbooks and activities for their classes; but the use of locally produced textbooks is dominant.

A decision to develop local English textbooks for universities, which dates back to the introductory years of the Revolution, has been gradually implemented throughout the last three decades. According to Erfani et al. (2010), in the beginning of 1980s, educational authorities, adopting the mission to indigenize English learning in higher education, established the Organization for Research and Compiling University Textbooks in Humanities (SAMT) to develop textbooks in different fields of study. The establishment of the committee of foreign languages as one of the divisions of SAMT paved the way to develop English textbooks for university students. At the outset, they compiled specialized English textbooks for students of science, engineering, social sciences, medicine, mathematics and agriculture. At that time, at the university level, a great need was felt for locally produced ESP textbooks that would be culturally and socially appropriate for the Iranian context. Afterward, as Soleimani (2006) writes, many ESP textbooks have been published to satisfy the needs of policymakers, educationalists curriculum designers. While the purpose behind all of these efforts has been to enable Iranian university students to study their specific academic reference materials and textbooks to get familiar with scientific and technological advances in their field of study, a review of their current status reveals that in spite of their quantitative growth, with reference to quality and efficiency, much remains to be done. Although it has been quite a while since the introduction of the current ESP textbooks into Iranian university systems, as Hashemi (2005) believes, such ESP textbooks may hardly ever meet the actual needs of the Iranian special-purposes students. As noted by Borjian (2013), it is clear that the main focus is on reading and grammatical skills. Regardless of their titles, these textbooks share the same pattern of their predecessors, and communicative components of the language have remained absent from university ESP textbooks. In a more precise word, suffering from some serious drawbacks including lack of needs analysis, mono-skill syllabus, inflexible and clichéd pattern, lack of revisiting and up-to-dating, low face validity, etc. (for more details, see Erfani et al 2010; Farhady 1994, 2006; Soleimani 2006; Zangani 2009), they hardly meet the learners' needs. Along with the shortcomings of these textbooks, other factors – including large class sizes with students of multiple interests and needs, the teaching of ESP courses by mainly by non-native language instructors, and the limited time allocated to such courses – have further aggravated the situation.

On the other hand, despite such shortcomings, the growing desire among university students to leave the country to study abroad will likely result in a situation in which annually thousands of students take IELTS and TOEFL exams inside or even outside the country in the hope of gaining a good command of English guaranteeing them entry into a prestigious university for their postgraduate studies that consequently will provide them with a plum job and good living in future.

3.2.5 English Departments and Professional ELT Networks

English is studied in its own right, as a range of independent fields, with three branches: Translation, TEFL and Literature. In line with more progressive views about learning and teaching languages, Linguistics has been added to these majors, especially at the postgraduate level (Hayati and Mashhadi 2010). In such a situation, there is no doubt that the growth of English as a very popular major in Iranian universities has led to the appearance of many graduates, especially at the BA and MA levels. For example, today nationwide at more than 200 branches of Payam Nour University (so-called long distance education), thousands of students graduate annually at the BA level with a Translation major. Despite these efforts, the overall level of proficiency in English among English language graduates, especially from the newly established universities, remains far from satisfactory.

Apart from Payam Nour University and Islamic Azad University, a private university with more than 300 branches throughout the country, which both insist on quantity rather than quality, some English departments at governmental universities have emerged as the most significant pioneers and players in English education and research in the Iranian academic context.

The pivotal role of ELT professionals, most of them foreign-educated, at Iranian universities, as well as their efforts in publishing research journals, founding associations, holding conferences, organizing workshops and cooperating with private institutes, has been very instrumental in the process of ELT professionalism and advancement in the Iranian academic setting. In this regard, Borjian (2013) maintains that the rise of this coherent body of local experts who through their associations and journals became strong enough to voice their concerns about the low quality of English education offered in school and universities, has been very instrumental. In addition, the publication of some burgeoning research journals by such associations and especially by some universities in the field of ELT and applied linguistics has been profoundly effective in ELT professionalization in Iran.

In this regard, a noteworthy point that has been mostly neglected in the study of English education in Iran is in order here, and it is the advent of a newly growing critical-oriented shift in the Iranian ELT community. As Davari (2013) notes, the field of applied linguistics worldwide and ELT in particular has over the last two decades witnessed the emergence of critical movements which no longer see the globalization of ELT as an inevitable, unproblematic and natural development (see Hall and Eggington 2000) and introduce ELT as a profoundly and unavoidably political activity; in tandem in recent years, particularly in the last decade, the Iranian ELT community has experienced a kind of critical intellectual shift with the appearance of dozens of critical works, indicating that this critical discourse is drawing considerable attention. Among these works are those that deal with important ELT issues such as English linguistic imperialism (Pishghadam and Naji 2011; Mohseni and Karimi 2012; Pishghadam and Zabihi 2012; Davari 2013), critical pedagogy in ELT (Sadeghi 2005; Akbari 2008; Ghaffar Samar and Davari 2011; Rashidi and Safari 2011; Aghagolzadeh and Davari 2012) and critical trend in ELT

materials development and evaluation (Keshavarz and Akbari Malek 2009; Zarei and Khalessi 2010; Baleghizadeh and Jamali Motahed 2010).

Undoubtedly, since the practices and debates currently underway in pedagogical circles have a significant influence on the state and status of English in wider arenas, such a critical trend has led to a situation in which English language education in Iran will likely be a widely discussed issue in the academic setting, not merely as a technical issue, but also as an educational activity infused with politics.

4 State's Position: More Or Less English?

Identifying the direction and orientation of Iranian state's language policy with respect to English education involves in part considering and evaluating state documents, although in such a context, policies are not necessarily consistent with practices. Reviewing the available documents, some of which are not finalized, Kiany et al. (2011) argue that not only is there no unified document specifically developed under the title of Foreign Language Education Policy (FLEP), but some perceived shortcomings and inconsistencies among the available educational and developmental documents that deal with English education are quite evident.

Obtaining data from various sources, Borjjan (2013) attempts to uncover the state's "ambivalence" toward English. In her view, while there is no overt hostility toward English among the authorities, there is a perceptible discourse on English as a medium of Western cultural invasion. Nonetheless, providing the readers with some proofs, she deals with the causes of fundamental changes of attitude on the part of Iranian politicians toward English. She concludes that the field of English language teaching and learning could thus be seen as a site of struggle where multiple forces compete and finally the state moves in favor of more rather than less English.

Studying the language planning and language-in-education policy in Iran, Hayati and Mashhadi (2010) maintain that although Iran's policy on English as an international language stops short of nationwide dissemination of the language, the demands imposed by the irresistible pressure of globalization, along with the status of English as the world lingua franca, have resulted in increased attention to English in recent years. In their views, there is still an increasing perception among the country's policymakers that relates English as a medium of globalization to the imposition of a kind of political, economic, cultural and linguistic imperialism, and as a result the state tends not to embrace English.

Other experts, among them Riazi (2005) and Farhady et al. (2010), have taken the same view. Riazi (2005) believes strongly that the ideological stance of the state's policy toward the English language intends to keep it at a minimum level and eschew its vast dissemination, but the process of globalization has exerted its own pressures to promote the learning of English as a hidden curriculum. Farhady et al. (2010) also maintain that when it comes to foreign language policy or in a more precise word, English, Iran shows a more conservative stance in such a way that the

need to maintain national unity and identity among the young school generation is a real concern. In their views, the main reason for this is the politicization of the language issue after the Islamic Revolution and the fear that English presents a threat to the Persian language and Islamic culture.

In the following, in addition to the above-mentioned views, the researchers, drawing on critical perspectives on language policy and planning, first attempt to introduce the available documents which directly or indirectly deal with English education, then try to identify the orientation of the Iranian state's language policy by analyzing such documents.

One of the first documents which has fleetingly dealt with English education is The National Curriculum Document, which was finalized in 2009. In this development and educational document, it has been explicitly noted that a foreign language is one of the two essential elements of literacy in the third millennium. Thus, the communicative approach with a specific focus on speaking and listening has been emphasized, and it has been suggested that there is a need to reduce the age of language learning as well as teach it at primary school as an optional subject.

Another publication, which is more important than the one previously mentioned, is The Fundamental Transformation of Education, which was approved by the Ministry of Education in 2010. As pointed out, the Ministry is responsible for all top-down decisions, including the adoption of particular curricula and teaching methods, as well as the development of textbooks and the provision of equipment. This important document has allocated only one sentence to foreign language teaching. According to the document "foreign language study [will be offered] as an optional (semi-prescriptive) course in the curriculum on condition that its teaching stabilizes and strengthens the Islamic and Iranian identity." (p. 20)

As Davari and Aghagolzadeh (2015) write, regarding this sentence, some points are worthy of attention. Like the document described previously, the term 'foreign language' has been substituted for 'English.' The program is designated as 'optional,' and its description as 'semi-prescriptive' remains ambiguous. Its teaching is also subject to certain ideological conditions. (p. 16)

A review of the documents as well as the researchers' views on the topic indicates that at the moment Iranian policymakers are really in doubt. They appear to be caught in a dilemma in which on the one hand, they develop policies that necessitate more English and on the other hand, they avoid developing a separate unitary and unified English language policy that would pave the grounds for introducing and implementing a stable English education practice.

5 Future Trend: A Scene of Challenges

Bolton (2008) argues that the spread of English across Asia has been propelled by a number of related economic and social factors, including demographics, economic change, technology and educational trends. A review of the past and present situation of English and scrutiny of the probable future of this language reveal that due

to the increasing role of English in the globalizing world, naturally the Iranian society should not be considered an exception to this rule. However, because of some specific political, cultural and ideological features of this society in which English has served mostly as a vehicle of educational advancement with little practicability nationwide and not as a means of internationalization, it appears that placing a high premium on English might be confined to an educational system marked by two distinct forms of English, namely the nativized alongside the Center version.

As mentioned, since recent education policies have been created within the discourse of globalization, education is treated as an instrument to keep up with the rapid rate of globalization. In this situation, English as a “language of opportunity” will possibly turn into the language of power and prestige, especially in the educational context. Indeed, the use of this language by a growing educated class or the so-called elites to meet their educational needs might lead to a situation which serves the interests of some over those of others and consequently may result in exacerbating the unequal relationship between different classes in Iranian society.

Overall, the new curriculum reform in the public English education system, which so far has mostly focused on textbook development, can be interpreted as an ambivalent policy change in English education in Iran. In addition, the increasing activity and number of English institutes mushrooming nationwide within the current political context of Iranian society – in which on the one hand the state decision-makers strongly desire to control and manage the important realm of education and on the other hand, the current facilities and equipment of the governmental education system cannot meet and attract the learners’ needs and interests – means that the private sector with its prestigious Center version of English emerges in the absence of an organized language policy as a rival that competes directly with the partially growing nativized form. To put it simply, the future will be a scene of an inevitable challenge and growing tension between the globalization and domestication of English.

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English Education Policy in Israel

Iair G. Or and Elana Shohamy

Abstract The English language education policy in Israel is shaped by the varying social meanings of the language throughout the country's history. The chapter begins with a brief historical sketch that tracks the formation of these social meanings, from the British Mandate of Palestine, which imposed English as an official language (alongside Arabic and Hebrew), through the rise of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel, where English was excluded and regarded as the language of British imperialism, to the current state of affairs, in which American influence is strong and English is regarded as an asset in a globalized world. Implications of the prolonged Israeli-Arab conflict on the status of English in Israel are also considered. Following the historical sketch, aspects of the English language in Israeli society and education are discussed, including issues of social and economic inequality, exposure to English in the mass media, and minority populations with particular needs and difficulties such as Israeli Palestinian (Arab) students, ultra-Orthodox Jews, and immigrants. We conclude the chapter by discussing ways in which the Israeli educational system can address the multiple social meanings, uses, and manifestations of the language, as well as the specific needs and capabilities of different types of learners.

Keywords Israel • Jews • Israeli Palestinians • Ultra-Orthodox Jews • Migration • Religion • Language in the mass media • Language policy • Language ideology

1 Introduction

The present chapter describes the role that English plays in Israeli education and society, as well as the challenges it faces. Due to the ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity of Israeli society, English seems to be dominant in a wide variety of social contexts and rather latent in others (Shohamy 2014). A brief historical discussion will help to clarify how the complex language situation of Israel has evolved,

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and will set the scene for a discussion of current trends and challenges. Then, the current role of English will be discussed, with special focus on social gaps among different groups.

2 Language and Education in Israel: A Brief Historical Sketch

The state of Israel was founded in some areas of historical Palestine in 1948, following the 1947 UN resolution on the Partition Plan for Palestine, which called for the creation in Palestine of two independent states, one Arab and the other Jewish, as well as the establishment of a “Special International Regime” in the City of Jerusalem. Before its creation, the territory of modern-day Israel had been under prolonged Ottoman rule (in the years 1517–1917, excluding a brief intermission in the years 1831–1840), succeeded by the British mandatory rule in the years 1917–1948. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Jewish national movement in Europe, known as Zionism, led to several waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine and was engaged in pioneering efforts to revive the Hebrew language and resume Jewish life in the biblical, ancestral homeland of the Israelites. Prior to these waves of immigration, termed by Zionists as *aliya* (‘upward movement’), the main groups residing in Palestine had been rural and urban Palestinian Arabs, Turkish administrators, and several groups of pious Jews and Christians in several urban centers. The main languages used were Arabic and Turkish, although Jews used a variety of additional languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, Judeo-Spanish, Judeo-Arabic, and Yiddish. Christian communities and settlers across the Holy Land used a wide variety of liturgical and vernacular languages such as Coptic, Greek, Latin, Russian, and German.

The arrival of European Jews rapidly changed the language situation in Palestine, dramatically raising the number of Yiddish, Russian, Polish, and Hebrew speakers. Some schools in the growing Jewish communities were operated by German or French associations, and their language of instruction or dominant culture were respectively German or French. However, the strong ideology of Hebrew revival and the national aspiration to impose Hebrew as the sole language of education, trade, and administration, quickly led to the spread of Hebrew, persecution of speakers of other languages, and the gradual eradication of multilingualism in the Jewish population (Shohamy 2008). The British authorities acknowledged the national aspirations of the Jews in the 1917 Balfour declaration, supporting “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people”, as well as in the 1922 King’s Order-in-Council, which recognized Hebrew as one of the three official languages of Palestine, alongside with Arabic and English. Despite this strong Hebrew-only policy of the Jewish community, in reality there has continually been a great deal of language diversity among the various groups in the country, both during the British Mandate era and afterwards (Halperin 2015).

The ideology that drove the Hebrew language revival was purist, seeking to purge the Hebrew language from foreign elements and any remnants of the long period in which Jews had lived in exile (Or 2016). Hebrew revival included coining new Hebrew words in replacement of loan words, aiming to minimize the influence of foreign languages. This policy, championed by the Hebrew Language Committee and later by the Hebrew Language Academy as well as by many educators, copyeditors, and journalists, is still very dominant in Israeli culture.

For the Palestinian (Arab) population, the shifts in government and linguistic landscape triggered an increase in multilingualism, with many Palestinians becoming naturally and informally proficient in English, Yiddish or Hebrew, according to the groups and individuals they were in contact with. However, the 1948 war, which led to a massive exodus, the destruction of Palestinian villages, and subsequently the arrival of additional waves of Jewish immigrants, created a new situation, in which the Palestinians who stayed in or were able to go back to the territory of Israel became a national and linguistic minority within a Jewish-dominated state. Shortly after the establishment of Israel, the Israeli parliament revoked the official language status of English, and since then, both Arabic and Hebrew are the official languages of Israel. Hebrew has been a compulsory subject in Arab schools since 1948, and only in 1996 was this requirement matched with a policy of making Arabic compulsory in Jewish schools, although the status of Arabic and Hebrew in the educational system of Israel is far from symmetrical (Or & Shohamy 2016).

According to the Israeli official statistics, which include the West Bank Jewish settlements and the predominantly Arab East Jerusalem, Arabs today make up 20.7 % of the population in Israel (Central Bureau of Statistics 2013). Arabs who are citizens of Israel are part of the Israeli educational system, and while in Jewish schools the medium of instruction is Hebrew, in Arab schools education is provided in Arabic, and the curricula in subjects such as history, religion, Hebrew, and Arabic are different from those for the Jewish population. It should be noted, however, that this only applies to Palestinians who live in the pre-1967 territories of Israel. The 1967 war and particularly the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza strip, and East Jerusalem led to an extended period in which millions of Palestinians were under Israeli military rule, but those Palestinians did not become citizens of Israel and maintained their own education systems, originally based on the Jordanian or Egyptian schooling, later to be transformed into an autonomous education system following the creation of the Palestinian National Authority in 1994. In the entire area including Israel and the Palestinian Territories, the number of Palestinians and Jews is nearly equal (5.8 million Palestinians vs. six million Jews at the end of 2012; Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics 2013).

In the Jewish sector, a great degree of fragmentation has evolved in education over the years. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, two different streams exist, a “general” (secular) one and a religious one. Ultra-Orthodox Jews have their own schools, which belong to different chains of schools and are often greatly autonomous.

3 English in Israeli Society and Education

Today, English in Israel plays multiple roles in multiple domains, both as a vital local language and as the main global language influencing local culture (Shohamy 2014). In colleges and universities, where the medium of instruction is almost exclusively Hebrew (with the exception of several Arabic-medium colleges where Arabic is central, as well as a growing trend of English-language programs), English is typically the only language that students in all disciplines are required to know besides Hebrew. Only in the humanities may students be required to take additional languages (such as French, German, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Sanskrit, Greek, or Latin) in addition to English. Students are required to read papers in English in almost all the disciplines. In many forms of oral interactions in Hebrew and Arabic, especially in urban, secular milieus, English loan words, code-switching, and other forms of translanguaging are very common. English is seen as the language of international business and high tech, and very good proficiency (if not a native or native-like level of English) is often required in most high-tech, management, administrative, and marketing job openings.

Whereas in the early years of Israel's existence English was viewed negatively as a remnant of the British rule, and the motivation to learn it was low, since the 1960s, the special economic, political, and cultural ties with the US and the growing American influence created a situation in which English is desired and viewed very positively. Israel also has an exceptionally high percentage of English native speakers working as English teachers (Inbar-Lourie 2005), due to the Jewish immigration from English-speaking countries, and they usually teach their own variety of English, although American English seems to be more dominant. However, the rise of English and its exceptional vitality in Israel seems to collide with hegemonic ideologies of promoting Hebrew as the national language of Israel. Over the years, Hebrew language activists blocked initiatives of teaching content in English in schools, of allowing students to submit papers in English in some university departments, and they usually oppose the dominance of English in shop signs, in TV commercials, and in the press. Proponents of Hebrew deplore what they view as a decline in Israelis' command of correct, standard Hebrew, and they attribute this decline to the prominence of English. Thus, English and Hebrew are perceived as if they are in competition, and English is viewed as an obstacle to achieving national goals of promoting Hebrew (Shohamy 2007, 2014; Spolsky and Shohamy 1999). In terms of pride and profit (Gal 2012; Heller and Duchêne 2012), English is often linked with notions of profit, while Hebrew is viewed as a symbol of national pride (cf. Abu-Rabia 1996).

Israeli schoolchildren are required to learn English from a very early age. In Hebrew-medium schools, English is the first foreign language taught, mandatory from fourth grade (age 9) to graduation but typically beginning much earlier, in second grade (age 7) and in some cases already in the kindergarten or first grade. There is growing pressure by parents to start teaching English at an early age, and a high level of achievements is expected, especially by parents in affluent Jewish

neighborhoods (Carmel 2009). In Arabic-medium schools, English is usually taught only after the introduction of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in first grade (age 6) and Hebrew as a second language in third grade (age 8). The fact that Arabs in Israel are expected to master MSA, a language variety which is not similar to their mother tongue and poses certain difficulties to learners (Saiegh-Haddad and Spolsky 2014), compounded with the socio-economic inequalities and fact that they are expected to have a good command of Hebrew, contributes to a significant gap in achievements in English between Arabs and Jews. The Ministry of Education maintains the same English curriculum, textbooks, policies, and assessment for Jews and Arabs (Ministry of Education 2013), but this only seems to accentuate the gap between both groups.

A similar gap between Jews and Arabs can be seen in the way English is used in public spaces. English is frequently used in signs, especially in secular Jewish cities and neighborhoods, and is often understood as a marker of Western, globalized culture and values. According to Ben-Rafael et al. (2006), English is displayed in public signage almost as widely as Hebrew in Jewish localities, whereas in Arab towns and villages it is almost completely absent. In Arab towns, Arabic is the most dominant language, alongside with Hebrew which competes with Arabic as the most dominant language. Thus, English, as a non-official language in Israel, seems to play a more important role in the Jewish population, being a global language, while for the Arab population it is Hebrew which typically seems to play the role of the “global” language competing with the “local” Arabic. In Arab public spaces, the representation of English is minimal, and is in line with the low achievements of Palestinian students in English compared to those of Jewish students.

Thus, one may claim that despite the prevalence of English in Israeli society and education, there seem to be growing gaps in access to the English language, English language resources, education, and levels of proficiency. While English is valued as an important asset for personal development and social mobility, there is great inequality in the way proficiency in and accessibility to English reaches different parts of society. These gaps are visible not only between Jews and Arabs, but also between the center and the periphery of the country, between non-religious and religious Jews, and between the haves and have-nots.

The results of the *Meitzav* exams, nation-wide examinations conducted in second, fifth, and eighth grades that are used to monitor the quality of education in Israeli schools, may serve to illustrate the huge divide that exists in levels of English proficiency. The English scores from 1 to 10 represent 10-percent bands (deciles) of schools according to their students' scores in the English component of the exams, so that a score of 10 means that a school is in the top 10 % of all schools, and a score of 1 means that a school is in the bottom 10 %. Using the English results of the 2013 exams in all the Israeli cities that have more than 40,000 inhabitants ($N = 42$), a noticeable gap exists between the cities ($M = 5.85$, $SD = 2.020$). The cities with the highest levels of English proficiency are all affluent with an overwhelmingly secular, Ashkenazi Jewish population in the center of the country – Giv'atayim (9), Herzliya (9), Hod Hasharon (9), Ra'anana (9), and Ramat Hasharon (10). The cities with the lowest English scores are the much poorer cities with substantial non-Jewish,

Mizrahi Jewish or Haredi populations, none of them in the center of the country – Acre (3), Afula (3), El’ad (2), Rahat (2), and Umm al-Fahem (3). No city with over 40,000 people received the lowest score of 1, but two Haredi cities – Beitar Illit and Modi’in Illit – with extremely low achievement in English or no English education at all, were excluded from the statistics. As for the three largest cities, the English score in Tel Aviv (8) is significantly higher than that of Haifa (7) and Jerusalem (6), both of which have Arab neighborhoods and in the case of Jerusalem also a significant Haredi population (Map of achievements in the 2013 Meitzav exams 2014). When correlating the English results with the socio-economic rankings of those cities ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 2.043$; based on data from 2008; Table of Cities 2012, 2013), a Central Bureau of Statistics composite index ranging from 1 (worst) to 10 (best), there is a very strong positive correlation ($r = 0.860$, significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed) between the English grades and the socio-economic scores of those cities.

Some of the causes of the gaps in English proficiency and achievements can be attributed to material factors that create inequalities in education more generally. To begin with, the population outside the center of the country and certain other groups are already underprivileged in terms of income or parent education. These areas and groups also typically receive a lower level of services, and the budgets of local authorities are usually limited. This affects education and achievements in all school subjects, unrelated to language issues. Achievements in English in particular are affected by additional linguistic and cultural factors. The following section will discuss some of these factors, which include the level of exposure to the language on television and the new media, the complex linguistic repertoire of Israeli Arabs, and the cultural and religious opposition of ultra-Orthodox Jews to the teaching of foreign languages.

3.1 Exposure to English in Mass Media

Television, cinema, and other audiovisual media may serve as a good indication of the level of exposure of the Israeli population to the English language and their involvement with it. Traditionally, Israelis have been exposed to English through British, American, Australian, and Canadian films and TV series. Movie and TV translations for adolescents and adults are available by way of subtitles rather than dubbing, and in many cases subtitles are bilingual, combining Hebrew and Arabic or Hebrew and Russian (or historically also Hebrew and French). Owing to the use of subtitles, Israelis are typically exposed to spoken English when consuming English-language cultural products. However, it is interesting to note that in the past three decades, the consumption of English language media has become a marker of well-to-do, young urban Israelis, who watch foreign TV series, listen to music in English, and use English on the internet.

First of all, the television consumption scene in Israel have seen tremendous changes since Nadel et al. (1977) described it as key to the exposure to English being “on the rise” (p. 50). Until 1993, only one state-operated channel has been active in Israel, which mainly combined original, Hebrew-speaking programming and subtitled English-speaking programs. These programs included mainly British and US productions. As in many other parts of the world, soap operas such as *Dallas* or *Dynasty*, BBC sitcoms such as *Are You Being Served?* or *Yes Minister*, American comedy shows such as *Who’s the Boss*, *Alf*, *Diff’rent Strokes*, or *The Cosby Show*, action series such as *MacGyver* or *The A-Team*, or the Canadian teen drama *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, to name just a few examples, were broadcast. These were extremely popular and contributed a great deal to viewers’ familiarity with varieties of English. Israeli viewers were equally exposed to Arabic programming at that time, for which a daily slot between 18:30 and 20:00 has been reserved for years. However, since the beginning of commercial TV and the establishment of the widely popular Israeli Channel 2 (and later also Channel 10), TV channels started focusing, for commercial reasons, almost exclusively on Hebrew-language programming, most prominently talk-shows and reality shows as well as news and drama (Cohen 2002).

The advent of commercial TV meant that from then on, viewers were no longer “forced” to view programs in English, but needed to be truly motivated in order to access programs in English. This quickly created a gap between weaker populations, who lack such motivation, and stronger, well-off urban populations, who not only followed English-language programs in non-mainstream Israeli channels, but were more likely to buy DVDs, download or stream English-language movies and series, sometimes without even needing subtitles to understand them. While for the stronger parts of the population English-language movies, TV, and music have become an inseparable part of their lives, weaker parts of the Jewish population are more likely to follow Hebrew-language series or reality shows almost exclusively. The Arab population of Israel now has access, via satellite or cable, to a wide variety of Arabic language TV channels from the entire Arab world, so for Arabs, too, consuming English language media is a matter of motivation and choice.

This seems to be one factor widening the gap in terms of multilingualism and particularly with regard to knowledge of English. Many Israelis in the weaker parts of society seem to be much less exposed to English (as well as some other languages) than members of more affluent groups. Moreover, the high level of localization in computing and the internet makes it easier for people to live almost exclusively in Hebrew (or Arabic), using the Hebrew (or Arabic) versions of computer programs, Google, Facebook, and other media services. This may partly explain the fact that in more affluent areas in the center of the country English is much more present and the level of proficiency is generally higher than in other parts.

3.2 *Palestinian Students*

In addition to the general exposure to the language, three groups have unique characteristics that affect their access to English: Palestinians (Arabs), ultra-Orthodox Jews (Haredim), and immigrants. First of all, the Palestinians, who became an ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority following the 1948 war, generally obtain much lower grades in the English *Meitzav* and the English component of the high-stakes pre-higher education Psychometric examination. Among the reasons that account for their lower grades is the fact that, unlike many Israeli Jews, Palestinians often lack direct contact with speakers of English. Additionally, the fact that Palestinian students are required to master three languages – Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Hebrew, and English – all at a very high level in order to graduate from schools and succeed in Israeli society, creates special difficulties for Palestinian students. Each of those languages poses challenges to native Arabic speakers, and the fact that English is not the only (or main) foreign language they are required to learn implies that resources, attention, and teaching time for learning the language are all limited. Moreover, while in recent years schools in the Jewish sector started teaching English from first or second grade, in Arab schools English teaching typically starts in third grade. Israeli Palestinians view English as extremely important, and many parents are even willing to pay for private tuition, but still English learning is not the their main interest, which contributes to the factors that impede the attainment of better achievements.

The fact that English language curriculum, assessment, and textbooks for Palestinian students are the same as those of Jewish students means that there is no special effort to take into account the specific needs and potential of this population. As Amara (2014) points out, the English curriculum in general does not consider the unique interests and prospects of Palestinian students learning the language. Since the school-leaving matriculation examinations are the same for Arabs and Jews, the teaching of the language cannot be seriously adapted to the specific needs of Palestinian learners. Furthermore, Palestinian students obtain poorer achievements in exams since those exams focus solely on their English proficiency and not on their overall linguistic repertoire, which is typically much richer than that of native Hebrew speakers. Despite these difficulties, in recent years Palestinians have become more exposed to English through television, movies, music, and the internet, and are increasingly using English to contact friends and relatives abroad (Amara 2014).

3.3 *Ultra-Orthodox Jews*

Another group in which the level of proficiency in English is usually extremely low is the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) population of Israel. Haredi schools belong to various networks of schools which are relatively autonomous if not completely separate

from the general schooling system of the country. Due to strict sex segregation in the Haredi communities, Haredi young boys have their own special schools where they are expected to study the Talmud, and the teaching of “secular” subjects such as English or mathematics is often considered a waste of precious time. As a consequence, English proficiency is particularly low among Haredi men. Conversely, Haredi girls, who are not prohibited from getting “secular” education, usually learn English, which often helps them to financially support their families later in life. When English is taught, it is viewed mostly as an economic tool, and any potential cultural influences are minimized. Since 1999, there has been some pressure from secular political parties and educational reform committees to force the Haredi population to include in their education so-called “core curriculum” subjects (*Liba* in Hebrew), namely mathematics, English, science, and computers, but the acceptance of such programs by the Haredi population has been so far very limited. Some Haredi men discover years after finishing school that they need to know English, and then take courses in order to catch up with their secular peers. It should be mentioned that within the Haredi population there is a great deal of variation in attitudes and worldviews, and some Haredi groups do not oppose the teaching of English (most notably *Habad*, which uses English for its global outreach activities). However, in general, Haredi schools either limit themselves to a minimum of English or refrain from teaching English altogether. Thus, while English is the third most common Haredi language in the world after Yiddish and Hebrew, the situation in Israel is utterly different (Baumel 2003).

Haredi communities usually resist the study of foreign languages, since these are seen as potentially bad influences on religious minority communities keen to preserve their unique identity. The Haredi attitude toward the study of English is rooted in the traditional religious views regarding the study and use of non-Jewish languages during the Enlightenment period in Europe. The non-Jewish languages of Europe were seen as transmitters of Enlightenment ideas and a threat to rabbinical authority, and their teaching was highly controversial among religious Jews. Learning foreign languages was associated with assimilation to European culture and the loss of religious and ethnic identity. Historically, this negative attitude toward the teaching of foreign languages had not achieved official religious status until a number of Ashkenazi rabbis in Jerusalem placed a *herem* (ban) on the teaching of foreign languages in the late nineteenth century. The *herem* was placed following the request of several religious schools to be allowed to teach Arabic, a language which was needed for employment in Ottoman-ruled Palestine. Some Haredi rabbis consider the *herem* to be still in effect. It should be added that prominent rabbis had traditionally also opposed the learning of Modern Hebrew, seeing it as a threat to Haredi cultural and religious separatism, but in reality, most of the Haredi groups in Israel have eventually adopted Modern Israeli Hebrew as their vernacular (Baumel 2003; Spolsky 1993).

3.4 *Immigrants and Other Minority Groups*

Lastly, an additional group that requires special attention is immigrants from English-speaking and non-English speaking countries. Ever since its establishment, the State of Israel has welcomed Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world with open arms, granting them citizenship and a package of economic benefits. This policy, together with many other factors, led to waves of immigration, most prominently from the former Soviet Union, North Africa, Europe, the Americas, and the Arab Middle East. Jewish immigrants coming to Israel are immediately faced with the challenge of learning or improving their Hebrew up to a level that helps them to integrate into Israel's society, get education, housing, and jobs. For children immigrating at school-age with their families, it may take up to 10 years to achieve the same grades and level of performance as their counterparts born in Israel (Levin and Shohamy 2008). Since in addition to Hebrew, knowledge of English is also required for success in school and later in life, immigrants from non-English-speaking countries are relatively disadvantaged. They have a more urgent need to master Hebrew, and as in the case of Palestinian students, they are never assessed or evaluated for their entire linguistic repertoire, which is admittedly richer than that of native Hebrew speakers.

Immigrants from English-speaking countries arrive with knowledge of English, a prestigious language which is a great asset in Israel. However, as a study by Blustein and Shohamy (2012) has shown, even speakers of a power language such as English are in need of empowerment in Israel, since many authorities and businesses offer no services in English, so it can be hard to live in Israel without a working knowledge of Hebrew. Still, while immigrants from English-speaking countries may need to learn Hebrew to succeed in Israel, they are at least not faced with the pressure to learn *both* Hebrew and English at the same time, like immigrants from non-English-speaking countries. Nevertheless, while the need to learn English is mitigated, it does not go away, and, depending on the age in which they immigrate to Israel, immigrants from English-speaking countries often need to work on their literacy skills, expand their vocabulary, and practice reading and writing in English. In the past three decades a lot of knowledge has been accumulated in Israel in the area of further education in English for native speakers of the language, and today this group of students usually learns English in separate groups, focusing on their specific needs.

Another group of immigrants includes non-Jewish migrant workers and asylum seekers, mostly from Sudan, Eritrea, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and China. Although there is a lack in research on language use and language needs among non-Jewish migrants in Israel, English seems to be of great value to them in general as a lingua franca, as they can use it when contacting their employers or the authorities. For many, knowledge of English may replace their need to learn Hebrew, especially since they are often expected to leave Israel after a few years, cannot make it their permanent home, and do not know where they will leave to. The services given to them in their native languages are typically minimal,

often limited to necessary safety instructions and guides translated into their languages. English is therefore the main tool for many of them to communicate with Israelis.

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the English language has a wide variety of social meanings, uses, and manifestations in Israel. It is recognized as a global language and a crucial tool for social mobility and success. However, not all members of Israeli society have the same access to English learning, English-language media, and English-language contacts. For many, such as the Palestinians and Jewish immigrants, mastering Hebrew is a priority due to the strong status of Hebrew in the country (Shohamy 2014). Therefore, it may be hard for them to achieve the same level of English proficiency as native Hebrew speakers. For ultra-Orthodox Jews, while English is recognized as an important asset, it is also a cultural threat, and religious and cultural complications prevent members of the group to learn English at a high level, if at all, despite the fact that English is also a lingua franca among Jews around the world. Additionally, variables such as socio-economic status, proximity to the wealthy center of Israel, country of origin, and even TV viewing preferences may play a crucial role in creating tremendous gaps in English proficiency between different cities, schools, and students.

Some findings suggest that these aspects only scratch the surface of the wide variety of issues and social meanings associated with English in Israel. In a recent article, for example, Lavie (2006) shows how, as a feminist activist involved in the struggle of Mizrahi Jews (Jews originating from the Arab and Islamic world) against intra-Jewish racism and discrimination, English has been a gateway for global connections as well as for accessing the emancipatory writings of prominent activists and authors abroad. As much as English is central for this type of flow of ideas and connections, Lavie laments the fact that many activists in Israel cannot access texts in English, and that similarly, the international community of researchers and scholars is unaware of local discourses of activism in Israel due to the scarcity of translations. She deplores what she terms the “transnational English tyranny”, which is responsible for such barriers just as much as English could be used for bridging discourses and activists with a common cause.

Lavie’s arguments, besides being valuable in their own right, may suggest that the English language has as many social meanings and implications as there are social groups, areas of interest, and occupations. To a computer programmer from central Israel English must mean something different from what it does to a farmer from southern Israel or a literature teacher from the north. Compounded with the gaps and problems that mark the teaching of English in Israel, we believe that an English curriculum should take into account the immense variety of needs, interests, and contexts in which English is taught and used. Thus, students will not be judged by the same set of standards and scales, but rather will be rewarded for the efforts

they make and for developing their knowledge of English in ways they truly need and see fit. Moreover, language education in Israel should acknowledge the fact that for some of the learners, English is not their first foreign (or second) language, but their third, fourth, or *n*th language. Therefore, it seems that some mechanisms are badly needed for recognizing students' full linguistic repertoires and their ability to use them.

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English Language Education Policy in Kuwait

Marta Maria Tryzna and Hussain Al Sharoufi

Abstract This paper investigates the present state of language policy in Kuwait, implementation of this policy in the country, and recommendations to form an effective language policy, having the ability to overcome the current impasse of English language teaching in Kuwait. The paper discusses the shortcomings found in creating an effective pedagogical system, capable of producing proficient English language speakers in the state-funded schools in Kuwait. Due to the indispensable role that the English language plays in most Kuwaiti institutions, finding a viable solution to solve language problems in Kuwait is becoming of an insurmountable concern to the educational authorities. This paper suggests that adopting a unified solution at the Gulf Cooperation Council, GCC, countries' level would provide Kuwaiti educational authorities with a workable solution, capable of overcoming language problems currently faced by Kuwaiti students. It is further suggested that language dualism as practiced in the United Arab Emirates could provide a viable solution for a solid language policy. Teacher training should thus be based on modern language methodologies and use of technology, which goes hand in hand with customizing what is culturally-appropriate for Kuwait and GCC countries.

Keywords Kuwait • Language policy • Culturally-appropriate language policy • Language dualism

1 Introduction

The present paper describes the main facets of the English language policy in Kuwait, including the status of the English language in the country from both historical and contemporary perspectives, as well as the main features of English language education in the state-sponsored school system. It also touches upon teacher

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preparation and professional development as part of the government policy to ensure quality education for Kuwaiti citizens.

The paper is organized as follows. First, basic facts and statistics about Kuwait are presented with emphasis on expenditure on education, as well as the status of the English language in general. Second, the education system is described, in particular the public schools system and the role of the English Language Teaching General Supervision within the Ministry of Education in terms of setting English as a Second Language standards, benchmarks and learning outcomes for the primary, intermediate, and secondary levels in the public school system. Third, the current state of the English teacher education and training opportunities are presented. Next, the role of tertiary educational institutions is described. Finally, the shortcomings of the policy are pointed out and recommendations are made. The concluding remarks summarize the main findings and present expert opinions regarding improvement opportunities in the English education system in Kuwait.

2 Kuwait: Basic Facts

Kuwait is a very small country (17,820 km²) situated at the north-eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula on the coast of the Persian (Arabian) Gulf, wedged between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. According to The World Bank database, its total population reached 3.250 million in 2012, of which roughly 31 % are Kuwaiti citizens, and two-thirds are expatriates from various countries including Egypt, India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Iran, Armenia, USA, Great Britain, and many other nations. It has a strong, stable, oil-based economy with the nominal GDP of USD 173.2 billion (2012), and a GNP per capita at USD 45.800 (International Monetary Fund 2012). The country has a literacy rate of 94 % for both genders, which is one of the highest in the GCC region. Its annual rate of expenditure on education equals 13 per cent of total public spending, which amounts to 3.9 per cent of GDP, which is slightly lower than in an average Arab country (4.9 %). Overall, Kuwait was ranked 63rd on the 2011 Human Development Index (HDI) report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which placed it above the regional average.

Article 3 of the Kuwaiti Constitution establishes Arabic as the official language of the State of Kuwait. Thus, all public services use Arabic as the primary language of communication, so that all official meetings and procedures are carried out in Arabic, and all documents are issued in Arabic, including personal identification cards of expatriates. This situation is currently undergoing a gradual change, as a new model of identity cards is being introduced, with personal information in both Arabic and English.

Arabic is also the language of instruction in the public school system. Since the adoption of the Compulsory Act in 1965, education for all citizens regardless of gender or social status has become compulsory in Kuwait from the age of six to fourteen. As Article 40 of the Kuwaiti Constitution guarantees Kuwaiti citizens free

access to education up to secondary level, the majority of Kuwaiti children are enrolled at government-sponsored schools, which are gender-segregated. This right to free education reflects the government's effort to completely eliminate illiteracy and to achieve the physical, moral, and mental development of the Kuwaiti youth.

3 The Status of the English Language in Kuwait

Although Arabic enjoys the status of the official language, the country is in fact linguistically diverse since the expatriate community constitutes about two-thirds of the population. Numerous ethnic expatriate groups regularly communicate in such languages as Hindi, Urdu, Persian (Farsi), Tamil, Bengali, Filipino, Malayalam, and Sinhala, among others. At the same time, English enjoys a special though unofficial status of the second language, and is taught as a compulsory subject at all levels of the public school system. Thus, most Kuwaitis are bilingual, preferring to speak Arabic with family, friends, and local business partners, but using English for entertainment purposes and dealings with expats.

Historically, English has been an important language in Kuwait since the end of the nineteenth century. English language was first used as the language of administration and international relations in Kuwait during the period of the British protectorate, which lasted from 1899 to 1961. English language instruction became part of the local Kuwaiti school curriculum alongside mathematics, geography, and history in 1910s (Al-Yaseen 2000). After the termination of the British protectorate treaty, the economic and cultural ties with Great Britain continued, cementing the privileged status of the English language. After Kuwait began establishing diplomatic and economic relations with many countries, its international position grew, as did the importance of English. The status of English as the language of international relations was further strengthened when Kuwait became a member state of the United Nations in 1963.

From the economic perspective, the discovery of oil in Kuwait in the 1930s and the fast-developing oil-producing industry necessitated the training of the local workforce, which led to the development of English for specific purposes known as 'petroleum English' (Karmani 2005). Kuwaitis who worked closely with the British expatriates had to acquire English in order to learn technical skills of the oil development process and to share expertise. In 1936, the Kuwaiti Council for Education was established in order to invest intellectual and financial assets in the local educational environment (Al-Edwani 2005). Thus, the economic advancement of the country, closely linked with the oil production and the import of technology, resulted in the formalization of the schooling system and the further strengthening of the status of English in the region as a vehicle for international communication.

Currently, the status of English in Kuwait as the second language is reinforced by the labour market model which heavily relies on the expatriate workforce in the private industries, as well as by technological advancements, the entertainment

industry, global trade and investment opportunities, and extensive international travel of Kuwaiti citizens for various purposes including business, education, healthcare, and pleasure (Al-Yaseen 2000).

4 English Education in Kuwait

There are about 1145 schools in Kuwait, at all levels from kindergarten to secondary. Out of this total, 664 are public and 481 are private schools (Kuwait Education Indicators Report 2007, p.18). Kuwait offers its citizens and residents a rich palette of educational institutions, including, but not limited to the following types grouped according to the status of the English language:

Public schools, with Arabic as the principal language of instruction and English taught as a second language;

Bilingual Arabic-English private schools that follow the Kuwaiti curriculum and are partly subsidized by the Kuwaiti government, with selected subjects taught in English;

Private English-language schools with the British or American curriculum, where all teachers are native speakers of English, with Arabic taught as a second language;

Private national curriculum schools (e.g. Indian, Pakistani, French, Philippine) with English either as the language of instruction or as a second language, with robust national language programs and teachers from respective ethnic backgrounds.

Public (or government) schools are free but accessible to Kuwaiti citizens only. They are gender-segregated with separate campuses for boys and girls. Free education is offered to Kuwaiti nationals at three levels: primary (5 years), intermediate (4 years) and secondary (3 years). Schooling is obligatory till the age of 14. Preschool and kindergarten are also available, though optional. Modern Standard (MS) Arabic is the language of instruction, textbooks, and other educational publications, while the vernacular Arabic (i.e. Kuwaiti Arabic dialect) remains the primary means of communication in the classroom and in social interactions among students and teachers.

In the government school system, English language is taught from first to twelfth grade, which gives each student 12 years of formal instruction, delivered in 45 min lessons five times a week. Beginning with 2002, the Ministry of Education has gradually introduced a modernized English language curriculum as well as new textbooks and assessment tools. The Ministry introduced a new textbook series for the three levels: *Fun with English* (years one to five), *Target English* (years six to nine) and *Over to You* (years ten to twelve).

Within the Ministry of Education, the Language Teaching (ELT) General Supervision department is in charge of the English language instruction and assessment at the national level. The ELT General Supervision is responsible for setting the national standards of ESL education, developing the curriculum, preparing

pedagogical materials (textbooks, workbooks, literature selection, audio-visual aids), advocating teaching methods, and producing and administering assessment tools. For each stage of the English language educations, the ELT General Supervision sets the learning objectives and evaluates learning outcomes. In addition to managing the national English language curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the department oversees English teacher preparation for primary, middle, and secondary schools in terms of supervising the practical pedagogical training process as well as approving new candidates into the national pedagogical cadres. Every teacher employed by the public school system automatically becomes an employee of the Ministry of Education.

In 2011, in an effort to establish a stronger connection between the various stakeholders in the educational process such as students, teachers, parents, administrators, and supervisors, the ELT General Supervision, under the leadership of the ELT General Supervisor, Ms. Sakina Ali Hussain, launched an official website with news bulletins, important information, useful resources and activities, past exams, syllabi and other documents which have not been available to the wider public before. The website is interactive, in that it provides opportunities to leave feedback and comments on various initiatives undertaken by the ELT general Supervision. It also provides links to various English-language projects in Kuwait, sponsored by well-established institutions such as the British Council.

According to the ELT General Supervision, the website provides opportunities for the English learners to practice the language informally and in authentic contexts. It is meant to inspire teachers to improve their professional skills and use various methodologies and materials. It allows teacher trainers to create a collaborative platform for disseminating information, offering professional development opportunities, as well as staying in touch with the needs of the in-service teachers by encouraging open communication and offering instantaneous feedback. The ELT General Supervision also created a blog (eltgeneralsupervision.wordpress.com) to encourage a more interactive relationship with the stakeholders, specifically to foster a more pro-active approach on the part of the teachers.

The effort of the ELT General Supervision is indeed praiseworthy, and has received very positive feedback from educators and parents. The mere fact that the Ministry reached out to the community by making many useful documents available, as well as establishing an informal communication channel, is truly unique against the background of standard Kuwaiti government practices.

5 The New English Language Curriculum

The ELT General Supervision adopted a new, modernized English language curriculum in 2002, and has been gradually implementing it at the three levels of education. It is important to note that the public education system in Kuwait is highly centralized. The general goals for state-sponsored education of citizens are specified by the Ministry of Education, and the ELT General Supervision must operate

within the established framework. Thus, the aims for teaching English in Kuwait are necessarily couched within three crucial general educational objectives such as pride in Islam, love and patriotism to Kuwait, and appreciation of Arab values, traditions, and culture. Those values heavily influence the choice of content throughout the ESL curriculum, eliminating all cultural information deemed offensive or undesirable, and avoiding any discussion of social phenomena which might be taboo or controversial in the Arab world.

The new English language curriculum follows from the mission and vision of the ELT General Supervision. The new principles underpinning educational standards center on fostering cooperation among the stakeholders in the educational process, inspiring students to become active learners, and raising academic standards. According to the ELT General Supervision, the modern curriculum from kindergarten to pre-university education is aimed at developing critical thinking, independence, creativity, and problem-solving skills to produce graduates who can keep pace with scientific and technological developments and meet the challenges of modern life.

In particular, the educational objectives within the new English language curriculum encompass linguistics, cognitive and affective goals. The linguistic goals are subdivided into the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) and are specified both in terms of program outcomes (e.g. to study, use, and enjoy the English language and literature, communicate orally and in writing) as well as in terms of assessable competencies (e.g. listening for specific information to complete tables, talking about self and others, writing a restaurant review).

Cognitive goals focus on the development of such skills as predicting, defining, logical reasoning, comparing/contrasting, justifying opinions, decision-making, and differentiating fact from opinion. Affective goals zero in on fostering the students' pride in Islam by carefully selecting texts and dialogues which expose them to the familiar cultural content, information, and lifestyles. Other important affective goals include enhancing the students' collaborative and interactive skills (group work, pair work, teamwork), self-awareness, self-confidence, empathy, ability to engage in a topic, and public speaking skills.

The new curriculum is well-structured and addresses various stages of the students' linguistic development in terms of standards, benchmarks, competencies and sub-competencies (The ELT National Curriculum 2011). Standards are translated into programmatic goals, separately described for each language skill (reading, writing, speaking, listening). Benchmarks are performance indicators described for each grade and each language skill, with an understanding that "not all learners, however, are expected to meet all benchmarks at the same time or in the same way" (p.25). The competencies and sub-competencies are specified for each grade and for the four language skills. They form the basis for carefully staged language presentation and practice, as well as ministry-mandated assessment (four progress tests per year).

The curriculum progresses from less to more complex linguistic, cognitive, and affective tasks as well as including a variety of contexts, functions and activities. For ease of use, each unit is mapped onto a five-category grid: Educational

objectives, grammar, functions, vocabulary, and activities. The curriculum map is available to educators in hard copy and in the electronic format.

The curriculum is also well-supported by developments in language teaching methodology, as it advocates a healthy balance between the communicative approach and a structural approach. It is said to be “content-based, skill-based and task-oriented” (The ELT national Curriculum 2011: 43). Students’ progress and the extent to which learning objectives are met are assessed annually by means of national English language examinations, prepared, administered, and evaluated by the Ministry of Education/ELT General Supervision. Samples of the past examinations at various levels are available at www.eltgeneralsupervision.wordpress.com.

In addition to its commitment to upgrade the English language curricula, the ELT General Supervision is responsible for raising the efficiency of teachers and improving the learning environment. However, researchers emphasize that updated and modernized curricula have little chance of creating a positive impact on the general state of the English language competency among Kuwaiti public-school system graduates without the qualitative reconstruction of the existing learning environment (Al Darwish 2006; Al-Edwani 2005). Specifically, the national system of professional training of ESL teachers demands an overhaul in order to enhance teacher preparation in terms of knowledge, teaching methodologies, and professionalism (Al-Rubaie 2010).

6 English Teacher Preparation

Kuwait University with its College of Education is a well-reputed institution producing graduates with English teaching qualifications. Established in 1980 in response to a long-standing need for a national work-force in the field of education, the college prepares well-trained teaching cadres in various educational fields including English. The college houses several academic departments, technical centers and specialized units. The major departments include curricula and teaching methods, educational psychology, educational foundations, educational administration and planning. The two technical centers provide training in educational technology, while specialized units focus on counseling and academic issues.

The College of Education offers programs at three levels, undergraduate, postgraduate, and graduate. Its undergraduate programs prepare teachers for kindergarten, primary, intermediate and secondary stage education in various areas and subjects, including English as a Second Language. The college offers postgraduate diploma in education and psychological counseling while graduate programs present Master’s in four majors: curricula & teaching methods, educational foundation, educational administration and counseling. The college closely collaborates with the Ministry of Education to meet the needs of the country in terms of implementing the educational reforms and producing workforce to meet the demands of society. It also has an active role in organizing and participating in national and international

seminars, symposia, and conferences for the development of education and improving the quality of instruction.

In addition to Kuwait University, another government-run institution is Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). Established in 1982 in response to a growing need for skilled local labor, PAAET provides vocational and technical training in four colleges: education, business studies, technological studies, and health sciences. PAAET also houses several institutes: energy (formerly electricity and water), telecommunications and navigation, industrial training, nursing, construction, and vocational training. The language of instruction is Arabic, while English is taught as a foreign language in relation to the field of study (English for specific purposes).

In 2002, PAAET's College of Education established the English language major program in the English Department with the view to training primary school English teachers to meet the needs of the Ministry of Education. The main objective of the program is to develop Kuwaiti cadres for the English language teaching profession, as well as to make up for the shortage in the Ministry of Education. Candidates for admission to the English language program must pass a written proficiency test as well as an oral interview. Graduates get a B.Ed. in ELT. The first batch of graduates was released in the Spring and Summer semesters of 2004–2005.

The only private university offering a degree in English education is Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). In 2005, GUST established a major of English/Certification in Secondary Education (ECSE) as the first such education program in Kuwait. The ECSE faculty work with all public school districts as well as private schools to facilitate both student internships and student teaching assignments. The ECSE also offers to students at all levels necessary experience in both public and private sector schools in Kuwait. The emphasis of ECSE is to continue the development of the learning process in the field of education, to prepare English secondary education teachers to achieve all standards and objectives designed for modern teacher education preparation programs, and to enhance the quality of education, especially in Kuwait. ECSE offers education courses in areas of educational, historical, and philosophical foundations; school administration; curriculum, teaching and learning methods; classroom management, psychology, assessment, research, technology, and material development; as well as internships and student teaching experiences. The practical training of the English teachers is also supervised by the ELT General Supervision assess the candidates level of preparedness for the profession. The graduates receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Education and are eligible to pursue a career in secondary public and private schools in Kuwait.

In addition to training and supervising English teachers, the Ministry of Education is heavily involved in future planning as well as in-service teachers' professional development. In terms of planning, since the early twenty-first century, the Ministry of Education has sought to prepare a general, long-term education strategy, focusing on education for the years up to 2025 in an effort to align teaching methodologies with the current needs of globalized world. The National Education Development plan for 2005–2025 specifies the new areas of development for which the Ministry

of Education plans to allocate resources and manpower. One such area is specificities in the Fifteenth Project entitled 'Reconsidering the Organization and the Overall Structure of General Education in Public School', and includes the initiative to develop educational programs for kindergarten in basic subjects including English as a second language, as well as making kindergarten (or other forms of preschool education) compulsory.

According to the National Education Development Plan, the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing training opportunities for teachers and other ministry employees in order to enhance their professional skills in their respective areas of specialization. For example, in the 2007/2008 academic year, in the area of English as a Second Language, the training courses included preparation of new teachers for primary and intermediate levels, technology training in language classrooms communication skills, curriculum development, TOEFL preparation for secondary level students, refresher courses for intermediate and secondary level teachers. Over seven hundred in-service English teachers completed the aforementioned professional development courses.

In spite of considerable efforts on the part of the Ministry of Education as well as private tertiary institutions, there are many opportunities for improvement in the field of English as a Second Language pedagogy in Kuwait. Improving the quality of English as a Second Language instruction in public schools is currently a matter of national debate. Many researchers observe that the low achievement of Kuwaiti students in the public school system with respect to English skills must be tackled by first improving teacher preparation and professional training. Currently, at Kuwait University, future English teachers complete an overwhelming majority of the coursework in Arabic, including crucial pedagogical subjects such as teaching methodologies, with only four courses mandatory in English. This results in an insufficient preparation of the future teachers of English in terms of linguistics skills, which may lead to a plethora of problems for the public-schools graduates, especially if they intend to pursue higher education with English as the language of instruction.

Al Refaie (2010) studied the effects of poor preparation of ESL teachers in the public school system in Kuwait. She found that teacher's pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge was inadequate and their teaching methods outdated, as they placed emphasis on drills and memorizing out-of-context vocabulary lists. Also, the teaching materials were found to be dull, lacking cultural content, and disconnected from other school subjects. Most importantly, however, the respondents complained about the teachers' general lack of professionalism. One of the respondents commenting on the assessment process in high school said: "[G]ood marks were often put for obedience and diligence rather than progress in academic skills," (p.169). Another participant reminisced about the extent and methods of language instruction: "We spend years on 'Hello, my name is...' and 'How do you do,' as well as memorizing set-book texts." (p.171). As a result, the current generation of public high school graduates generally have poor English skills in terms of reading comprehension and expression in speech and writing, rendering their linguistic preparation insufficient for college-level work.

7 English in Higher Education

Higher education institutions in Kuwait comprise public and private colleges and universities. Kuwait University, established in 1966, is a government-sponsored higher education institution consisting of 16 colleges, such as art, science, law, engineering and petroleum, medicine, dentistry, education, Islamic studies, and social sciences, among others. The colleges of science, engineering and petroleum, medicine, dentistry, and administrative science use English as the language of instruction. Thus, the entrance examinations to the above mentioned programs include an in-house English language proficiency test in order to assess the prospective student's ability to function successfully in an English-speaking academic environment.

In addition to state-sponsored higher education, Kuwait offers several private universities modeled on the American-style institutions of higher education, the most prominent being the American University of Kuwait (AUK), affiliated with Dartmouth College, and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST), affiliated with the University of Missouri in St. Louis. Undergraduate programs include business administration, accounting, computer science, engineering, humanities, and liberal arts, such as English and American literature, education, linguistics/translation, as well as mass communication. Other English-language colleges and universities include the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), Box Hill College, American College of the Middle East (ACM) and American University of the Middle East (AUM). The admissions criteria to universities specify the minimum English proficiency requirements in terms of one of the three standardized tests: TOEFL IBT, IELTS, and ACCUPLACER. Candidates scoring below specified benchmarks on a standardized English proficiency tests are not admitted to undergraduate programs. As all private English-language colleges and universities in Kuwait offer non-credit intensive English programs to students with low English proficiency, university candidates whose English skills are insufficient for the full-time academic program have the opportunity to improve language skills before enrolling in credit courses.

In addition to offering free university education at Kuwait University, as well as merit scholarship to private, western-style universities in the country, the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait is taking serious steps in providing international scholarships to Kuwaiti students. The former Minister of Education and Higher Education in the State of Kuwait has mentioned that the Ministry is currently providing 4500 seats in different countries. This step solidifies the Ministry's attempt in preparing stronger graduates in various fields, deemed strategic for the country's development. Before leaving Kuwait, students who encounter some delays in getting their visas, are strongly encouraged to improve their English language at certified institutions in Kuwait like the British Council and Amid East. This encouragement reflects the Ministry's understanding that mastering English is an essential step towards guaranteeing better future specialists in all fields.

8 Recommendations

Talking about the status of English in Kuwait, one needs to highlight some of the figures that might play a role, whether directly or indirectly, in the present mediocre proficiency of Kuwaiti students at public schools. Since the Kuwaiti teaching sector relies heavily on specific Arab expats in teaching English as a foreign language, it is relevant to reflect on their numbers at Kuwaiti schools. According to a report prepared by the Ministry of Education (2012), the total number of non-Kuwaiti teachers at all stages is 4645 vis-à-vis 2068 Kuwaiti teachers (c.f. Table 1).

As Table 1 shows, Kuwaiti teachers are a minority in the government school system, constituting less than fifty per cent of the cadre. The highest imbalance is at the secondary school stage, where Kuwaiti teachers represent less than a quarter of the cadre. It must be noted at this point that only Kuwaiti teachers are trained under the supervision of the Ministry of Educations, while expatriate cadres receive their degrees and professional training from abroad, typically in their home countries. Although the non-Kuwaiti teachers have been licensed to teach English in Kuwait, their preparation leaves much to be desired. Such figures suggest that there is a connection between the level of low English language proficiency and the high number of expats, most of whom need better training in teaching English as a second language. The urgent remedy to this problem in English language teaching would be to offer professional teacher training opportunities to all English teachers to upgrade their skills and to ensure that the new objectives of the curriculum are properly addressed.

It has also been suggested that developing a regional curriculum would be one of the solutions to the English language teaching problems. Kuwait is part of the Gulf Co-operation Council, GCC, which comprises Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, and Oman. The European Union is a similar example of a group of countries that are regionally homogenized, a circumstance which urges every single country to be part of a collaborative language teaching program. A study by Marianthi Karatsiori shows that 26 European countries have decided to develop a special initial-language teacher training program. The program necessitates specific requirements for qualified language teachers in secondary education. The study concludes that there are evident differences and variations between the 26 countries, but the ultimate goal is to appraise and adopt best practices (Karatsiori 2013).

Similar to the initial-language teacher education suggested by this study, one thinks that it would be a very relevant scenario if GCC countries set a common language policy in which foreign language teachers take specific preparatory

Table 1 ESL teachers in the government sector in Kuwait

Nationality	Level of education			TOTAL
	Primary	Middle	Secondary	
Kuwaiti	1193	622	253	2068
Non-Kuwaiti	1787	1720	1138	4645

courses for gaining a pedagogically acceptable qualification in English language teaching. Another solution would be to create a common certification program, similar to PGCE UK model, which can be accepted as the threshold for teaching in secondary education, for instance. The ideal situation would be to develop a GCC language policy where Arabian Gulf students can enjoy a standardized English language programme and uniformly trained English teachers. In this respect, one can further suggest the involvement of academia in forming such a policy in the GCC. With the vast multilingual background of the EU, tremendous efforts were exerted towards unifying language policy. Most of such efforts were crowned with success. A study by Jeroen Darquennes shows that “The combination of both policy directions and research trends is meant to give way to a generalising reflection on challenges related to European language policy as expressed in the Commission’s communications on multilingualism and on the role academia could (or should) play in meeting these challenges” (Darquennes, 2011). This stance reflects the importance of academia in forming such a policy. The linguistic situation in the GCC is far simpler hence the only language that needs to be strongly promoted and properly taught is the English language. A unified language policy would undoubtedly enhance the status of English as a second language, and would trigger further academic research for the benefit of students, educators, administrators, and policy makers.

The way to achieving a standardized language program could be through combining cultural awareness and effective teaching methods, which would represent the first step towards envisaging an effective language policy in the Gulf States, Kuwait in particular. Language dualism as practiced in UAE could provide a viable solution for a solid language policy. Teacher training should be based on modern language methodologies and the use of technology, which goes hand in hand with customizing what is culturally-appropriate for Kuwait and GCC countries. An effective language policy should be congruent with effective curricula and teaching methods.

“The UAE has accommodated globalization by embracing global English within a policy of linguistic dualism whereby English is associated with business, modernity, and internationalism, and Arabic is associated with religion, tradition, and localism” (Montelongo and Herter 2010) Adopting global English and encapsulating it in a local context has resulted in buttressing the view of what is known as glocalization, a coined concept that best suits the linguistic situation in the Arabian Gulf, which is defined by Robertson as “a twofold process involving the interpenetration of the universalisation of particularism and the particularisation of universalism’.” (Robertson 1992, 100)

In an interesting experiment conducted at Higher Colleges of Technology, HCT, which is a multi-campus system, with colleges in the cities of Al Ain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, and Sharjah, and a central office in Abu Dhabi.2, new female Emirati student teachers become aware of the indispensable bifurcation between language policy and planning. “The program, which graduated its first teachers in 2004, prepares Emirati women as English teachers for UAE primary schools and was developed with the dual purpose of demonstrating the benefits of

progressive learner- centered pedagogies in the dual Islamic and global contexts of Emirati schools, as well as addressing the recognized need to improve English teaching within the Emirates” (Montelongo and Herter 2010). Adopting this unique language policy in GCC countries could lead to producing more effective curricula, focusing on language skills and encapsulating them in a local dress. Benefitting from the Emirati experience would help instructors from other GCC countries, especially Kuwait, to create this important dualism when producing their language policies.

On a further note, revising the existing language policy necessitates the modification of pedagogical practices, which entails adopting culturally-appropriate curricula. As Karmani points out, most of the curricula used in the Arabian Gulf are imported by Anglo-American companies which have no clue at all as to the appropriate cultural or religious norms in these particular countries. One thus encounters very unacceptable texts or cultural messages that are completely foreign to the GCC area norms and traditions. (Karmani 2005:9). Having the above-mentioned dual plan in mind, one can think of adequate language programs that would not affect the identity of GCC students. In a study conducted by Hasaneen, Al- Kandari, and Al Sharoufi at the Gulf University for Science and Technology in Kuwait, the researchers investigated whether using the English language or using modern mass media, as globalization agents, would affect the identity of their students. They have found that “agents of localisation, including local news and local television programs, actively influence Kuwaiti students to embrace their national identity. Notably, this study found that local news and programs were linked to national identity (Hasanen et al. 2014). This finding shows that adding the local element to globalisation is crucial to achieve a successful language policy in the GCC region. In other words, adopting Robertson’s *glocalisation* in language policy and practice, the way it was adopted in the UAE, would guarantee an effective language policy for Kuwait, and by extension for the GCC countries.

Another factor that could positively affect the enactment of an effective language policy in Kuwait would be the involvement of TESOL Kuwait, an affiliate of TESOL International in Kuwait, in shaping language policy in the country. Although TESOL Kuwait is a new affiliate of TESOL International-USA, it has held several international conferences in the country, and has had a considerable impact on teaching English in Kuwait. The impact of language policy on TESOL is unequivocal. English programs should be primarily based on an effective language policy: “Language policy has a direct impact on TESOL and should therefore be considered as a crucial factor in planning for ESOL programs. Provided here is specific information on how an ESOL curriculum might be planned which is more compatible with the existing language policy in various countries around the world. Classification” (Judd et al. 2016) This stance clearly emphasizes the importance of having TESOL organizations, which are supposed to translate language policy into effective and culturally-appropriate curricula, involved in shaping language policy in Kuwait. Fostering a culturally-appropriate language policy would then entail the creation of relevant curricula that are both linguistically effective and culturally appropriate.

No single ESOL curriculum or instructional strategy will suit all circumstances. As G. Richard Tucker says, “Educational or national policy serve to define the parameters within which language problems can be developed” (1977:16), and only through an understanding of the English language policy of a given country can we help devise the proper curricular and teaching approach for the particular educational environment” (Judd et al. 2016). It is clear then that in order to devise an effective language policy, experts in the field, typically those who are involved in TESOL organisations, would definitely provide responsible authorities with accurate and expert opinion on how to devise an efficacious language policy.

9 Concluding Remarks

The issue of English as second Language in Kuwait seems to be replete with apparent contradictions. While the status of English in Kuwait as an unofficial second language is not debated, the extent to which English is embraced by the general population remains at odds with its alleged importance as the language of both business and education. Although young generations of Kuwaitis recognize the importance of English for career opportunities, knowledge acquisition, and success in the globalized world, very few actually speak or read in English outside the classroom (Al Rubaie 2010). Even though the Ministry of Education allocates substantial resources and effort into curriculum development, teaching materials, and teacher preparation, the current state of ESL pedagogy does not produce high level English proficiency among the public school graduates. The English language policy in Kuwait seems well-designed and coherent, but its implementation remains deeply unsatisfactory.

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English Language Teaching in Libya After Gaddafi

Abed Aloreibi and Michael D. Carey

Abstract This chapter discusses the impact of the political, cultural and social background of Libyan society on the current quality of English education in the country. Libya has witnessed several attempts to reform English education since the 1970s; however, these attempts were based on introducing grammar-based curricula which were designed by non-native speakers of English, few of whom were Libyans. In an effort to reform English education in the country, the Libyan Ministry of Education developed new English curricula in 2000 based on CLT principles to be used in Libyan primary and high schools in place of the previous curricula which aimed mainly to teach grammar and reading. However, Libyan English teachers have not been able to help their students of English to achieve the objectives of the new curricula because the teachers predominantly use the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and teacher-centred pedagogy. Despite the government's intentions to innovate with communicative curricula, the teachers do not actually use these curricula in primary and high school classrooms. The quality of English language teacher education in Libya is underdeveloped and this situation can be seen as a result of a greater issue; the Libyan government's accreditation procedures for universities, programs and courses are not well-developed.

Keywords English • Language • Teaching • Libya

1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the impact of the political, cultural and social background of Libyan society on the current quality of English education in the country. Moreover, the chapter discusses the government's intentions to adopt a Communicative

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Language Teaching (CLT) approach in the country and how English education is actually delivered by teachers and managed by the government in Libya. This discussion is informed by a recent case study conducted at the University of Benghazi, Agdabia campus in which pre-service English teachers, English language education lecturers and other university officials and stakeholders were interviewed, and pre-service language teachers' teaching knowledge and skills were studied through an intensive 7-week English teaching methods course.

The recent events in Libya are well known to the world, but the prelude to these events needs to be explained to set the context for English language teaching and learning in Libya. The discovery of oil and gas in Libya in the 1950s led to an urgent need in Libya to develop better foreign language education in general, and English in particular, as part of improving the country's economy. The former Gaddafi regime that ruled Libya for over four decades developed political tensions with the west, particularly the USA. Consequently, during the height of this period of tension in the late 1980s, the use of any foreign language was banned in the country for over 6 years, contributing to the current poor English proficiency of Libyans. Though English language teaching was resumed in the mid-1990s, the students experienced a lack of qualified teachers and a limited curriculum (Najeeb 2013).

Libya has witnessed several attempts to reform English education since the 1970s; however, these attempts were based on introducing grammar-based curricula which were designed by non-native speakers of English, few of whom were Libyans. In an effort to reform English education in the country, the Libyan Ministry of Education developed new English curricula in 2000 based on CLT principles to be used in Libyan primary and high schools in place of the previous curricula which aimed mainly to teach grammar and reading. However, Libyan English teachers have not been able to help their students of English to achieve the objectives of the new curricula because the teachers predominantly use the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and teacher-centred pedagogy.

The quality of English language teacher education in Libya is underdeveloped and this situation can be seen as a result of a greater issue; the Libyan government's accreditation procedures for universities, programs and courses are not well-developed. According to the Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions report (NCQAAETI 2012) the centre runs systematic visits to tertiary institutions in Libya and requires the providers to submit applications to obtain accreditation. However, the quality of this process is difficult to verify, as the centre officials state that none of their accreditation criteria are available for the public to view. The centre accredits all educational institutions within all scientific and vocational fields in Libya. This is very different to the accreditation process in western contexts where vocational education accreditation is discipline-specific, more tightly regulated, and transparent.

Other issues such as alignment between the curricula currently used at primary and high schools in Libya and those used by lecturers at the Agdabia faculty are discussed in this chapter. Despite the government's intentions to innovate with communicative curricula, the teachers do not actually use these curricula in primary and high school classrooms.

2 Historical Background

More than 2000 international companies started investing in Libya in construction, trade and manufacturing after the discovery of oil and gas in the 1950s (Najeeb and Eldokali 2012; Bayoud 2013). However, the direction of this economic development changed when the Army Captain Muammar al-Gaddafi (henceforth Gaddafi) took control of the country on the 1st of September, 1969 in a bloodless coup, and established the Revolutionary Command Council (Blanchard and Zanotti 2011). The council was formed by his army companions and headed by him. The military governors transferred the country's administrative and political leadership from the east of Libya, where the former king Idris Alnusi used to live, to Tripoli in the west. The former king was on a medical trip overseas when the young military men took control of the country. Gaddafi implemented a political, social, and economic agenda in Libya through his 'Green Book' which rejected capitalism and communism as being rich-oriented. He announced what he called the Third Universal Theory which he considered to be the ultimate solution for the world and anticipated that the world would one day adopt the theory (Blanchard and Zanotti 2011). The theory is described in the Green Book:

The Third Universal Theory heralds emancipation from the fetters of injustice, despotism, exploitation, and economic and political hegemony, for the purpose of establishing a society of all the people where all are free and share equally in authority, wealth and arms. Freedom will then triumph definitively and universally (Gaddafi 1976, p. 19).

One of the main principles of this theory was that people should all work as partners and not as workers on the one side and rich owners on the other. Gaddafi (1976) states in the Green Book that "wage-earners are but slaves to the masters who hire them. They are temporary slaves, and their slavery lasts as long as they work for wages from the employers, be they individuals or the state" (p. 12). He sympathized with poor people and urged them to take the businesses from their owners and distribute them equally among the workers who should work together as partners. The main goal for their work was to produce society's daily needs and not to make profits or expand the business (Bayoud 2013).

Influenced by the president of Egypt in the 1970s, Jamal Abdu Alnaser, Gaddafi developed the desire to unite the Arab countries and resist western colonising forces (Blanchard 2012). He declared his sympathy and support for what he considered the movements of liberation around the world. He supported groups and peoples in various parts of the world, including Europe and South America with money, logistics and weapons to fight back against their opponents. His negative attitude against colonising countries, which were mainly western, resulted in Libyans generating similar attitudes towards these western regimes. The United States and the west considered Gaddafi's support as an unacceptable act of supporting terrorism and urged him to end his support (Blanchard and Zanotti 2011).

The Gaddafi regime spied on Libyan detractors domestically and in exile and assassinated them through its intelligence and security forces, calling the opposition in exile "stray dogs" (Blanchard and Zanotti 2011). He was then accused of

conducting terrorist attacks in Europe and bombing a Pan America airliner. The International court of justice demanded Gaddafi hand over two Libyan nationals suspected of the bombing, but the regime refused to do so. This act of defiance drove Libya into undeclared war with America. The Libyan regime instigated political tensions with the west and the USA in particular.

Consequently, during the height of this period of tension in the late 1980s, the use of any foreign language was banned in the country for over 6 years, contributing to the current poor English proficiency of Libyans. Use of any foreign language, including English, was illegal at that time in private and state schools, universities and hospitals. The USA imposed economic, political, and military sanctions on the Libyan regime which continued for approximately 20 years. The Libyan regime then started to re-introduce English education to Libyan schools and universities after Saif Al-Islam, the eldest son of the Gaddafi, launched his *Libya Alghd* or *Libya of Tomorrow* project (Gheblawi 2011) which aimed to reform Libya and maintain closer relationships with the west.

After the Libya of Tomorrow project was launched in the mid-2000s, the relations between the regime and the west began to stabilize. The main focus of the project was to start a new chapter with the international community and also the Libyans in exile. Saif Al-Islam, who received his PhD from the University of Eastern London, invited all Libyans of opposition in exile to return to Libya, guaranteeing their safety, as well as their civil rights, and financial compensation for being in exile. He declared the start of a new media age in the country with more freedom of speech and less government restrictions on human rights.

However, this was considered as an attempt to polish the face of the regime and to give Saif Al-Islam more popularity in Libya (El Issawi 2013). The Libyan public and other observers of the political situation in Libya considered his intervention in the country's political domain as a sign that his father was preparing him to inherit the leadership of Libya. He declared the suspension of Libya's nuclear and long-range missile programs. He also visited the United States to negotiate mutual relations and benefits for the two countries. Gaddafi's son implemented several measures to fix the country's relations with the international community and maintain the economic, social and political reformations in the country. He also instigated projects to develop the infrastructure and industrial capacity of the country. He invited international human rights representatives to visit Libya and assess the situation by visiting Libyan prisons and police departments.

Saif Al-Islam, who speaks English fluently, invited international companies and business owners to invest in Libya. This led to an urgent need in Libya to develop better foreign language education, particularly English, as part of improving the country's economy. However, this was a challenge which could not be overcome despite years of work and investment (Omar 2012). Libya has witnessed several attempts to reform English education since the 1970s. However, the earlier attempts were based on introducing grammar-based curricula which were designed by non-native speakers of English, few of whom were Libyans. After the reintroduction of English in the 1990s, the new English language syllabus was based on Communicative

Language Teaching (CLT), but CLT has not been the panacea for English language teaching in Libya.

3 The Tribal Nature of the Libyan Society

Tribal loyalties and social customs of the Libyan people play a significant role in organizing the political, administrative, and legal aspects in Libyan society (Myers 2013). These social norms and cultural heritage are held in the highest esteem by Libyans. Traditional rulers are highly respected by the people in northern African nations and especially in Libya (Elbendak 2008).

There are over 2000 tribes in Libya (Tempelhof and Omar 2012) which constitute the social complexity of the country. Tribal elders are most often the leaders of these tribes and therefore the entire country. Myers (2013) reports that elders, especially the *Sheekh* are arbitrators who intervene to resolve disputes between people from either the same tribe, or from different tribes. In the latter case, usually elders from neutral tribes form unofficial committees to manage these situations. The elders in each tribe are known for their wisdom and good decision making and are highly respected by the public, and younger people are required socially and ethically to abide by their decisions. Elders occasionally hold unofficial meetings to discuss the various issues arising in the society and how to manage them.

Gaddafi misused this tribal nature of the country to maintain peoples' loyalty and support (Tempelhof and Omar 2012; Mayer 2013). Gaddafi considered the tribe as a *social umbrella* that provided its members with the social security they needed, but the tribe in his era played a more substantial role in the Libyan political domain (El-Katiri 2012). Gaddafi (1976) states in the Green Book that "The tribe is a natural social umbrella for social security. By virtue of social tribal traditions, the tribe provides for its members collective protection in the form of fines, revenge and defence; namely, social protection" (p. 22). For the first time in Libya, however, he formed what was called in Libya *Keadatshabia* or peoples' leadership councils which gave a semi-official title to these councils in every Libyan city and directly linked them to the main council in Tripoli. These semi-official governing bodies can still, in some cases, influence the government's decisions and actions.

Although the current government does not openly admit their recognition of these semi-official bodies, it does contact them unofficially from time to time to gain the support and compliance of the public with the government's interests. This semi-official legislation is derived from the Arabic term *A'urf* which broadly translates to *social convention*; a set of agreed, stipulated, or generally accepted standards, social norms, or criteria. The *A'urf* comes second after the court in Libya (Myers 2013) which constitutes the legal and official legislative authority. Libyans generally appreciate their social convention but there is wide agreement that the former regime misused it as well as Libyan cultural and social norms to maintain Gaddafi's rule of the country (Tempelhof and Omar 2012).

4 Colonialism and Attitudes Towards Learning English

Unlike the case with other neighbouring countries, especially in the North West region of Africa, the Libyan people have a history of resisting all forms of colonisation and led battles against the successive colonising armies that attempted to rule the country over past centuries (Hajjaji 1967). Libyans are generally cautious about foreigners and foreign intervention (Gheblawi 2011). In Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria, for example, French is the dominant language, although it is only considered the second language of these countries. When the Algerian president Butaflika delivered a public speech in French on a national occasion in Algeria in the 2000s, he was widely criticised in the Libyan media, and by the public in Libya. This reflects the overall attitude of the Libyan people towards all forms of foreign language use in all Arab countries and not just in Libya.

The Libyans fought the Ottoman occupation of Libya for over 300 years and then the Italians for over 30 years. Despite the attempts by both occupying forces to enforce Turkish and then Italian languages respectively in Libya at the expense of Arabic, Arabic is still the only language used now in the country. The Turkish government, for instance, restricted the use of Arabic in the public domain in Libya and put strict rules and penalties in place to punish those who did not comply. The penalties included fines, taxes, imprisonment, and even death (Hajjaji 1967).

The Italians had similar rules and both governments placed heavy restrictions on Arabic education and replaced it with Turkish and Italian education. Only a few Libyans were allowed in each Italian school and there were limits to the education levels they could reach in these schools (Youssef 2012). The Italians also detained hundreds of thousands of families in detention camps and sent them into exile in the Mediterranean islands to reduce the Libyan population and replace them with Italian occupants. Libya was considered the fourth shore of Italy and therefore the Italians instigated these actions to eliminate the Arab identity and language as part of their colonising ambitions (Hajjaji 1967).

These practices generated a negative attitude towards communicating in a different language among the Libyan people. Libyan leaders who fought against these occupying forces are now remembered as national heroes in Libya, both officially and by the public and stories of liberation from colonisation are part of the oral history passed from parent to child. The Libyans also developed negative attitudes towards the colonisers and their practices in sympathy for what their forbears had suffered throughout history.

Libyans currently display a negative attitude towards learning English, most likely due to the American military actions against Muslim countries worldwide in the name of peace and democracy (Youssef 2012). This highlights the importance of maintaining a stable political relationship with Libya while introducing English into the country as identity and motivation are crucial elements in learning foreign languages (Brown 2007). The lack of motivation and positive attitudes towards learning English in Libya (Youssef 2012) might be one of the main reasons for maintaining a traditional style of teaching. Generally, when some Libyan students

practice English communicatively, their peers do not take them seriously. It is most often perceived as showing off, so it is therefore socially taboo to use English in public.

5 The Low Income of Teachers and the Financial Expectations of Students

The income for an average teacher in Libya, especially in the public sector, is modest compared to that of other professions, or to teaching in the private sector. Although there is no empirical research correlating low teacher performance with the low pay they receive (Muralidharan 2012), there is anecdotal evidence that Libyan teachers' low pay affects their performance in the classroom and causes them to feel unhappy about the profession. The teachers and stakeholders we interviewed in our case study concurred with this opinion. A stakeholder from the Agdabia department of education said "As a matter of fact, we have teams of very capable teachers in town but sometimes they complain about the pay in the education sector". The word for teacher in Libya is *mudares* which is pronounced similarly to the word *imddares*. The former means teacher whereas the latter is used to refer to the car that is parked or stationary. It is used metaphorically to refer to the society's perspective of the teacher's financial situation. In other words, the Libyan teacher is unable to progress financially.

Male students also perceive teaching as a feminine profession and believe men should do other more physical work that females cannot do such as construction, car repairing and catering. The income of a teacher is suited to females as they are not socially required to cover any major financial responsibilities. Male students who quit their education and have their own businesses or work hard to create their own enterprise are admired by their fellow students. Male and female students are separated in Libyan schools starting from grade six at the end of Elementary school when they are typically 12 years old. Beyond that point the two genders are not allowed to be together at the same school until they graduate high school and then they get back together again at University. Students at this stage (especially males) usually start thinking about getting married and other life necessities like buying a house, a car, and commencing a private business or finding a good job. Males tend to think that these matters are important for females when judging if a man qualifies for marriage.

Libyans of different gender do not usually interact privately or communicate unless between siblings and families (Abubaker 2008). Similarly, students of both genders do not feel free to interact or participate actively in class activities in mixed classes. In order for such activities to be carried out within the Libyan schema, the class has to be composed of either males or females. In some cases, the teacher has to be the same gender as the students as well. Some female students prefer to be not only with other female students in the class but also with a female teacher.

6 The Standard of Libyan English and the New Curricula

English language teachers in Libya argue that the undergraduate students of English in most of the Libyan universities have poor English proficiency. Rajendran (2010), for example, states that Libyan “university students fail to even understand the meanings of commonly used English words like *post office, money, street*” (p. 64). Libyan students also have difficulties using English for communicative purposes as they cannot speak or understand spoken English in its natural context (Omar 2012).

To place these claims within the context of international standards, we consulted the available information provided by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). IELTS can be sat in academic or general training modules and is a robust, validated international test which examined two million candidates in 2012. The test assesses reading, writing, listening and speaking with a 1–9 band scale system for each part of the test and then calculates an average overall band score of the test taker between 1 and 9. A global band score of 1 indicates that the test taker has a very limited competence and command of English while 9 refers to a fully operational command of it.

According to data collected in 2011 (IELTS 2011) Arabic language users have the lowest English language proficiency across all four skills (5.2 in both the academic and general modules) compared to language learners from the 40 language groups who have been most frequently tested by IELTS (range = 5.2–7.2/7.3 in the academic/general modules). Generally, Arabic speakers have the sixth lowest proficiency in speaking English in the academic module and the third lowest in the general module (mean academic and general = 5.7; range = 5.4–7.4/8.0 academic/general modules). Libya is not the poorest performing Arabic country in terms of its English performance; it is intermediate in the fifth position out of ten Arabic countries for both speaking and overall competence.

Clearly, English language proficiency in Libya is by all accounts poor. Much time, effort, and money have been spent in Libya in the last few years to develop better English education in the country (Orafi and Borg 2009). The Libyan government has designed and developed English language teaching materials, in and outside of Libya, for primary and secondary schools. However, the intention for the graduates from Libyan universities to use these materials to teach secondary and high school students did not lead to achievement of the desired objectives of the curricula and designers. This is because there is usually a gap between what the teachers of English have previously studied at their Libyan university and what they are eventually required to teach in schools (Orafi and Borg 2009). Unless the pre-service teachers of English can utilise their knowledge of teaching of English and also develop their abilities and familiarity with modern and effective methods of teaching English, their knowledge and skills will not impact on what is taught in schools.

The new curricula were introduced in Libya in 2000 and are mainly based on CLT principles to be used in Libyan primary and high schools in place of the previous curricula which aimed mainly to teach grammar and reading. However, Libyan

English teachers have not been able to help their students of English to achieve the objectives of the new curricula because the teachers were influenced by their own background and understanding of teaching English (Orafi and Borg 2009). Their use of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and maintaining a teacher-centred style of teaching is at odds with the communicative principles of the new curricula and the ways its objectives can be achieved.

The introduction of the new English curricula was not accompanied by professional development programs for primary and high school teachers, nor was professional development in the new curriculum or CLT introduced into university teacher training courses. English education at Libyan universities is mainly taught by sessional staff and lecturers are at liberty to choose the materials that are convenient for them to deliver to their students. They tend to focus on grammar and reading and use traditional teacher-centred approaches. When pre-service teachers of English graduate and start teaching at Libyan primary and high schools, they find the communicative curricula challenging. Therefore, they tend to filter these curricula and only teach the reading and grammar components and ignore speaking and listening activities.

After the Gaddafi regime was overthrown in the 2011 upheavals, English primary and high school curricula were slightly revised. However, this was only done to omit the political influence of the former regime on these curricula. For instance, the parts of curricula that discussed Gaddafi's life and his political, socialist and economical perspectives as well as his photos were all removed. The new authorities also changed the state's former name and flag colour on the cover page of the textbooks.

Despite this poor international comparison of proficiency and other problematic intercultural issues with the teaching and learning of English, English is the most preferred foreign language to learn and use in Libya (Black 2007). It is rare to see or hear about schools or language centres where French, Italian, Spanish or Chinese programs are offered in this country. More than 70 % of the Libyan economy is based on the oil industry. This has led parents to pay large amounts of money to language centres so that their children learn how to use English communicatively.

However, the lack of quality teachers of English is believed to be the main reason why the whole process of teaching and learning of English remains ineffective (Orafi and Borg 2009; Omar 2012). Besides the poor quality of teaching, learning English is socially maligned and accompanied by low status and income for teachers, so older, traditional methods of teaching English are the mainstay in the absence of well-directed funding and research into teaching methods that are appropriate for the Libyan context.

In summary, although research (e.g. Glewwe et al. 2008) suggests that increasing spending to improve the administrative and logistic aspects of education and decreasing the cost of educational services for the public can improve the quality of the outcomes of the educational process, this seems to have been unsuccessful in the Libyan education context. Glewwe et al. (2008) suggest that providing textbooks for free, together with other similar educational needs and also providing midday meals for school students, may improve their performance and stimulate their

motivation to learn. However, in the Libyan case, this seems to have created an attitude of carelessness and a lack of any sense of responsibility towards the equipment and resources available in the public education sector both by students and stakeholders.

7 Methods of Teaching English in Libya

Learners vary in their capacity to learn due to their varying capacity across a range of cognitive abilities, most notably referred to as *multiple intelligences* (Gardner 2011), and also other behavioural factors such as motivation (Feng and Chen 2009) and attitude (Fakeye 2010), and students and teachers also preference certain learning and teaching methods due to their particular socio-political and philosophical influences (Wong 2006). These factors make the choice of the teaching method a challenging task for teachers, especially in Libya where there is a major controversy regarding the Libyan students' level of motivation to learn English and the capacities of the Libyan teachers of English (Omar 2012). In all cases, the choice of the teaching methods should engage learners and be based on an analysis of the learners' needs (Nunan and Lamb 2001). However, this is challenging due to the large Libyan class sizes as the larger the class is, the more likely the learners are to vary in their learning capacities and preferred ways of learning. This problem also hinders the possibility of maintaining interactive learning strategies and suggests lecturing is the only alternative.

In general, the objective of students and educators in Libya is for students to complete their exams with the highest possible scores (Alhmali 2007). English is seen as a subject to be passed in school and university (Rajendran 2010) rather than a subject for which functional language proficiency is the end goal. The main focus of English education is on grammar and reading without an equivalent focus on listening and speaking. In this transmission teaching experience, the more grammatical forms and vocabulary learners can memorize, the higher scores they can achieve at the end of each course. Grammar and reading are studied for their own sake and not for practical communicative purposes in real life situations. In addition, Arabic is the dominant medium of instruction and communication in Libyan English classrooms (Shihiba and Embark 2011). Teachers and students communicate in Arabic even in *spoken English classes*. For these reasons, Libyan learners of English have not been able to develop communicative capacity in English (Omar 2012).

ELTs in Libya have a traditional style of instruction in teaching English and there is evidence to suggest that this style of instruction negatively affects the attitudes of the learners towards learning English (Abidin et al. 2012). There are no guidelines that govern the choice of teaching methods or curricula in Libyan universities and therefore Libyan teachers tend to maintain the Libyan version of the GTM. This version, according to Elabbar (2011) may be slightly different from the standard GTM as it usually has a mix of features of other methods which are randomly

selected by teachers depending on the personal beliefs and background of the teacher, the type of learners, and the reason for learning (e.g. to pass, or just be able to read English texts). The students are accustomed to memorization and therefore the GTM suits them. Brown (2000) explains why the GTM remains popular worldwide as requiring "... few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored" (p. 19).

In a 7-week teaching methodology course conducted in Libya, the first author worked with a group of 20 students from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Benghazi, Agdabia, Libya. The participants were divided into test and comparison groups. Before exposing the test group to modern English teaching methodologies, both groups were surveyed and tested for their knowledge of English teaching methodology with the Cambridge Teaching Knowledge Test (TKT).

The students were surveyed to determine their attitudes towards learning English prior to taking the course. They were introduced to the CLT with a focus on interactive learning as an alternative to the lecturing and teacher-centred instruction that is common in their Faculty. They were then given the opportunity to practice using these methods to teach their peers in class and to directly compare the GTM and CLT methods of teaching. Throughout this action research project, the participants were encouraged to reflect upon their teaching practice and adopt, adapt, or reject methods (Nisbet and Collins 1978) they were learning about and request less or more input on certain methods. This drove the *in-situ* modification of the flexibly delivered course.

Five out of the ten test group students were interviewed to further investigate critical incidences that arose in the course and to determine how to better develop the course. The students revealed their feedback through scheduled reflection on practice sessions and also through weekly monitoring sessions with an independent academic from the faculty. Third party assessment was necessary to give the students the opportunity to honestly reflect on how they felt about the course. The test and control groups were both surveyed and tested with the TKT after the course.

As would be expected, the test group students scored higher on their post-test compared to their pre-TKT test. They developed positive attitudes towards learning and teaching of English after the course and their confidence to use English increased substantially. Their perspectives on how to teach English changed from focusing on grammar in isolation to interactive learning and focusing on communication. The post test results of the control group students, on the other hand, showed no differences in their attitudes or their teaching knowledge. Students of both groups were attending the university at the time of conducting the course, but only the test group students attended the methodology course. This reveals that the teaching and learning of English, at least in the department of English in this Libyan university, is based on teacher and textbook centred instruction rather than on communicative and interactive learning. It also suggests that the students can develop better attitudes towards learning English if provided with the necessary environment that encourages cooperative instead of individual learning.

8 The GTM Culture of Teaching English in Libya

In what looks like a tendency to sustain everything traditional in the Libyan society (Elbendak 2008), holding the GTM and the traditional, old school of thought in the highest esteem in Libyan universities and schools is clearly visible in people's words and actions. In one of the interviews conducted during our study, one of the participants, for instance, said:

Libyan society has a common agreement that learning languages can best be done through learning grammar and reading. Libyans value traditions and therefore they prefer anything traditional, even when it comes to teaching methods. Old teachers of English always talk to us about how they used to teach languages in the sixties and seventies with great respect, pride and admiration for their work back in the day. They also talk about today's classrooms and education with a sense of dislike compared to how they used to teach back then. I, as a modern generation prospective teacher, do imitate them and still hold these values regardless of what you tell me about modern education and its effectiveness. It is just what I grew up learning (translated from Arabic).

Thus, cultural and sociological aspects may partly explain why the English teaching and learning approaches maintained in Libyan schools are traditional grammar and reading-oriented, rather than being communication-oriented (Najeeb 2013). Another participant who calls this approach *GTM heritage* stated:

Because students [pre-service teachers of English at the faculty] have heard a great deal about this heritage from older teachers and were taught only in this way, they know that they will need to use this method in the future if they choose to become teachers of English or any other language. I think it is a matter of a tradition that is passed on from one generation to the next all over Libya and not just here in Agdabia (translated from Arabic).

The widespread use of the GTM in Libya hinders any possibilities to use any other method of teaching, including modern variants of the Direct Method (DM) (Alrahy 2008). Students and teachers rely on translation into Arabic (Soliman 2013) in and outside of their classrooms in the teaching and learning process of English which contradicts the main principles of the DM. There is a common belief in Libya that translation is an efficient way to learn a foreign language including English (Omar 2012). Thus, Libyan teachers and learners of English do not sacrifice translation for the sake of communication.

ELTs who are non-native speakers of Arabic in Libya complain that students do not appreciate communicating in English in the classroom and constantly demand translation. Moreover, Libyan ELT teachers are not acquainted with pronunciation of English, functional grammar and English culture and pragmatics, which remains another obstacle for them to adopt the DM. Libyan teachers typically receive their English education in Libya where Arabic language and culture are the only dominant and available mediums of communication. Therefore, they have little or no opportunity to learn about English culture.

It is often noted that language learning is more effective if learning is conducted in smaller classes and learners are provided with the opportunity to interact actively on authentic tasks for extended periods of time (Brown 2000). This strategy is

difficult to adopt in crowded Libyan classrooms and Libyan teachers generally have no practical experience in using task-based learning in the classroom. Brown (2000) points out that the success of these methods depends on the capacity and skills of the teacher and that there is little evidence that the methods can be adopted by all teachers. Besides these uncertainties over which methodologies to adopt, adapt, or reject, a problem of greater magnitude is the uncertainty surrounding the accreditation processes undertaken by the government and universities in Libya. These processes are meant to ensure the quality of English teacher education and they are currently in a state of crisis.

9 Teacher Education Accreditation Procedures in Libya

The Libyan government's policy on accreditation procedures for universities, programs and courses is not clear. According to the Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions report (2012), the centre runs systematic visits to tertiary institutions in Libya and requires the providers to submit applications to obtain recognition from the institution to be accredited. However, the centre officials say that none of their accreditation criteria is available for the public and is kept internally for their office use. The centre has forty employees in total, working in three distant offices distributed in the eastern, southern and western regions of the country. The centre accredits all educational institutions within all scientific and vocational fields in Libya.

This is very different to the accreditation process in western contexts where accreditation is more explicit and transparent. In Australia, for example, teacher education programs are accredited separately from all other types of vocational education programs. Australian teacher education programs undergo an accreditation process if the program is new, or an accredited program can be either re-accredited or denied accreditation within a number of years determined by the accreditation agency since it first granted accreditation. Once the accreditation expires, providers of the program must submit an application to renew their accreditation. Usually each program has to be assessed once every 4–5 years on its own merits, depending on the nature of the program and the negotiations with the accreditation agency (AITSL 2013).

The only accreditation institution of education existing in Libya is the National Centre for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Educational and Training Institutions which was established by the Libyan Ministry of Education in 2006. It has two smaller departments in the country; one in the eastern region of Benghazi and the other located in the southern city of Sbha. According to the Higher Education in Libya report (European Commission 2012), the accreditation body was founded to design and implement a system “for evaluation, accreditation and quality assurance in public and private higher education institutions” (p. 5). The centre is owned and monitored by the Libyan Ministry of Education but operates independently with regard to administration and funding. The centre mandates that all higher

educational institutions in the country have offices of accreditation to work directly with the governing body in Tripoli. These educational institutions must maintain ultimate cooperation through the organization of conferences, seminars, workshops and publications to sustain the quality of higher education in all regions of the country.

The centre has published the accreditation and quality assurance standards according to which the quality of the higher education system and output in the country is judged. The centre reported that all private universities have been assessed on the basis of these standards and that only five of them have been accredited.

However, after extensive research, no specialized accreditation details have been found about the educational programs in general and the teacher education programs in particular. The guidelines shown in the final annual report published in Arabic by a team from the accreditation centre in 2012 are broad and do not provide any specific details about the criteria of judging education programs. For example, the report states that each educational program provider in Libya is required to submit an application to obtain a license for recognition as an accredited educational institution in the country by the accreditation centre. The program provider must provide all the required documents, lodge a full application and then the application is initially reviewed by a committee in the centre. If the application is accepted for consideration, the committee then notifies the applicant of their acceptance to process the application and of paying the fees afterwards. The application then goes through academic and administrative assessment and then a decision is to be made by the committee members in the centre about granting a license or recognition of the applicant educational institution as accredited. However, the standards and criteria used in the academic assessment of this application are not detailed in the report. The report only states that the committee writes a recommendation to advise that the standards of the centre to accredit any educational institution are either present, partially present or are not present. However, these criteria are not available for the public and are restricted for internal use at the centre. No reasons are given for this restriction.

The educational institution can be granted accreditation which expires in 2–5 years depending on various aspects such as the type of program offered and the recommendations of the assessing committee. Granting the accreditation is often conditional on an agreement signed by the representative individual of the assessed educational institution to cooperate with the teams from the centre visiting the educational institution occasionally. These visits are made without notice and may require access to archives and documents of the institution. The guide does not advise if these teams include expertise for each educational program to evaluate them academically. It only reports that the teams assess the whole institution with a major focus on the administrative, financial and logistic capacities.

The report also describes the teaching and learning activities performed at the applicant educational institution as 'good' or if 'adequately practiced'. However, it does not provide details about the basis of deciding if a particular activity is 'good' or 'adequately practiced'. The criteria and standards are mainly related to logistic, financial and administrative matters which are detailed and thoroughly described.

However, no clear description of the mechanism of deciding about the quality of the offered programs from an academic perspective is provided. The assessment here involves educational institutions and not individual academic programs.

Undergraduate and postgraduate degree holders who are seeking employment or are willing to study abroad are required to bring their certificates to the National Accreditation Centre in Tripoli to stamp them for quality assurance purposes. The accreditation process is undertaken in the same way for all graduates from all disciplines. The process may take up to three working days and involves verifying the signatures of the individuals who have signed these qualifications. This is to confirm that the certificate was actually issued, signed and stamped by a recognized university or educational institution in Libya or outside.

The English teacher accreditation process therefore involves verifying that the information provided on the certificate is correct as per the data stored in the Accreditation Centre database. However, the process does not involve any quality control aspects concerning the academic quality of the programs that the student has accomplished or the details of that particular program. Once the certification is approved, the student applicant is accepted for employment in Libya and is no longer liable for any further kind of assessment.

Other than this particular administration centre, there is no other administration centre, office or an institution responsible for any similar accreditation purposes, either private or governmental in Libya. When establishing a new university, faculties at a university, or training colleges, the broad guidelines for this future educational institution are drawn with regard to who can be admitted into it, what they should study, for how many years and where graduates should be able to work. The remainder of the details are left to the teachers and stakeholders at that educational body to decide. The academic side is usually undertaken by teachers while the administrative issues are handled by stakeholders. This practice occurs in all types of universities, faculties, and training colleges in Libya, including teacher education.

10 Decision Making and English Education Policy in Libya

Education policy in Libya, in general, has always been managed from the top down (Elabbar 2011). It is influenced by the overall political system of the country; this was especially the case during the rule of the former regime. It was “highly centralised and characterised by a complex hierarchical structure” (Shihiba and Embark 2011, p. 11). By centralised, Shihiba refers to the total control of the former General Peoples’ Committee of Education (GPCE) in Libya. The GPCE was based in Tripoli and is currently known as the Ministry of Education. All education matters all over Libya such as educational institutions and school construction, development of curricula, and all other decisions related to education were solely made in Tripoli. Despite what the former regime claimed about the social system of the country and Gaddafi’s Third Universal Theory, which is based on the idea of the *rule of people*

in Libya and which was one of the main sources of legislation during his rule, all major decisions and actions were dictated by Gaddafi and then implemented by lower administrative authorities. These decisions and actions went from one higher authority to the lower until they reached the people to either implement or abide by. The Third Universal Theory posits that no one has the right to act or express an opinion, wish, or a point of view on behalf of another person in Libya. Therefore, all forms of representative bodies such as parliaments and parties were strictly prohibited in Libya.

The Third Universal Theory was developed in response to the two preceding regimes of capitalism and communism. For example, in what was called *mu'utamarat sha'abea issaseea* or *Basic People's Conferences* which used to take place at least once a year all over Libya, all Libyans of the age of 18 or over had to attend these conferences held in public places such as schools and community centres. Both men and women were required to meet, elect their regional committees who recorded all discussions, points of view, and wants of the general public, processed records, code them statistically and then forward them to a higher administrative authority after which they are tabled at the *People's Supreme Conference* in Tripoli for a final discussion. This discussion was televised for the public to follow. The results were then forwarded in the form of decisions to the executive committees for implementation. In theory, this places the ordinary person at the heart of decision making. The decision starts from the people and then proceeds for implementation by higher authorities.

However, Libyan opposition in exile have been sceptical about the actual implementation of this system. It has been argued that all major decisions were made by Gaddafi unless these decisions were not of any importance to him in extending his rule over the country. People used to meet and express their wishes and desires about all aspects of life in the Libyan society but the actions taken by the executive committees were influenced by Gaddafi's perspectives in the first instance. Therefore, the decision making process is generally top-down, occurring in the opposite direction to that claimed by the former Libyan regime.

Education policy in general and English education policy in particular are no exception. The decisions regarding the adoption of particular curricula, teaching methods and methodology and the availability of resources and equipment for example are made by the Ministry of Education which runs primary and secondary school and the Ministry of Higher education which runs higher education in Libya. The former Ministry determines the objectives of the primary and secondary education, whereas the latter determines the objectives of the higher education in Libya (Youssef 2012). However, these two government bodies are not at total liberty to manage education in Libya. After the American raid of the two Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi in 1986, Gaddafi decided to suspend English education and to adopt anti-imperialist materials in all education levels in Libya. Another example of the former regime's influence on education is the adherence to Gaddafi's social, political, and economical perspectives in the English curricula of Libyan primary and secondary schools.

It appears little has changed in the governance of education since the Gaddafi years. Even though the higher authorities ask the stakeholders at lower administrative councils to prepare assessment reports and provide a description of the actual situation in schools, these authorities still make decisions without consideration of what stakeholders report. One of the stakeholders interviewed in the study conducted in Agdabia said:

We have been asked [in Agdabia council] to prepare a report and send it to the Ministry of Education to highlight our educational needs here in Agdabia with regard to all logistic and technical issues. You know that all major projects and decisions come from the Ministry of Education and we are only her executive department. We have to accept whatever comes from the Ministry, whether that has to do with curricula or labs for instance. These issues are planned for and done by the Ministry and every department and council of education all over Libya has to abide by these decisions. Whatever you find in Agdabia is exactly the same as what it is in Mustrate, Tripoli and Tubruk (translated from Arabic).

This is similar to how other policies were made during the rule of the former regime; listen to what the public and people in lower administrative councils say and then make the decisions on the basis of the agenda drawn by the highest authorities.

Some universities in Libya had internal rules and legislation but they were not enforced as they contradicted some interests of the former regime. For instance, each university student can fail and repeat the same course twice after the first attempt. When the student fails the first time, s/he can repeat the course twice with an academic warning placed on his/her file. In the case of failing the same course three times, the student is automatically suspended. However, the former regime rejected this policy in the name of supporting the youth and rejecting unfair treatment through decisions made at these universities. A stakeholder from the Agdabia faculty said:

Throughout the rule of the former regime, it was impossible to terminate the enrolment of any student because the former regime feared student anger and having them out of the university with nothing to think about. This could have led them to think about an uprising against the government (translated from Arabic).

The former government interfered in all academic and administrative aspects of education in general and English education in particular in schools and universities alike. The offices of the *revolutionary committees* and *revolutionary work teams* were the eyes of the former regime which monitored schools and universities in Libya and represented the highest authorities in them. The managers of these offices monitored and guided the Chancellors of the universities, for example, and could investigate or replace them if necessary. No materials were allowed in these schools and universities if they contradicted the former regime's perspectives.

The situation is still unstable and the respective governments that came to power in Libya after the 2011 revolution were busy with security matters and pursuing the former regime's pockets of resistance inside and outside of the country. There is also a tendency to change all decisions made during the rule of the former regime.

As far as education is concerned, a stakeholder from the Agdabia council pointed out:

...the educational system in Libya after the revolution has been changed mostly because of the public tendency to change anything that was done by the former regime. I strongly support the specialised high schools in Agdabia and am against returning to leading only two high school branches in Libya. Specialization in high schools is now becoming an international system and it was not invented by Mumaar Algdhafi (translated from Arabic).

Thus, decisions are mainly influenced by the emotions of the current stakeholders and are not practically considered. There are no other obvious reasons for taking such major decisions, nor is it clear whether the other overall objectives of education drawn by the former regime are still valid in the Libya of post 2011.

11 Developing the ELT Situation in Libya

To enhance the quality of the current English education in Libya, the overall policies need to be revised. They need to be based on formal and conventional considerations rather than on personal relationships and emotions of individuals (Tempelhof and Omar 2012). English education should enhance the communicative capacities of the Libyan learners of English and this can only be done through a plan that guarantees reaching this goal within a given timeframe. The current objectives of English education in Libya are mainly communicative but the implementation of the plans put in place by the authorities to achieve these goals hinders the achievement of these desired goals. This calls into question the capacities of the administration in all regions of the country. The communicative English curricula developed for Libyan schools which were considered as a departure from traditional English instruction in Libya (Orafi and Borg 2009), for instance, were filtered and taught through traditional methods of teaching. Soliman (2013) considers these curricula weak and ineffective because of the excessive use of Arabic in teaching English, the short time allocation and the use of traditional methods of teaching.

Conducting continuous teacher professional development courses and monitoring all those involved in the education process and considering the needs of the learners are factors which our study identified to enhance the quality of English education in Libya. These are necessary steps to be taken in Libya to encourage the teachers of English to lead innovative and modern methods of teaching required by the current English curricula adopted in schools. Therefore, the administration in these schools, and in the different councils in all regions of Libya, needs similar courses to our 7-week course in English teacher professional development.

Libya has achieved remarkable success in enhancing the literacy rate in the country by increasing the budget for education and making it free and accessible for all Libyans and putting new plans in place to improve education. The literacy rate of 40 % in 1970 increased to 89 % in 2011, which is substantially higher than that of the Middle East and North African average of around 77 % (World Bank 2013).

However, the unsatisfactory wage for Libyan teachers is also a crucial factor that contributes a barrier to implementation of plans to improve education in addition to other factors such as financial and administrative corruption.

The abovementioned recommendations align with the findings of the study conducted in the Agdabia faculty. It has been found out that the pre-service teachers of English require more learner-oriented instruction and to focus on interactive, cooperative group learning instead of silent individual learning which is based on receiving knowledge from the teachers and textbooks, storing that knowledge in their minds and recalling it in examinations. They need to be provided with a less threatening learning environment where teachers focus more on learning the language instead of passing exams and obtaining high scores. Listening and speaking should be given more time and be practised in classrooms. The needs of the learners should be taken into account when choosing the materials for these activities. The nature of their future responsibilities should also be considered and therefore the materials they will be required to use and the methods required for delivering these materials should be mastered by the pre-service teachers of English before graduating university. Other administrative issues need to be attended to as well. Adequate equipment needs to be provided as well as access to well-resourced libraries and high speed internet for both lecturers and students so that authentic English texts (Guariento and Morley 2001; Soliman 2013) can be sourced and can drive innovation in the new curriculum.

12 Conclusion

Since Gaddafi took control of the country in 1969, Libya has witnessed frequent changes in various sectors, particularly in the political, educational and economic domains. This instability was considered by Libyan opposition leaders in exile as a result of Gaddafi's controversial psychological state. It was also believed to be deliberately maintained by Gaddafi as part of his internal policies to sustain his rule over Libya. Regardless of the reasons, this state of instability and lack of long term plans to develop the country has negatively affected the country in various ways, including English education.

Despite the effort and the time spent to develop English education in Libya, English has not become a *Lingua Franca* in Libyan society. The industrial and economic situation of the country required the use of English in Libya; however, various barriers have hindered the attempts to develop English. One important reason for such limited English language development is the change planners' failure to adequately consider what support classroom teachers will need, when, and for how long (Wedell 2003). A systematic review of classroom resources and professional development is required if teachers are to be helped to make the transition from a grammar translation to a communicative curriculum and to subvert the practice of teaching to a focus on learning. Other barriers include the social and cultural nature of the Libyan society and the overall attitude of the Libyan people towards accepting

a different language to Arabic which may threaten the national identity and mother tongue of the Libyans.

The case study research conducted at the faculty of Agdabia provides a glimpse of the difficulties encountered in introducing an alternative curriculum to Libyan learners and teachers of English. The study revealed that the adoption of CLT in Libya will require the serious involvement of all of those concerned, starting with the Libyan Ministry of Education who should consult teachers and learners of English, and other stakeholders in all Libyan regions, with a plan to run professional development programs with teachers. This program should be run by Libyans who are skilled in implementation of CLT and should involve culturally sensitive modelling of teaching methods within the CLT approach.

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English Education Policy and Practice in Morocco

Mohammed Errihani

Abstract The debate about which language is best suited to take on the role of the first foreign language and language of education in Morocco is in full force these days. The policy of Arabization, which many blame for the current education crisis in Morocco, has failed to replace French as the linguistic medium of science and technology in tertiary education and as a result has produced high school students who are unable to function in any foreign language upon graduation. The 1999 National Charter of Education and the 2009 Emergency Program have been attempts to come to the rescue through the proposals of several reforms to the system of education as a whole, including the introduction of another foreign language – for the teaching of science and technology – on an already saturated linguistic scene. The question is which foreign language is it going to be: French, which represents continuity, or English, which provides access to international communication and economic development? All indications point to a language shift towards English. What remains to be seen are the steps the government will take to guarantee the success of this new venture, especially after the failures of recent policies meant to salvage the Moroccan educational system from total ruin.

Keywords Morocco • English • Arabization • Education • Language

1 Introduction

Je considère que ceux qui ne cessent d'appeler à l'arabisation ne sont pas encore libérées car leur esprit est encore bourré d'infériorité [...] Le fait que je parle la langue française – et j'aurais aimé parler d'autres langues – ne signifie pas que je suis encore sous le Protectorat des Français. (Late King Hassan II)

Moroccans are typically known to be gifted speakers and learners of foreign languages, especially when compared to other Arabs in the MENA region. Such a claim may not be supported by much empirical evidence, but there are certainly

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historical events and facts to support it. Morocco's recent history has been marked by several encounters with foreign linguistic cultures that have left their marks on the Moroccan linguistic landscape (Laroui 1977). Such encounters account not only for the openness of Moroccans onto other cultures (Ibn Khaldoun 2004) due to its close proximity to Europe, but more importantly for their ability to absorb and adapt many of these foreign cultures' linguistic traditions, hence the appreciation, ease, and effortlessness with which they speak and learn foreign languages (Gellner 1969; Grandguillaume 1991).

The average educated Moroccan will speak at least one foreign language – typically French – in addition to the mother tongues, Moroccan Arabic (Darija) and/or Berber (Tamazight) and Standard Arabic. And due to the proximity of the Northern part of Morocco to Spain and the influence of Spanish culture on these provinces, Moroccans from the northern regions will typically also speak Spanish in addition to the languages mentioned above. Therefore, the culture of speaking at least one foreign language in addition to the mother tongues is expected of all educated Moroccans to the point where education and socio-cultural capital can be based on one's proficiency in a foreign language(s).

The validation of the importance of mastering foreign languages came in 1999 in the form of the National Charter of Education Kingdom of Morocco (MEN 1999). Article 100 of the Charter stresses the, “renforcement et perfectionnement de l'enseignement de la langue arabe, diversification des langues d'enseignement des sciences et des technologies, et ouverture sur le Tamazight” (www.men.gov.ma). (Strengthening and improving the teaching of Arabic, diversifying the languages for teaching science and technology, and openness to Tamazight.)

“Strengthening and improving the teaching of Arabic” has always been the goal of Moroccan language policy, so there is nothing new here in terms of language planning. What is new, however, is the push to diversify the languages used for teaching science and technology, although the foreign language(s) to be adopted for teaching these subjects remains shrouded in mystery and ambiguity. The implicit message in the Charter is the attempt to revert to French and possibly English as the mediums for teaching these subjects, something that Arabic has not been able to accomplish at the tertiary level. The Charter even goes further as to suggest that French may not be the only language used in science and technology, and the implication here is that English might be taking over.

The move to promote the teaching and learning of English both as a language and as a means teaching in tertiary education has already been in place since the 1995 inauguration of Alakhawayn University, the first Moroccan institution to adopt English as its medium of instruction. Whatever the case may be, there seems to be an implicit recognition that the policy of Arabization has failed, and that a return to bilingualism is a necessary course of action to guarantee that in the global village, Morocco is not left behind (King Mohammed VI's speech, August 20, 2013).

2 Linguistic Landscape in Morocco

2.1 Languages of Morocco

2.1.1 Arabic

Arabic is dubbed the official language of Morocco. But the question is, “which Arabic?” Is it Classical Arabic, the language of the Qur’an and a great body of literary and religious texts? Is it *Darija* (Moroccan Arabic vernacular), which is the mother tongue of all Moroccans of Arab ancestry? Or is it Modern Standard Arabic, a type of modernized, neoclassical Arabic used in schooling and the media? Even though the type of Arabic considered to be the official language is not made precise, it is assumed to be a hybrid of Classical Arabic and the so-called Modern Standard Arabic. Nevertheless, no Moroccan can claim Classical or Modern Standard Arabic to be his or her mother tongue; it is a language to which Moroccans are introduced only through schooling. As such, Arabic is marked by diglossia wherein Vernacular Arabic (*Darija*) is the Low variety, while the highly codified Classical/Standard Arabic assumes the High variety label (Ferguson 1959; Wagner 1993).

Standard Arabic is taught as a language throughout elementary and secondary education, in addition to its being the medium for teaching literature, religion, history, etc. In the last three decades, however, the policy of Arabization, whose goal was to institute Arabic as the dominant language on Morocco’s multilingual scene, became so predominant in primary and secondary education to the point where subjects such as math and science, which used to be taught in French were now taught in Arabic. However, the policy of Arabization failed to make Arabic the medium of instruction at the tertiary level. The failure of Arabization at the tertiary level has resulted in lower standards of achievement at the Moroccan university, as students who had gone through the Arabized system in high school all of a sudden found themselves deficient in French, the medium for teaching scientific and technological subjects. A direct outcome of the failed policy of Arabization is the low education standards in the public school and university in Morocco. This situation has resulted in parents actively seeking private institutions where French, and sometime English, is the medium of instruction.

2.1.2 French

French used to be the official language up until Morocco’s independence in 1956. Although it holds no official status in Morocco, French continues to enjoy widespread prestige and use in the business, finance, science, and technology sectors; it is also an important language for the cultural and regional ties that it represents for the government and elites of Morocco. French is a controversial language, however, because it represents a legacy of colonialism. Because of this colonial legacy, many political groups, namely Istiqlal Party (Independence Party), pushed for the policy

of Arabization with the goal and hope of eliminating French from the socio-linguistic scene of Morocco immediately after Morocco's independence. Arabization never succeeded in achieving its stated goal of eliminating French and making Arabic the sole language in use in Morocco, and to this day French continues to enjoy a prominent and powerful position on the socio-economic scene in Morocco thanks to the economic and cultural capital it engenders (Errihani 2008).

In the public school system, Moroccan students are introduced to French in the 2nd grade of elementary education, and the number of hours taught at every grade varies between 6 and 8 a week. This is because "regional Academies for Education and Training in each of the 16 administrative regions of Morocco have been charged with, among other things, developing up to 30% of the curriculum for their respective regions to help ensure that these curricula are locally relevant" (PIRLS 2011, p. 408).

In private schools, French plays a bigger role, for children are introduced to the French language in pre-school. The number of hours taught varies depending on the type of school, but it is generally much higher than the number of hours taught in public schools. Private schools have thus realized the importance of using French as a medium of instruction early on to lure parents who are wary of sending their children to public schools, where Arabic is primary the medium of instruction, and where French instruction is typically poor.

2.1.3 Berber

As of July 1, 2011, Berber, also known as *Tamazight*, became the second official language of Morocco. Berber, with its three varieties – Tarifit, Tashelhit, and Tamazight – is the mother tongue of about 50% of Moroccans (www.Berberworld.org), most of whom also speak the Moroccan Vernacular (Darija) as another native language. Until July 1, 2011, Berber had no official status in Morocco, although the royal decree of 2001 required that this language be taught to all elementary school children in an effort to maintain and promote the Berber language and culture of Morocco as they are integral parts of the Moroccan identity (www.ircam.ma). The teaching of Berber in elementary schools implies introducing it as another foreign language, in addition to Standard Arabic and French. The Ministry of Education's initial goal for having Berber taught to every Moroccan child by the year 2011 has proven to be a myth due to the many issues that this language policy ran into (Errihani 2013), which are beyond the scope of this chapter to detail.

2.1.4 English

English as a foreign language in Morocco has recently been gaining ground steadily. There are many educators and leaders in the private sector who have been calling for strengthening and promoting the teaching of English at the expense of French because of the global reach that English possesses. In the fall of 2013 alone, two

major conferences have been organized for this specific purpose, one in Casablanca: Colloque International sur l'Éducation: Le Chemin de la Réussite 4–5 Octobre 2013 (International Symposium on Education: the Road to Success 4–5 October 2013). The other conference took place in Rabat and was more specific and outspoken about its orientation, which is evident from its title: “Strengthening the Position of English in Morocco for Development 21 December 2013.” The program for this conference states that

The Conference hopes to provide what is perhaps the first opportunity to engage and listen to language experts, business people, service industry actors, decision makers, education officials and members of the public as they debate and make their cases about the foreign languages they would want to adopt and use as they trade and communicate with the rest of the world.¹

Therefore, one notices that the linguistic situation in Morocco is laying the ground for welcoming the English language as a critical tool to assist in the reform of the educational system in Morocco. English now even serves as the medium of instruction in the most prestigious university in the country: Al-Akhawayn University (www.aui.ma). However, Like French, English holds no official status, but unlike French, it is a neutral language that carries no imperialistic undertones. At this time, Moroccan students are introduced to English in the 9th grade of secondary education, although the Charter of National Education mentions its introduction in primary education, which is still to take place. In private schools, however, English is no introduced earlier, although there seems to be no consensus among the private school sector as to what grade to introduce students to language or how many hours of instruction a week students should receive.

3 Policy of Arabization and Its Effects on Foreign Language Instruction in Morocco

Morocco is a country whose sociolinguistic reality is marked by bilingualism, diglossia, and several languages and dialects spoken in everyday interactions. The official languages in Morocco are Arabic and Berber, but Arabization has been the official policy since the independence of Morocco in 1956. In fact, post-independence Moroccan education policy was based on 4 principles: Moroccanization of education, generalization of education, Arabization of education, and a free education for all.²

Arabization is the policy that has the most controversy because of how it affected education in Morocco. In an effort to do away with the remnants of colonialism, including the French language, and to unite the country linguistically and culturally,

¹ *Strengthening the Position of English in Morocco for Development*. (21 December 2013). Rabat, Morocco: Conference program.

² Interview with Dr. Boulouz on www.hespress.ma. Retrieved September 27, 2013.

Morocco adopted the “One language – one nation” slogan as a springboard for its nation-building project. Therefore, the imposition of Arabic as the sole national and official language in the country gained popularity, especially among the nationalists at the time. Such a policy was viewed as a necessary tool for revamping the Moroccan national identity and building the political and cultural infrastructure of the newly independent nation. This policy has now proven to be a myth and probably a major cause of the decline of the Moroccan system of education, especially in the last two decades (King Mohammed VI, August 20, 2013).

4 Effect of Major Educational Reforms (1999 and 2009–2012) on the Teaching of English

The 1999 Moroccan National Charter of Education has dubbed the 2000–2009 decade the *National Decade of Education*. Education is deemed the second most important priority for the government after the country’s territorial integrity, which became a most crucial issue in Moroccan politics ever since Spain relinquished its hold on the Western Sahara, which was reclaimed by Morocco in 1975. Due to the importance given to education, the government has “pledged all the resources necessary to reform and develop the education sector in order to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century” (National Charter of Education: Articles 20 and 21).

The 1999 National Charter of Education is a large-scale, inclusive project that addresses the whole system of education and proposes detailed and well-thought out plans on how to go about implementing all the changes and reforms put forward. The Charter is a rather long and detailed document of 157 articles providing exhaustive and comprehensive steps about implementing the reform of the educational system in Morocco. It has more global goals for the entire system of education, including, among other things, making elementary and secondary education mandatory for all Moroccan students until the age of fifteen, setting up new guidelines for required courses and exit exams for each level in the educational system, as well as proposing different languages to be adopted in teaching each subject, from elementary school through tertiary education.

In terms of the Charter’s linguistic propositions, one will notice early on that one of its grand goals is to repeatedly underscore the importance of strengthening the teaching of the Arabic language (both spoken and written) and encourage its use in all different domains of Moroccan society, as well as in science and technology, a goal that should, according to the Charter, constitute in effect a national objective. The Charter also reiterates that the Arabic language is mandatory for all Moroccan students in all educational institutions, both public and private. This statement seems to be a clear admonition to any private institution that has opted to use French or English only as the medium of instruction rather than Arabic. The message is that every educational institution in Morocco is required to teach the Arabic language to Moroccan students, regardless of whether it uses French or English as its principal

medium of instruction. At the time this charter emerged, this requirement seemed to fly in the face of that segment of Moroccans who are of Berber descent, especially now that their language has been recognized as a second official language besides Arabic. As such, the Charter has been viewed by some as a vehicle for the pan-Arabists and Islamists to propagate their narrow ideologies (Assid 2000).

The Charter goes on to argue that mastering the oral and written expression of the Arabic language shall be made accessible to every Moroccan student. In addition to being proficient in Arabic, Moroccans are also called upon to be open and receptive to other world languages, especially those deemed instrumental in today's global economy; the Charter does not specify which ones, however. French, for example, which is considered by almost everyone in Morocco to be the country's second language, is never mentioned in this Charter, nor is English, which the state seems to have decided to promote at the secondary and tertiary levels of education.

The Charter indicates that it intends to introduce two foreign languages in elementary school, the first starting in the second grade and the second at the fifth grade level. The Charter will not mention any foreign language by name, however. This unwillingness to admit that Morocco is a multilingual country where local as well as foreign languages are alive and in daily competition can be explained by the strong hold that the policy of Arabization still has on the minds of pan-Arabist language planners, so much so that to mention any other language in an official document besides Arabic is tantamount to linguistic apostasy.

To put this Charter's new propositions in perspective, here is a summary of the proposed linguistic changes for elementary school children that the 1999 put forth: Students in the first five years of primary education are introduced to Modern Standard Arabic, which is a new language with a new script for all Moroccans, despite being related to Moroccan Arabic Vernacular.³ Additionally, students are introduced to two different foreign languages, which are never specified in the Charter.

As of 2001 – two years after the advent of the Charter, a new language policy that recognized the Berber language and culture has instituted the Berber language as yet another mandatory language for all children in elementary schools, regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background. This language policy went into effect in 2003 and was expected to be generalized across all schools in the nation by the year 2011; however, the implementation of this policy has so far not yielded the desired outcome. Therefore, when this new policy is taken into account, the Charter expects students in elementary schools to learn four different languages with three different writing systems: Arabic, Latin, and Tifinagh⁴ (the Berber script). Once again, the foreign languages that are supposedly going to be introduced at the elementary school level are not specified in the Charter, and one can only assume they are French and English.

³Moroccan Arabic Vernacular is a spoken language only.

⁴Tifinagh is a Berber script that has no resemblance to Latin or Arabic. It is a script that apparently was used by the Berbers 5000 years ago. Berber activists opted for this script for the teaching of Berber instead of the Arabic or Latin as a political solution to a linguistic problem.

Although everyone would agree that children have an unmatched ability to acquire new languages at an early age (Chomsky 2006; Crystal 1989; Clark 2003), introducing them to four different languages with three distinct writing systems, while simultaneously stressing the importance of strengthening the Arabic medium, seems to be an over-zealous and an unrealistic goal to achieve on many levels: in terms of planning, pedagogy, human resources, teacher training, etc. The Charter constantly reiterates that acquiring a solid foundation in the Arabic language should be the main focus of primary education. One wonders how this can be achieved when students are introduced to three additional languages in addition to Arabic.

One major difference between previous language policies that stressed the exclusive use of Arabic and the 1999 Charter is that the latter for the first time seems to suggest that scientific and technological subjects in higher education may be taught either in Arabic or in a foreign language. This in itself is an implicit recognition of the failure of the Arabization process to remove French from the linguistic scene in Morocco. In other words, the idea behind this change in policy is that Arabic has never been able to replace French as a medium of instruction of science and technology in higher education, and the state seems to have made peace with this reality, albeit quietly. Nonetheless, this discreet admission is not meant as a final submission to the ascendancy of French in higher education, since the Charter also proposes the progressive introduction of Arabic as a medium of instruction of scientific and technological subjects in higher education too, which only adds more confusion to an already saturated linguistic scene. Thus, in addition to calling for the introduction of Arabic as a medium of instruction in higher education, the Charter also suggests the introduction of a foreign language “offrant la meilleure performance scientifique et la plus grande facilité de communication” (offering the best scientific performance and the most ease in communication” (National Charter of Education, article 114). This foreign language is not named in the Charter but can only be assumed to be French, which is not something new. If this foreign language ends up being English, then higher education in Morocco would be following a completely new orientation altogether.

The fact that the Charter calls for the introduction of Arabic at the tertiary level in addition to maintaining French or introducing English – something left ambiguous – aims at fulfilling a promise to all those students who were affected by Arabization in secondary school only to find themselves required to learn or relearn French to be able to study scientific subjects at the university. Thus, creating a linguistic continuum and bridging the linguistic gap between secondary and tertiary education can only be described as a practical and sensible plan. Providing high school students with linguistic choices can provide a more or less a level field of opportunity for everyone. Nonetheless, the attempt to re-introduce Arabic as a means of instruction in higher education remains ambiguous, especially after the obvious failure of the previous policy of Arabization to achieve that goal. One therefore wonders if this talk about strengthening the role of Arabic in higher education is nothing short of a face-saving measure and a way of paying lip service to the initial policy of Arabization without openly admitting its failure, especially since as

of the end 2013, the plan to introduce Arabic in higher education as a medium for teaching science and technology has not materialized.

Moroccan language policy has historically been characterized by ambivalence (Miller 2006), and this confusing ambivalence seems to be the hallmark of the Charter's articles that deal directly with language planning. On the one hand, the Charter insists on the importance of acquiring foreign languages, while at the same time it stresses the importance of promoting and strengthening Arabic at all levels of the educational system, which is nothing new. In fact, this has always been the official discourse of language planners in Morocco: Arabization first, and openness towards foreign languages second, but it is always possible to provide funding and resources to both, and that is exactly why the Arabization process was not generalized in tertiary education. Still, one thing remains certain: because of its prestige and status, French is expected to continue to enjoy total supremacy in the field of science and technology in higher education, at least temporarily. In fact, Arabization has had its day on the linguistic scene in Morocco. The door has been made open to foreign languages to take on the challenge of educational reform in Morocco, whether it is French, English, or both.

Moroccans themselves are ambivalent about the role of French in the Moroccan cultural and educational scenes. Although French is seen as an extension of political and cultural imperialism, it remains indispensable in Morocco because of the prestige, cultural, economic and social capital it entails. Moroccans generally understand the need to learn French despite their hostility to the political and cultural values it may represent. Such antagonism coupled with a need to learn French might change, however, if and when English assumes a more leading role in the education sector in Morocco.

On the other hand, the new role and status that English is gaining as measured by the numbers of Moroccans who now speak it as a second language or have a working knowledge and use it on a regular basis does not depend on nostalgic or sentimental attitudes towards the British or the Americans. It is rather the result of the practical and concrete demand of a globalized world where English plays a leading role. Contrary to French, speaking English effectively in the Moroccan public sphere does not signify prestige or cultural capital, although its status might change in the coming decades as it becomes more widespread and gains more acceptance as not only a useful but also a prestigious language in Morocco.

5 Emergency Plan: Najah Program 2009–2012

The National Charter of Education and Training launched in 1999 was a roadmap for what was termed a “decade of education.” Unfortunately, the grand objectives and visions of this Charter were never realized due to lack of funding and coordination (www.oxfordbusinessgroup.com/weekly01.asp?id=4695). In fact, the reforms identified in this charter continued to yield poor results: the adult literacy rates, especially among females, have remained static; the male-to-female education

ratios continue to be a challenge; the graduation rates continue to be dismal, etc. As a result, Morocco received very low grades for its mediocre system of education (www.worldbank.com/ma), which prompted the Moroccan government to cook up yet another plan, conveniently called the Emergency Plan, Najah 2009–2012 (the Arabic term, Najah, stands for success). “The implicit aim of this program is to help Morocco make significant strides toward meeting some of its UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015” (PIRLS 2011).

This Program is also meant to boost the 1999 Charter by increasing funding to the education sector in Morocco with the primary goals of making elementary education universal and increasing the adult literacy rate. In terms of linguistic changes or improvements, there seems to be no change in policy between the 1999 Charter and the Emergency Program. Nonetheless, despite the lack of any tangible realizations of the Charter or the Emergency Program, the Ministry of Education’s latest report of 2011 continues to paint an unrealistically glamorous picture of the state of higher education in Morocco (http://www.enssup.gov.ma/enssup1/doc_site/documents/Programme_urgence/Programme_urgence2009-2012/Bilan_miparcours.pdf).

The King of Morocco’s speech of August 20, 2013 came to deconstruct this rosy picture as the reality on the ground points to no substantial gains or accomplishments in the state of education in Morocco despite the increased funding and the rhetoric that characterizes every official report coming out of the Ministry of Education’s headquarters.⁵ The King of Morocco seems to have felt the need to interfere for the first time by openly criticizing the current government’s handling of the education sector in Morocco and indirectly accusing it for the lackluster results on the ground. The outcome of these “non-existent” reforms has therefore led the King to call for the total overhaul of the educational system (King Mohammed VI’s speech, August 20, 2013).

What has led to this catastrophic state of education, then? The linguistic medium (aka as the policy of Arabization) has played a leading role in this debacle. Prior to the implementation of this policy at the elementary and secondary levels in the 1980s and 1990s, the education system in Morocco in general produced high school students who were able to function in a minimum of two languages, and those who chose scientific and technological majors at the university level were equipped with the linguistic tools to succeed in their education and eventually compete in the job market. Currently, and because of the Arabization policy, students who study in the Moroccan public system are set up for failure at the tertiary level if they choose to specialize in science or technology simply because they have to study the same topic in a different language in which they have minimal proficiency.

⁵ See: 1. *Pour un nouveau soufflé de la réforme: Présentation du Programme “Najah 2009–2012” Rapport de synthèse. Juin 2008*

2. *Rapport National sur le Développement de l’Éducation: rapport préparé pour la conférence internationale de l’éducation 2008 sous le thème: « L’éducation pour l’Inclusion: la voie de l’avenir ».*

3. *Programme d’Urgence 2009–2012- Principales mesures prévues et éléments de bilan à mi-parcours 2008/09 – mai 2011*

The aftereffect was a consistent decline in the level of education of Moroccans who opt for public education at the tertiary level. Therefore, to say that the employment prospects for a Moroccan who graduates from a public university in Morocco are dim is an understatement, a phenomenon that has led to a mushrooming effect of private institutions that vow to use foreign languages for instruction as a means of providing equal opportunities to Moroccans who cannot afford the exorbitant French or American schools.

6 Language and Socio-economic Capital in Morocco: English vs. French (Historical and Political Implications)

Until the turn of the century, English was simply one of the three foreign languages (in addition to Spanish and German) routinely taught at the high school level in Morocco, although the state usually steered the majority of students towards the “English Option.” Arabic and French, on the other hand, were the established languages of education, with Arabic dominating the public sector and French the private sector. The linguistic status quo in Morocco experienced a transformation with the inauguration of the first private, English-medium-university in the country in 1995, which also coincided with the spread of the Internet and the role that English played as the language of technology and the World Wide Web. As a result, private schools of English, namely the British Council, AMIDEAST, and the American Language Centers, witnessed an unprecedented increase in their enrollment to a point where demand for English surpassed supply and every school director’s expectations. The number of students studying English at the American Language Center in Fez, for instance, has gone from fewer than 1000 students in the late 1980s to over 6000 students in 2010 (www.alif.org.ma).

Morocco’s system of education has always included the teaching of foreign languages as a major staple of its high school curriculum, but this system has not been able to adapt to the high demand for English instruction due to lack of human and material resources. To set an objective to teach English at the elementary and early secondary level (Charter of National Education 1999) might have been an easy objective to target, but the reality on the ground shows that such a goal is not easy to achieve due to lack of English training schools and instructors who are proficient enough in English to be able to gain entry into one of these schools.

English teacher education/preparation is not in the hands of universities in Morocco as is the case in the United States, for example. Two institutions have always been in charge of preparing future teachers of English in Morocco: the ENS and the CPR⁶ (*Ecole Normale Supérieure* and *Centre Régional Pédagogique respectivement*). Any student with a Bachelor’s degree can take the entrance exam, but only a few make the cut due to the limited number of available spots in the school. The

⁶www.ensrabat.ac.ma; www.cpr.ac.ma

ENS typically trains future high school English teachers, and the CPR is in charge of training future middle school English teachers. Therefore, before a language policy that introduces English in the school curriculum is put in motion, additional English teachers' colleges need to be put in place to prepare future English teachers. The government will also, at least initially, have to rely on foreign English instructors and teacher-trainers until a cadre of Moroccan professionals is ready to assume the responsibility of teacher training.

Additionally, the government will have to seriously reconsider its English textbook adoption policies. Until the mid-1980s, the Ministry of Education used to adopt English textbooks that were written by foreign specialists in the field of ELT and published in the U.K. and the U.S. However, after this period and with the process of Arabization in full swing and the rise of Islamization, the Ministry of Education, under pressure from more conservatives, determined that these "foreign" English textbooks were simply too laden with foreign cultural influences considered too hazardous to the young Moroccan mind.⁷ It was assumed that teaching English using foreign textbooks was tantamount to teaching about the cultural values of the textbook writers', which was antithetical to the mission of the educational system in Morocco (National Charter of Education 1999).

The Ministry of Education's official document, *English Language Guidelines for Secondary Schools: Common Core, First Year, and Second Year Baccalaureate 2007* came to lay down strategies and recommendations, and sometimes rules, on what to teach at each level of secondary school.

A good case in point is found in the section that instructs English teachers with regards to the type of writing prompts they should give their students:

Ensure that the topics are not culturally biased. Writing prompts can address relatively neutral themes, such as asking learners to describe a local monument. Alternatively, they may include more controversial topics designed to have learners to (sic) take a stand, such as learners' attitudes toward televised sit-coms in Morocco. (p.71)

According to this official document, a less "culturally biased" topic and a "relatively neutral" theme would be to describe a "local monument" or "learners' attitudes towards televised sit-coms in Morocco." Such prompts implicitly expect students to watch TV sitcoms in Arabic and write about them in English, which is contrary to every principle of language teaching (Celce-Murcia, et al. 2014; Burns and Richards 2009; Brown 2007). "Language has no independent existence, living in some sort of mystical space apart from the people who speak it" (Crystal 2003, p. 7). Any attempt to teach a language devoid of its cultural and social contexts is tantamount to robbing the learner of the richness and joy that come with learning a new language.

One could therefore argue that the Arabization process did not affect only the teaching of French in Morocco, but it did extend to how English is taught, by whom, and using what teaching methods and materials. Again, the end result is the same:

⁷See www.hespress.ma's interview with one of these conservative Arabists, Dr. Mohamed Boulouz: <http://hespress.com/interviews/89853.html>

low standards and low English proficiency levels of high school graduates, compared to those whose education was bilingual in Arabic and French prior to the 1980s.

The 1980s is a crucial decade for the education sector in Morocco: this is the decade when the Arabization policy was completed at the elementary and secondary levels; this is also the period of that witnessed the rise of conservative Islamism in Morocco. Another direct result of these strange coincidences seems to have been the flight-en-masse of all the foreign English instructors who had taught in Morocco for decades. Currently, every instructor of English in every English department and every English teacher preparation department who are on the government payroll are Moroccan. The only occasional foreign instructors in these departments are the English Language Fellows⁸ or Fulbright Scholars.⁹ The only schools that will hire foreign language instructors are private English schools, including Al-Akhawayn University. The fact that these private institutions are able to have a balance between a foreign and local language teaching staff¹⁰ usually results in students higher graduation rates and higher proficiency levels in English and therefore employment prospects, especially in the private sector. The same could not be said of those who graduate from the public university system in Morocco.

7 Major Players in Planning and Advancing the Teaching and Learning of English in Morocco

(a) The Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education in Morocco is in charge of all language education policy decisions including foreign language teaching and learning in Morocco. The Ministry of Education is a very centralized institution, although it has 16 regional branches (called academies) in the major cities and provinces of Morocco. “These branches are responsible for implementing the government’s policies and managing educational needs in their respective regions by developing up to 30 % of the curriculum for their respective regions to help ensure that these curricula are locally relevant” (PIRLS 2011, p. 408).

(b) Moroccan Association of English Teachers

Another crucial organization in the English education sector in Morocco is the Moroccan Association of English Teachers – MATE, a non-profit, non-governmental organization that consists mostly of high school teachers of English as a foreign language. MATE was created in 1979 with the goal of providing ongoing professional

⁸ See ww.elf.georgetown.edu

⁹ See cies.org

¹⁰ Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane boasts 40% of its teaching staff as foreigners – with 30 % from English-speaking countries – and the rest from Morocco.

development opportunities such as conferences and in-service training in order to help improve the quality of teaching English in Morocco.

MATE receives a great deal of material support from both the British Council and the Regional English Language Office of the American Embassy in Morocco.

(c) The British Council

The British Council assists MATE through the:

- “Organisation of a number of ELT seminars, workshops and summer schools;
- Participation of British Council professionals and experts in MATE national events through workshops and presentations;
- Enabling MATE members to participate in international ELT events and conferences;
- Assistance for newly qualified teachers through the provision of a wealth of ELT materials and resources
- Provision of free places on British Council Teaching training courses.” (<http://www.britishcouncil.org/morocco-english-mate.htm>)

(d) Regional English Language Office (RELO)

Similarly, the U.S. embassy in Morocco’s Regional English Language Office (RELO) assists MATE and the teaching of English in Morocco in general in the same way. Additionally, this office has one of the most successful English programs in Morocco: ACCESS. This program provides 2 years of English instruction to needy students, who cannot otherwise afford private language schools, in urban as well as in remote areas of the country (<http://morocco.usembassy.gov/root/pdfs/access-in-morocco-info-sheet.pdf>).

The RELO office runs other programs, such as the E-Teacher scholarship, English Language Exchange Programs, namely through the Fulbright Scholarship, wherein novice teachers of English are sent to the United States to learn about American culture while teaching Arabic to American college students. The English Language Specialist Program and the English Language Fellow Program are two other programs that regularly send a number of TESOL professionals to teach in different institutions and provide in-service training to Moroccan teachers (<http://morocco.usembassy.gov/relo.html>).

(e) The American Language Centers

The American Language Centers of Morocco are the oldest private English language institutions in the country. There are 11 centers in Morocco – mostly in large urban centers. The American Language Centers, which are private language schools run by American educators, teach EFL to Moroccans, and especially to middle and upper class children that can afford their tuition, which has more than doubled in the last 10 years due to high demand for English.

These schools employ a large number of Moroccan high school and university instructors and tend to provide teacher training in the form of national conferences and in-service training. Some of these centers, especially the one in Fez, has an

internationally respected Arabic as a Foreign Language program that attracts hundreds of American students every year. The advantage of such a program is that it houses its students with Moroccan families, which not only benefits the students but also the family members who are learning or interested in learning English.

(f) AMIDEAST

AMIDEAST is an institution that provides advising to students interested in studying in American universities. It also runs exchange programs between the United States and Morocco, but in the last decade it has started offering English language classes as well. In doing so, it has followed the American Language Centers' model and has excelled in attracting students to its new headquarters in Rabat and Casablanca.

(g) Private Moroccan English Language Schools

In addition to these foreign-run English language schools, Moroccan businessmen in particular seem to have realized the potential of this sector and have therefore embarked on launching new private school ventures, most of which include the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. Even government teachers who are still on the state payroll have entered the private language school business by setting up English, and sometimes additional language schools. And so far the state has turned a blind eye to the proliferation of these schools.

The private English language school is a not a regulated sector in Morocco; the government has largely stayed out of the private language school business primarily because it is focusing its energy on fixing its public school system. According to the BBC, (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24017596>), Moroccan teachers of English and new graduates of English departments are also playing an important role in the spread of English by becoming more entrepreneurial in their approach to delivering English to those who are unable to afford the American Center, AMIDEAST, and the British Council. Thus, the number of English speakers in Morocco is on the rise, and how this is going to play out with the small minority of influential Moroccans who have strong and ongoing political and economic ties with France and the French language remains to be seen.

8 Conclusions and Recommendations

Language planners in Morocco may not agree on many things, but when it comes to the state of the education system, everyone seems to agree that the system is dysfunctional and needs a total overhaul, especially in terms of the linguistic tools used as mediums of instruction in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Several attempts to address this failure have been introduced, including the 1999 National Charter of Education and Training and the 2009–2012 Education Emergency Plan. Still, both plans have failed to address the specific and concrete measures to improve the quality of education, and as a result the system continues to see high dropout

rates, low student achievement at all levels of the system, in addition to producing students who are unequipped with the linguistic, technical, and technological skills to compete on the job market.

A 2007 World Bank report on development and education in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region ranked Morocco in the 11th place out of 14 countries in the region (http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/downloads/P11_IR_Chapter1.pdf)

The United Nations Development Program, where education plays a primary role in how countries are ranked, put Morocco in the 130th place, out of 187 countries (http://www.pnud.org.br/atlas/ranking/IDH_global_2011.aspx). In the PIRLS's 2011 comparison of international student achievement in reading, Morocco's reading averages at the end of elementary school ranked it among the least performing countries, one position before last (http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/downloads/P11_IR_Chapter1.pdf).

The Moroccan government and most Moroccans are well aware of the educational crisis in the country, and the introduction of all these reforms that have unfortunately not paid off is a clear indication that the will is there to turn the education sector around. But unless the issue of foreign languages and the linguistic medium to adopt for teaching scientific and technological subjects is confronted and addressed openly and honestly, it would be hard to predict a way out of this educational conundrum.

In the midst of this chaotic educational atmosphere, English continues to gain ground on the linguistic scene in Morocco, and all indications at this time point to a strong shift in Morocco's language education policy from a focus on Arabic and French as the traditional mediums of education to English. How the state will unroll this project is anybody's guess.

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English Education Policy in Oman

Khalid Salim Al-Jardani

Abstract The Oman chapter highlights various aspects of Education in the Sultanate of Oman. It starts by describing how English language is seen in Oman from governmental, the society views. It discusses English in both the primary level and the tertiary level. The chapter also highlights some of challenges facing the Sultanate of Oman to prepare its youth for a better life and work. The aspect of using only one Textbook for Government Schools is also discussed.

Aspects related to Teacher Training is also highlighted. This covers types of programmes provided for teachers as an in-service training addressing the needs of teachers at each stage of schooling: Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Post-Basic Education.

The chapter ends by addressing aspects leading to improvements showing a number of recent researches developed which can help policy makers to make better choices for a better development for English language Education in Oman.

Keywords English • Oman • Education • Primary level • Tertiary level • Textbook • Teachers • Schools

The Sultanate of Oman is facing the challenge of preparing its youth in life and work for the modern global economy. There is a need to prepare them with a high level of awareness and skills in Maths, Science, Technology and Languages to deal with the changes in social and life style, technology and international business (Ministry of Education 2010). This also helps to develop a smooth interaction with the rest of the world and show a high degree of adaptation to take their place in the world with strong confidence in religion, culture and their own beliefs. The need to observe the changes in educational philosophy; the role of English in society (tourism, business, etc.), students' and parents' expectations; the educational technology and the workplace expectations, all require a clear reflection of plans across the social and educational context.

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1 ELT in Primary Education

English in Oman is seen as an important foreign language. It is utilized in both governmental and private organizations (Al-Jardani 2012, 2013). However, it is used more in private associations, as they are linked more closely to international organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF and other areas such as oil and gas companies. From this international perspective, people in the Omani society see the need to focus more on how English is taught in classrooms. They also see the importance of teaching English as a means for communication and of developing children's abilities to use it authentically – for example, filling in English forms and writing e-mails. Parents see the importance of this target language for their children as it operates as a tool or as a gateway to the future. They spend their time, effort and money to help their children learn English quickly and effectively. They sometimes send their children to private institutes during holidays for English and computing courses.

From this standpoint, English is expected to be taught to reach the expectations of society and parents. These expectations lead to focus on the use of the target language. They mainly focus, as the researcher sees it, on language production skills, as parents are keen to see their children write and speak well.

The use of English in Oman has developed into “institutionalized domains”, such as business, the media and education (Al-Busaidi 1995). To prepare future participants to function in these domains, English is taught in government schools from Grade One, while it is taught from Kindergarten in private schools. English has also become the medium of teaching and training in all private and public higher education/post secondary institutions throughout the Sultanate (Al-Issa 2005).

It is clear that English is seen as an effective tool for any educational innovation. As such, efforts to improve English Language instruction receive political and economic support from the government, which determines its place on the social “hierarchy” (Al-Issa 2002). English is considered as a resource for “national development” (Wiley 1996). “English is also considered as a fundamental tool that facilitates ‘Omanisation’” – a gradual and systematic process through which the expatriate labour force is replaced by a qualified Omani one (Al-Issa 2002). Mastery of the English language is a prerequisite for finding a white-collar job (Al-Busaidi 1995; Al-Issa 2002). English is, hence, central to Oman’s “continued development” (Nunan et al. 1987, p. 2) and is “a resource for national development as the means for wider communication within the international community” (2). This stresses the need for English language and also a need to specify the objectives of learning it in Oman and other related elements and of course the need to make these elements easy to be known by different organisations in a form of a framework.

The government recognises that competence in English is important if Oman is to become an active participant in the new global economy. English is the most common language for international business and commerce, and is the exclusive language in important sectors such as banking and aviation (Al-Issa 2005). English

is the global language for Science, Medicine and Technology, and rapidly expanding international computerised databases and telecommunications networks that are maintained in English are increasingly becoming an important aspect of academic and business life (Ministry of Education 1995).

In 2004, the Ministry of Tourism was created in Oman. This was as a result of a better understanding of the need to stay on the cutting edge of international development, and also because of the increase in the number of tourists coming to Oman every year. It is also linked with the perceived need to diversify in the economy. Therefore, if we focus only on the Omani culture by highlighting its main aspects, this would not satisfy the needs created by these recent developments in Omani society. The effects of tourism, business and of accepting others would definitely seem to require a better understanding of others and an open mind in learning about their cultures. These would have far-reaching effects within Oman. Thus, teachers need to be working with their students with some space for them to teach the language in the ways which might help their students to use the language in public. The increased use of English in Oman necessitates innovation in the education system hence, the importance and significance behind my particular research topic.

The use of different communication and information devices is noticed easily within the Omani context and Omani youth too. It is uncommon now to meet even a teenager without a smart phone with modern features. They use the phone applications such as Whatsapp which are mostly in English, chatting and surfing the internet for school purposes and their own interest. The availability for these devices and their use adds to the use of English.

2 ELT in Tertiary Education

English is the medium of instruction in all the science majors in public institutions (Al-Issa 2006; Al-Jadidi 2009). English is taught for both general and specific purposes in different institutes and colleges according to need. In some institutions, such as Sultan Qaboos University and Institutes of Health Sciences where assignments and papers are required to be produced in English, it is taught for academic purposes (Al-Issa 2006).

In most institutes and universities in Oman, students spend about a year on foundation courses before they start their main courses of study and a few may drop out of their studies because of their low level of English. For example in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), 86% of female and only 44% of male students finished their foundation course in 2010 and 4.2% of male but only 0.66% of female students dropped out of their study in the same year (Al-Busaidi and Al-Shihi 2014). This highlights the need to look back at what students are provided within their general education and how they were taught during their 12 years of primary level and this clear difference between male and females.

3 English Language Teaching

The educational system in Oman has developed continuously. In 1998, a new system was created based on the new education philosophy which takes into account the different stakeholders' needs and expectations as well as how to cope with the changing world in the sense of the information and skills needed and the technology utilized. The stakeholder covers all parties involved in the need for English language teaching and involved in the developing and evaluating process, such as employers and higher institutions and colleges. Further research into this area is needed (Al-Jardani 2013).

English is taught as a second/foreign language subject in government schools in Oman; there is an argument whether English is seen as a foreign or a second language. Students start studying it from Grade 1 along with Arabic which is naturally their mother tongue (Al-Jardani 2013). They have 5–7 periods per week and each period lasts for 40 min, which makes about 3–4 h of learning English per week. For educators who see it as a second language, teaching it from Grade 1 and even in KG level along with Arabic, the mother tongue is strong evidence. On the other hand, English is mainly spoken in international institutions and big companies and for students a 40 minute lesson per day for 12 years of primary education. It is very rarely spoken at home which seems to be a strong evidence for the educationalist who feels that it is a foreign language in Oman. Moreover, starting in 2012 two more foreign languages were introduced as an elective courses in Post education Schools – French and German.

Schools are provided with some materials from the Omani Ministry of Education. Each school has a Learning Resource Centre which contains computers, CDs, DVDs, and many books. However, these centres are rarely used by the English teachers as there are very few English books and resources available in each centre. However, there is a plan to add more sources both fiction and non-fiction books in the nearly future. There are 3 levels of schools running at the same time. The “Basic Cycle 1 Education”, which covers Grades 1–4, Cycle 2 for Grades 5–10 and third level is called “Post-Basic Schools” which includes Grades 11 and 12. In addition, in some areas of the country, a school might cover two or even three levels. In a place where the researcher comes from, there are only two schools, one for boys covering Grades 1–12 and the other for girls covering all three levels; including Grades 1–12.

English teachers in Oman comprise of both Omanis and non-Omanis. Non-Omani teachers represent many different nationalities, such as Egyptian, Palestinian, Tunisian, Jordanian, Indian, and Sudanese (Al-Jardani 2012, 2013). Teaching experience in Oman varies; while some teachers have several years of experience, some are fresh graduate teachers with little practical classroom experience. In addition, some non-Omani teachers have been in the country for a few years while some are new to the country and to Oman's education system. Moreover, most non-Omani teachers stay in Oman for only four years. Thus, there are usually some new teachers arriving in Oman every year. Initially, a need for an orientation course is important in a country like

Oman in order to help new teachers, both Omanis and non-Omanis, as a refresher course to highlight the main issues of the textbooks and better ways to work with Omani students.

Students in Oman are rarely formally exposed to English or to native English speakers. Very few Omani children have the opportunity to listen to English being spoken by their parents at home (Al-Jardani 2012, 2013). However, they are exposed to English through the satellite channels and the Internet, which many can access from their homes. This creates difficulties for teachers seeking to implement the syllabus, as they need to provide more interactive opportunities to use the language in their classrooms, and to do so in a very interesting and enjoyable way. It must also influence the kind of English that is being taught because there is often a discrepancy between the English of text books and that of the media, as the language utilized and taught within a classroom is usually simpler and selective when compared to that which learners might hear from the media. Starting from 1998, learners in the government and private schools started to learn English from Grade 1. This might have helped learners to be more exposed to English and get more opportunities to use it, although no research could be observed on this issue so far.

4 English Language Curriculum Development

Throughout the history of curriculum development in Oman, the Ministry of Education has used both commercial publications and an in-house curriculum. With two series of commercial books being used first, five curricula of in-house materials have been developed so far. This shows that Oman intended from the beginning to develop its own curriculum for English Language Teaching. The latest curriculum used started in 1998, and is called the Basic Education system.

The rationale for the English Language Curriculum has been developed to match the general objectives of the Basic Education system in the Sultanate of Oman.

The general objectives of the education system are to:

- reinforce young Omanis' strong and proud belief in Islamic principles and behaviour, as well as pride in their country, their Gulf heritage, and the Arab world;
- value the diversity of the world's peoples;
- understand and actively promote equity, justice, peace, and the protection of the environment in their community, Oman, and the world;
- care about their physical, emotional and spiritual health as well as that of others;
- pursue healthy, purposeful lives and develop good work habits and basic life skills;
- acquire knowledge and skills in all areas of the curriculum, including skills in questioning, investigating, critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making;

- apply the skills learned to further studies, work, leisure, daily living and a life-time of learning;
- use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an understanding of technological applications, apply appropriate technologies for solving problems related to their daily lives, and promote transliteracy;
- raise critical awareness of various forms of arts, and participate in creative activities and expression.
- raise awareness of global issues within the curriculum;
- use English to support, reinforce and consolidate topics in other subject areas;
- present English as an international language and as a means of communication. (Ministry of Education 2010, p. 2)

In Grade 12 (Post-Basic Education) which is the last grade in the system, students sit National Exams in different subjects of which English is one. Based on their results – the results are in form of marks and percentage of each subject – they can apply to different fields of study in and outside the country’s colleges and universities, both governmental and private.

Government schools in Oman use only one English national course book, an in-house curriculum, called English for Me (EfM) for Grades 1–10 and “Engage with English” (EWE) for Grades 11–12, which is based on the new reform project. This project started in 1998. Based on this, English teaching started from Grade 1 instead of Grade 4 in the previous system as well as some other issues related to teaching methodology and developing a new in-house curriculum. Every school must use this book and is required to finish all of the lessons on time. Therefore the syllabus is seen as the main source of input.

The English Language Curriculum reflects students’ conceptual development and maturational levels at each stage of learning. The curriculum for Grades 1 to 4 plays a crucial role in developing a linguistic and attitudinal foundation for learning in later grades. It develops positive attitudes towards the learning of English by using communicative and experiential approaches to language teaching and learning. It is essential that children understand from an early age that to be a successful language learner, they must see English as a tool for communication, rather than an academic exercise to be memorised. It is also important to build on children’s natural instincts of learning by doing. The English Curriculum for Grades 5 to 7 further consolidates the foundations established in the first four years of school. It also reinforces that English is a tool for communication and functional use. This gives pupils the confidence and linguistic foundation in English, as well as the practical skills, to serve them beyond the Basic Education years. The curriculum for Grades 5 to 7 also provides a careful introduction to the elements of the English Language (grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary) along with reflecting the fact that pupils can employ both experiential and analytical modes of learning. At Grades 8 to 12, the curriculum has more advanced linguistic skills and a broader knowledge of the linguistic systems of English. At this stage, the approach of English as a tool for communication and functional use is balanced with a more analytical mode of learning. (Ministry of Education 2010, pp. 11–12)

5 One Textbook for Government Schools

Using only one textbook in the whole Sultanate is an aspect for argument. However, this issue requires further research in order to find out whether there is a need for different textbooks for different regions and is outside the scope of this study. The variety of geographical differences which affect learners' needs and interests might push towards having different textbooks catering for each place and context. However, other issues related to financial and equal opportunities for all children of Oman should be considered too.

A government needs a curriculum to make sure they provide equal exposure of a language or information to learners in the whole country. For example, in Oman only one course book is used all over the country, The English for Me and Engage with English series in this case. The rationale of this is mainly that the Ministry of Education wants to ensure that all learners get equal learning input and opportunity and then sit for the same exam. This is a contentious issue as there is a need for different textbooks and a need to set for different exams according to what learners in different contexts are exposed to. However, funding seems to be the key point for the government decision. Developing different textbooks requires funding as well as a greater effort to be made to encourage authors and materials.

The Tests and Examination Department has responsibility for public examination in Oman. This covers all test and examinations at all level. The high-stakes Grade 12 examination has two purposes, one is prove completion of the Post-Basic School and getting its certificate and then joining jobs or tertiary-level institutions. Using continuous assessment is used to assess students' achievement throughout the school year. However, the percentage of the marks awarded differs according to the level of the students. For example for lower grades; Grades 1–2, the continuous assessment covers all the grade, however, the percentage is decreasing towards Grade 12 which is 30% and 70% for the Semester Test as well as the short tests (Ministry of Education 2012, p. 91).

6 English Language Curriculum

Officers in different departments such as Supervision, Assessment, Training, Curriculum Development and Curriculum Evaluation need to have a clear curriculum. The curriculum department only has to develop one course book for each grade. It should be noted here that the writing of one course is not an easy task as the course book has to cater for learners' needs and interests for all Oman, taking into account, for example, learners with different backgrounds, knowledge, needs and interests. Another aspect is that along with the course book, there is also a need for supplementary materials including printed and non-printed materials. Extra supplementary tasks which are put in separate booklets can help students to practice the

language more; others such as audio and video devices can also play an important role in supporting learners' learning the target language.

Since the new course book started in 1998 written by textbook writers, (a mixture of native English speakers and national educationalists), which is about 14 years old, the Basic Education course book: The English for Me series (Grades 1–10) and Engage with English series (Grades 11 and 12) is still the purpose of any evaluation which seeks to work towards covering school materials which is not done until date. Therefore, the main purpose of any Curriculum Evaluation at least during the coming five years is mostly to identify positive things about the existing course to maintain (Al-Jardani 2013). Also the focus will be on adapting and developing the weaker areas. The purpose of comparing different courses is not practical at least now as there is only one relevant course book available. A former one was produced during the eighties out this seems to be out of date regarding the methodology and the information included.

However, looking back at the existing course book and the long time taken to put it into the field will not be an encouraging experience unless by enriching the curriculum department with more qualified manpower or finding good commercial books which need to be adapted anyway. This area is also in need of clear and planned research. Developing a clear planned evaluation process is a key issue in order to develop a good evaluation (Al-Jardani 2012, 2013). This should be based on needs analysis, the evaluation's purpose and the co-operation of others with the evaluator.

7 Teacher Training

Apart from the initial teacher education, there are a number of programmes offered to in-service teachers. First of all, teachers are provided with methodology courses to address the needs of teachers at each stage of schooling: Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Post-Basic Education. These programmes aim to develop the ability of teachers of English to teach at different levels effectively. They focus on developing their understanding of theoretical principles underpinning foreign language learning and teaching as well as best practice with regard to approaches and techniques of teaching English successfully. Teachers are also offered a programme to help them improve their language proficiency and knowledge of the English language system. In addition, a programme which focuses on research for professional development and which aims to equip teachers with the skills needed to undertake action research to continue to understand and develop their practice is offered to experienced teachers. Finally, a programme is offered to prepare Senior English teachers, to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to effectively support and mentor teachers.

As well as these programmes, teachers are offered a number of one day workshops. These include workshops to familiarise them with curricula innovations, to address literacy skills, the teaching of grammar, and making teaching more creative. The list of workshops is constantly updated to ensure these remain fresh and are responsive to teacher's needs.

The design of programmes and workshops is underpinned by an active approach to learning designed to ensure teachers can make strong links between their school practice and the new ideas they encounter in training. This is done through various methods including seminars, group tasks, workshops, presentations, guided observation in appropriate schools followed by reflection and discussion and also by individual self-directed study in the training room.

8 English Language Curriculum Evaluation

In order to reform initiatives in English language education in Oman, one must start at the Ministry of Education, which seeks to implement changes via a new or revised curriculum. As the principles underlying the approach represented in any new textbook or other educational reform initiative may be novel for the end users (i.e., classroom teachers and learners), problems can arise if there is a lack of explanation, orientation or a lack of effective Curriculum Evaluation process. If this area of Curriculum Evaluation is neglected, the textbook may be abandoned outright, or, more likely, a hidden curriculum could develop, with teaching and learning taking place much as it did prior to the introduction of the innovation (Kennedy 1987, p. 164). Therefore, there is a need for a systematic Curriculum Evaluation to support practitioners in the field.

In 2005 a new “small” department (Ministry of Education 2012, p. 94), the Department of Curriculum Evaluation, was founded as part of the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education 2012). The main aim of having this department was to participate in developing the curriculum based on the learning objectives in Oman, the type of learners and society and the workplace needs (Directorate General of Curriculum Development 2011). Therefore, there is a need to develop a clear and planned approach for developing and evaluating the curriculum and not to deal with it in an unstructured way.

Every year, the Department of Curriculum Evaluation of each subject suggests the grade which they expect the Department of Curriculum Evaluation to work on (Al-Jardani 2013). There can be more than one grade suggested, however it seems that one grade is acceptable considering the shortage of members of the Curriculum Evaluation Department. The department uses different curriculum officers including all subjects. They also use the supervision departments and teachers in schools to evaluate the books. For example, if a Grade 1 Arabic language course book was selected, the members of Arabic language in the Curriculum Evaluation have to plan the whole evaluation process, but can use members of the Arabic curriculum section, supervisors of Arabic language, Arabic teachers in schools, as well as learners if necessary. The process takes about a whole year. It covers documentation, field notes analysis and using other instruments including observation, interviews and questionnaires. It also covers different schools in different regions, and also teachers, students of the grade evaluated and sometimes parents. This coverage might help to provide a good picture of the course book being evaluated.

The department uses mainly document analysis sheets for educational researchers within the Department of Curriculum Evaluation, Curriculum Officers, supervisors and teachers of the same subject. These intend to be used by researchers to enable course participants and teachers to analyse the tasks and activities they engaged in during a course (Bell 1999; Wallace 1991, pp. 141–164; Krippendorff 1980, p. 21).

The Curriculum Evaluation sheets produced by the evaluation engage teachers in pre-observation and post-observation discussion. They also use classroom observations by outsiders in the form of a checklist, during the Focus Group meetings with teachers as well as in the teacher's questionnaire. These sheets mainly focus on teachers' perceptions of the curriculum and the learners' reactions towards too (Al-Jardani 2013). This is mainly because they are the main users of the curriculum and the ones who we tested to see whether they have done it well as if their learners were able to succeed. However there is a clear need to have these skills even to help themselves to analyse their students' reaction and development towards learning the language and how to support them more.

9 More Issues Related to English Language Curriculum Evaluation

The evaluation observed within the Curriculum Evaluation department in Oman seems to be on a very short term basis. Basically every year, officers of each subject intend to do one complete evaluation for a grade. A report will be distributed at the end of each academic year (Al-Jardani 2013). This is intended to be short term; however a plan is needed to do a long term evaluation where data of formative and summative input are collected systematically over a long time.

Looking through the sheets used by the Curriculum Evaluation department requires both types of measurement. There is a need to analyse numbers and also oral and written feedback. This requires knowledge of analysing qualitative and quantitative data. The training department established a course every year for teachers supporting them to do action research, conducting and then writing about them. The Ministry has already published a number of publications based on this practical research (Al-Jardani 2013). This will help other teachers with similar issues and also the Curriculum Evaluation process in which these can be used and their results can be examined. The idea of developing and encouraging a systematic approach of "Action Research" is very important. This could be developed within conducting a micro-evaluation which can be part of the professional development of teachers. Action research as a method of gathering data will be discussed in the section on gathering information. The training centre in Oman develops kinds of courses for teachers of different levels. Teachers attend a course of two parts, theoretical input for some sessions followed by action research. Teachers intend to do research within their classroom to solve some of their English teaching problems or any behaviour issues.

The key use of learners noted in the Curriculum Evaluation department sheets is by observing teachers to see how learners are managing the curriculum. Further, more teachers might be able to get some chances to discuss them with the learners directly. There are also some general self-assessment tasks (Al-Jardani 2002) within the English course books at the end of each unit which can be seen as distractors – i.e., those which stop learners from smooth learning- by some experts and others can see them as a way to assess the learners themselves of what they managed to do with that unit. These tasks can be used whether by their teachers and visitors to understand how learners think about their course book and each unit.

Officers from different departments in the Ministry of Education can also be part of the evaluation process as coordinators. They can help in the observation work and also in the discussion periods and meetings (Al-Jardani 2013). However, there is a need for cooperation between the officers themselves as they might be from different departments including: Curriculum Development, Curriculum Evaluation, Supervision, Evaluation, and Training departments. Their role in the evaluation process needs to be specified. Based on their needs seen as “institutional needs” (Masuhara 1998, p. 241), they are expected to consider different aspects related to the development of a curriculum. This covers developing the educational policy and the key aims and objectives of the system, considering social and political needs, market and workplace requirements and other organisational issues such as the number of periods allocated for the subject, the resources and the budget available.

Within the Omani context, the key role players in this matter are the officers of the Curriculum Evaluation. They need to establish the whole process within the Ministry itself by contacting different departments related to the evaluated course book, so they would be happy to participate and then make the changes needed afterwards, and also within the school levels and the directorates within each governorate. Involving all different parties in the process especially officers of the different departments would help to look at the curriculum from different sides (Al-Jardani 2013). This is basically as it is not only a good course book which makes the curriculum any better as they are different aspects need to be considered. By having officers of the supervision department, issues related to senior teachers, supervisors can be better checked and evaluated. The same things related to training involvement; their participation will give the trainee teachers’ side more focus and can help to develop a better report at the end of the process. This happens to other parties such as the curriculum writers and students assessment departments.

A study on the Curriculum in Oman by Al-Mahrooqi et al. (2015).as part of a nation-wide investigation funded by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos’ Trust Fund for Strategic Research, awarded on May 2, 2012, into stakeholders’ perspectives on the reasons for public school graduates’ weaknesses in English in Oman. This study concluded that there are a number of areas which requires more attention in order to make the Omani course books more effective is by providing learners with higher level thinking skills and check out the learning process considering the scaffolding of it, as well as providing students with authentic texts. These and some other issues needs to be looked at seriously by different stakeholders.

10 The Way Forward

A study was carried out by Al-Mahrooqi (2012) comprising a hundred students (32 male and 68 female) from Sultan Qaboos University into the factors causing a low English proficiency among school graduates. Students continue to graduate from schools with insufficient English language proficiency and the majority (Al-Mahrooqi 2012) therefore require remedial or intensive English courses in a foundation programme before they start their main course of tertiary study. The study concludes that the reasons behind this failure at the primary level as seen by the students themselves are classified as follows: Teachers (85%), Curriculum (80%), Students themselves (70%), limited exposure to English and lack of practice outside the classroom (24%), Parents and the social context (23%), The system and the school environment (15%) and having careless and unmotivated friends (2%). This shows that 85% of students in the study thought that teachers are the major cause of their low level of English, indicating that ineffective teachers, inadequate curricula and uninterested students seem to be the key issues as perceived by students as contributing to them leaving school with inadequate English skills.

In addition, as part of a PhD study, Al-Jardani (2013) highlighted the need for a separate research into stakeholders' needs and expectations. This is clearly observed from the analysis of the study. It should cover investigating the needs of different stakeholders, and may include some document analysis as well. There is a need to adapt these needs which help the national and foreigners working here in the education party as well as other parties such as stakeholders to get a good idea of not only what is expected from the school graduate students but also what they are expected to provide and what support they need to give (Al-Jardani 2013).

As these needs and expectations are subject to change over time and as the Ministry of Education is planning to reform education, a clear need for this research is easily seen and should be encouraged. There is no point in reforming the educational system without considering the needs of stakeholders receiving the outcome of the 12 years of learning at the primary level. Therefore, there is a need for such a study to find out the up-to-date needs and expectations in order to incorporate these into the development of education in Oman.

The study aims to investigate the gap between stakeholders' needs and expectations in relation to English language level and skills at tertiary level education, and the actual skills and level of Grade 12 graduates entering tertiary education in Oman. The Ministry of Education is planning to reform education in Oman through the development of new curriculum standards integrating knowledge and the skills across all subjects. Within this process of educational reform, it is essential to ensure stakeholders' needs are addressed. While it is generally recognized that Grade 12 Omani graduates enter tertiary education without the necessary level of English skills, there is a lack of research into the specific skill gaps that exist and the possible causes of these gaps. In order to ensure that the new curriculum standards meet stakeholders' needs, it is essential to methodically research this issue. Therefore, this study aims to investigate this skills gap and identify areas within basic and post-basic

education that could be improved to help ensure that Grade 12 graduate students' English skills are more closely aligned to stakeholders' expectations.

The study intends to answer the following questions:

- What is the expected English language level and skills of students entering tertiary education?
- What is the actual level of English Language and skills of students entering tertiary education?
- How can Basic and post-basic education be improved to reduce the gap between expected and actual English level and skills?

The study needs to start by developing a clear background about the topic highlighting issues related to the Ministry of Education, and tertiary education regarding the level of English and other skills needed. This requires an initial study to explore the need and expectations. The study will then analyse the Ministry of Education documents and the input provided for students from Grades 1–12 to highlight the needs covered and compare between the two lists. An additional issue if there is time would be to highlight what has been done to cover this gap from the tertiary education and ways to start with these needs in the primary education (Al-Jardani 2015).

Parents and society can also be enlisted to help to address their children's difficulties and ways to overcome them. On the other hand, society can follow up the aims covered and the needs and interests of the country in general to be addressed in each curriculum. The private sector and workplace need be considered in developing the curriculum and also in the evaluation stage. Considering the needs of the workplace, the employee's skills and competence may be covered within the curriculum in order to develop good students.

Re-write the new standards from which a new scope and sequence of learning can be developed. As well as defining learning outcomes can be define, a new curriculum can be written or the existing one developed based on them. There is also a need to consider checking and developing all documents covering all aspects of learning/teaching process of all subjects and students grades. This should cover curriculum development, curriculum evaluation, and supervision and training frameworks. This can be a golden chance to develop one whole document to ensure a unique document which can be a good basis for learning process.

There is a number of research areas suggested by different national research A study or analysis of the Stakeholders needs including society, the higher education institute and the work place too needs to be carried out.

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The English Language Teaching Situation in Palestine

Robert Bianchi and Anwar Hussein - Abdel Razeq

Abstract The modern-day areas of Palestine corresponding to the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip represent some interesting and dynamic sociolinguistic realities. First, although these are areas in which colloquial Arabic has traditionally been spoken by a majority of the population, several other languages have been in use in educational domains especially Classical Arabic, Turkish, and French among Christians. However, the British Mandate period saw the establishment of English as an important language of political, economic, and cultural power within Palestine. Yet with the establishment of the State of Israel in areas that were once part of British Mandate Palestine, a new language was introduced to the area, Modern Israeli Hebrew. Still, English has endured, partly as a colonial leftover, but also increasingly as a window onto the world for Palestinians. The present chapter explores the enduring yet changing role that English has played and continues to play in the educational system of Palestine. The chapter concludes with evaluations of current English teaching and educational policy in Palestine and provides suggestions for enhancing this policy in order to promote economic development and growth while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Keywords Palestine • English language • EFL • TEFL • ELT • Curriculum • Teacher Training

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1 Introduction

Palestine¹ has a complex history due to several different geopolitical, cultural, and religious factors. First, as a literal crossroads between East and West, its whole long history has been one of conquest and conflict between Eastern empires (e.g. the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians, Phoenicians, Ummayyads) arching westward and Western empires (e.g. Egyptians, Macedonians, Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, French, Turkish, and British) arching eastward. Next, as the cradle of Judaeo-Christian monotheism and status as a land of prophets within Islam, its spiritual legacy, while indubitably glorious, has placed it within a tug of war struggle between the three major monotheistic religions. Finally, Palestine's importance as a strategic gateway to Western Asia and the Arabian peninsula in the dying days of the Ottoman empire put it on a crash course with British colonial aspirations in the region. But what has all this to do with language in general and English in particular? Everything. For without a proper understanding of how Palestine's unique and tumultuous history has coloured its equally complex and challenging present, it is near impossible to make sense of its current linguistic situation and its relationship with English. To this end, this chapter will provide a brief overview of the linguistic history of Palestine, leading to a discussion of the current status of English in both Palestinian society and education. Next, some key studies that highlight recent initiatives to enhance English language teaching (ELT) in the area will be presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with a set of policy recommendations for further development of ELT in ways that support Palestinian desires for autonomy and cultural authenticity.

1.1 Palestine: A Brief Linguistic History from Persians to Ottomans

Historically, Palestine has been home to many languages. Due to its frequent conquest by neighbouring powers, Palestine has a long history of diglossia in which local languages have been spoken alongside more prestigious languages of government and civilization and lingua francas. A full discussion of this varied linguistic history is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth mentioning that throughout most of Palestine's history up until and including the present, its elites and upwardly mobile inhabitants have had to become bilingual if not multilingual. Thus, in the Hellenistic period, Greek became a language of prestige for well-to-do

¹It should be mentioned here that "Palestine" will be used in two senses in this chapter. Initially, it will refer to historical Palestine, which largely corresponds to the present-day territory of the State of Israel along with the Gaza strip and the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Later, when discussing the more recent history of the area especially after the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, Palestine will be taken to refer only to the Gaza strip and West Bank areas commonly known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) since East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel in 1982.

inhabitants of Palestine, spoken alongside their native Aramaic, which was introduced to the area by the Persians. Palestinian Jews would also have learned Hebrew as a liturgical language. Later, the Romans introduced Latin to the region. When the Arab armies of the Caliph Omar invaded in the late seventh century, the Classical Arabic of the Qur'an became the prestige language used in government, written communication, and in religious education in the newly established Muslim community. Over time, Arabic, adapted and nativized as a Palestinian Vernacular, came to replace the native Syriac-Aramaic of Palestine to the extent that even the Christians and Jews of the area adopted it as their first language (Amara 2003, p. 219). Thus, the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities of Palestine shared Palestinian Arabic as a spoken language and had Greek and/or Syriac-Aramaic, Hebrew, and Classical Arabic as their liturgical languages respectively. In addition, Armenian was spoken by the Armenian Christian minority in the area.

The invasion of the Western European Catholic crusaders in the twelfth century re-introduced Latin alongside French, Italian, German, and early forms of English, the main languages spoken by the hotchpotch occupying armies (Amara 2003, p. 219). And although the crusader occupation was short-lived, the linguistic legacy was the establishment of Western European Catholic schools among Christians, creating a niche for Western languages namely Latin, French, and Italian as languages of Western culture and affinity. Meanwhile, the incorporation of Palestine into the Ottoman Empire added a new linguistic element- Turkish. As Turks administered the area, Turkish became the language of government and the upper elites. The official status of Turkish lasted until the end of World War I, when the British Mandatory period began.

1.2 Palestine Under the British

By the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire, known as the sick man of Europe, was near collapse. Thus, the conditions were ripe for the British Empire to extend and consolidate its interests in the Middle East. On the one hand, the Suez Canal in Egypt provided a vital transit route for British owned goods to and from their East Indian and Far Eastern colonies. To protect this trade route, and counterbalance French interests in the region, Britain turned its sights on Palestine. In return, Britain agreed with France that Lebanon and Syria would become part of a French Mandate in the Levant. Another incentive for the British to take control of Palestine with its ports was to have easy access to petroleum transported overland from Iraq. Having found willing political partners in the Kingdoms of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the Trucial States, and Iraq, British suzerainty over most of the Middle East was almost total.

Linguistically, the establishment of the British Mandate in Palestine in 1922 heralded the rise of the English language in Palestine. Hebrew, which was in the process of being revived among European Jewish settlers, was also becoming increasingly important as the settlers became more numerous. Already, in the late

Ottoman period, British missionary schools (Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Quakers) had introduced English as a language of instruction among certain sections of Palestinian society among other foreign missions such as those from Germany, Russia, France, and Italy (see Amara 2003; Marten 2006). Now, with full British administration of Palestine, English was declared an official language of Palestine alongside Arabic, and Hebrew, which had become the preferred mode of communication among Jewish settlers (Amara 2003, p. 219). Amara also notes that there were separate schools for Arabs and Jews and that Jewish settlers, as the newcomers to Palestine, were obliged to learn Arabic whereas the Arabs did not have to learn Hebrew (*ibid.*).

The implications of the British Mandate for the status of English were numerous. First, it replaced Turkish as the *de facto* language of government. Second, in light of the large waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern and Central Europe, English, viewed as a neutral language, soon became a lingua franca between the numerous European Jewish settlers and the original inhabitants who invariably spoke Palestinian Arabic as a mother tongue (Amara 2003, p. 220). Thus, in terms of language education, English became a popular second language studied in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim schools in the area. This position continued right up until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

1.3 1948 to 1967

Once the State of Israel was established across most of historical Palestine, the British Mandate effectively ended. The remaining parts of historical Palestine, namely the Gaza Strip, the West Bank of the River Jordan and East Jerusalem were entrusted by the British to their allies Egypt and Jordan respectively (Amara 2003, p. 220). As such, Gaza and the West Bank and East Jerusalem were obliged to adopt the English language policies of Egypt and Jordan respectively. In both areas, English was promoted as a language of science and trade and was taught as a subject from Grade 5 onward as the only foreign language in public schools alongside Modern Standard Arabic, the official language of both countries. Outside of the state-run schools, private Christian-run mission schools continued to teach a variety of languages: French, English, Italian, German, or Russian.

The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 resulted in one of the largest refugee crises in modern history with some 750,000 Palestinian Arabs being uprooted from their homes now within the borders of the fledgling Israeli state (Manna' 2013). In order to cater to the humanitarian needs of these refugees, who ended up settling in numerous camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, the UN set up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In the 1960s, UNRWA established its first schools in the refugee camps (UNRWA 2016). These schools continue to this day and currently account for 24 % of all schools in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009).

1.4 1967 to 1993

After the 6-Day War in which Israel captured the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, these areas of Palestine came to be known as the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The administration of these areas fell under the Israeli government. Yet, interestingly, the English language curricula from the Egyptian and Jordanian period were kept in place. Thus, Gaza continued to use the Egyptian curriculum for English while Jordan supplied the West Bank's English curriculum (Amara 2003, p. 220). Only East Jerusalem came under Israeli educational policy. The net effect of this situation was to perpetuate the use of teaching and methodologies that were not necessarily aligned with the needs of the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, as Palestinians began to chafe under some 20 years of Israeli occupation by the mid 1980s, a resistance movement, the first national *Intifada* (uprising), began in December 1987, demanding Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories. The ensuing bloodshed on both sides of the conflict forced Israeli and Palestinian parties to negotiate a peace treaty. This culminated in the Oslo Peace Accords agreed between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993, paving the way for limited autonomy and Palestinian Arab administration of Gaza and the West Bank for the first time in modern history.

1.5 The 1993 Oslo Accords and Their Implications for ELT in Palestine

A major effect of the Oslo Accords was to hand over limited power for self-government to the Palestinians. Thus, the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established and charged with regulating the day-to-day affairs of the OPT covering both Gaza and the West Bank, with East Jerusalem remaining firmly under Israeli control.

In terms of educational policy in general and ELT policy in particular, the greatest impact for Palestine of the Oslo Accords was the green light given to establish a national curriculum independent of both Egypt and Jordan. Thus, in the years following 1993, great effort was made to develop an educational curriculum that would be suitable to the needs of Palestinians living within the OPT (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, p. 44).

Writing in the post-Oslo period, Amara (2003) notes that English is the most widely known and used foreign language in Gaza and the West Bank, having greatly increased in use even after the departure of the British from the area. Indeed, Amara states that "Knowledge of English is a powerful status symbol and class marker" in Palestine (2003, p. 221). Clearly, recognition of the importance of English in, and for, Palestine was to have an impact on the newly developed Palestinian ELT curriculum. In order to make this new curriculum as effective as possible, the Palestinian

MOEHE decided to collaborate with MacMillan Education to develop the *English for Palestine* (EP) textbook series, which debuted in 2000 (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, p. 29). This resulted in a specific curriculum for the OPT being gradually implemented between 2000 and 2006 (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, p. 27), which is still in effect to this day.

Dajani and McLaughlin point out that public schools make up 70 % of all the schools in Gaza and the West Bank. The second largest educational provider in Palestine is UNRWA, which administers 24 % of all schools in the PA. Finally, charities and religious schools account for the remaining 6 % (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, p. 44). This indicates that government schools have become relatively more numerous, increasing from 64 to 70 % of all schools in Gaza and the West Bank. It appears that this growth has been at the expense of private schools, which made up 13 % of all Palestinian schools only a decade earlier as reported by Sabri (1997, p. 101).²

Amara (2003) looks at changes in foreign language education policies a few years after the PA had assumed the administration of the OPT. His research takes a language planning perspective and looks not only at the grade school system but also at universities. Amara observes that since English is used extensively in tertiary education in Palestine, the MoEHE had opted to start teaching English to first graders as mentioned above (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, pp. 39–42). Thus, the next section of the chapter will review several studies of English at the elementary level and upwards.

2 Teaching English as a Foreign Language Issues & Challenges in Palestine

2.1 Issues & Challenges at the Public Schools Grades 1–12 Level

As alluded to above, one of the most pivotal educational policy changes regarding English since the PA came to power in the mid-1990s was the decision to start teaching English from the first grade (age 6) as a core subject instead of from the fifth grade (age 11) as had been the situation previously (Nicolai 2007, p. 20). This change in policy appears to have been motivated by an awareness on the part of the Palestinian educational authorities of the importance of English in a society that

²Given that such private schools tended to be Church-run or otherwise Christian charity-affiliated (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009, p. 44), this significant drop in percentage might reflect the considerable and ongoing emigration of Christian Palestinians from PA-controlled areas (see Weiner 2005, p. 6). Such an exodus would almost certainly result in a negative impact on the Palestinian economy, further exacerbating challenges to providing quality education across all schools in the area.

values education as critical to the future success of its people (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009). In this regard, Dajani and McLaughlin note that

Curriculum developers, policy makers, teachers and parents would like Palestinian children to learn English from early stages since the English Language is the language of science and technology, a fundamental tool for pursuing higher education, and a means for communicating with a wider community (2009, p. 44).

Despite such widespread recognition of the importance of English, several recent studies have highlighted challenges both within the education system and outside of it that hinder the teaching of English in Palestine.

As mentioned before, students in Palestine used to start learning English at the age of 11 (at the fifth grade level). Later, under the PA, the Palestinian MoEHE mandated that students should start learning English at the first grade level. Many educators and researchers questioned the benefits of such a change in policy. For instance Shehadeh and Dwaik (2013) questioned the axiom that “earlier is better” in ELT and suggested that, instead of spending valuable money and effort on ELT in the earlier grades, thus spreading resources too thinly across too many grades, the educational authorities should consider reverting to teaching English from Grade 5 onward and focus on improving the quality of instruction and materials from that grade onward. Consequently, there is no consensus among Palestinian educators and researchers when to start introducing EFL in Palestinian public schools. This will definitely have a negative effect on the quality of English teaching particularly if the majority of Palestinian EFL teachers disagree with such a policy.

According to Shehadeh and Dwaik (2013), the quality of English instruction is also affected by the large class sizes, few periods of instruction per week, lack of access to technology as another impediment to learning English, and teaching English in a cultural vacuum, which makes it seem irrelevant and unappealing to students. Further, Shehadeh and Dwaik note that because of the diglossic nature of Arabic, young students who have to learn English have often not even developed critical thinking skills in Standard Arabic before studying English, further hampering their development in English. There can be no doubt that such factors, especially large class sizes, pose serious challenges to ELT within Palestinian public schools.

As mentioned above, large class sizes create significant learning challenges. With an average of 40 students per class, the opportunity for teachers to provide individualized feedback and attention is virtually non-existent. Also, there is very little opportunity for students to actually practice the language. Further, a lack of educational materials and resources and the instability of the Internet are other factors that impact negatively on English language teaching and learning in Palestinian public schools (Dajani and McLaughlin 2009).

Teaching English through the medium of Arabic, the students’ native language, is also a serious impediment to improving students’ English skills. Abdelrazeq, one of the present authors, is a practicum supervisor in Palestine who has observed a very large number of pre-service and in-service teachers. Abdelrazeq reports his utter shock at how often Palestinian EFL teachers use Arabic during English lessons. From

the authors' personal perspective and experience, the reasons behind such a heavy reliance on Arabic as a medium for teaching English are twofold: First, most teachers have not received adequate teacher training and development to support teaching English through the medium of English. Second, and perhaps more troubling, is that these educators, who are not native speakers of English themselves, never received adequate opportunities to practice and speak in English while they were learning it. Put bluntly, based on extensive observation by the authors, a significant number of EFL teachers in Palestine appear to have limited proficiency in English.

Corroborating this observation, Dajani and McLaughlin (2009) note that speaking skills are taught either inadequately or not at all. The activities prescribed in the textbooks used to teach the English skills (listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) do not stimulate and challenge students to think critically and creatively. Focusing on a Grade 3 textbook, these researchers detected a very limited range of activity types in order to stimulate young learners. They observe that listen and point, listen and say, count and say, and point and say are the main activities, leaving little room for the cognitive development of the students. Indeed, Dajani and McLaughlin argue that an emphasis on mere repetition of patterns is meaningless.

Still highlighting challenges in oral production, effective teaching of pronunciation is a major issue. Clearly, a foreign language learner who has not developed sufficient accuracy in pronunciation cannot be said to speak the target language proficiently. Yet Al-Najjar (2012), who investigated the teaching of pronunciation using the EP curriculum at the Grade 10 level, concluded that teachers at this level are poorly equipped to teach pronunciation effectively and that appropriate curricular materials are lacking. He recommends that instructors be better trained to teach pronunciation and that pronunciation be taught throughout the grade levels using learning domains that integrate pronunciation with the other units in the EP curriculum (2012).

Using effective language teaching methodologies and differentiation of instruction where teachers are able to use a variety of teaching strategies is also a great challenge. Teachers abide by textbook activities to such an extent that students end up performing the activities at the end of each reading passage in a routine and unchallenging way. Following the same routine for every unit in the textbook certainly does little to intrigue, motivate, and engage students in the learning process. For instance, focusing on Grade 10, Al Mazloum and Qeshta (2007) noted a dearth of group work and cooperative learning methods among teachers at this grade level. They recommended in-service workshops be provided to equip these teachers with the ability to use such strategies in order to better cope with large class sizes.

Teaching to the test is yet another challenge that limits teachers' ability to vary their methods of instruction. This situation is exacerbated by the time pressures placed on teachers to finish the units in the textbook in order to assist their students to pass exams. Indeed, Fennell (2007) observed that the English periods are dedicated to passing exams, largely in parallel with the *Tawjihi* (lit. 'orientation') exam (see Sect. 3 below), which focuses on grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing as distinct, unrelated components of language proficiency. Within this context, Fennell also observed an overtly grammar-centered approach to learning the lan-

guage that also prioritizes meeting curricular goals within limited time constraints over adopting communicative approaches. Such a lack of variety of teaching strategies, coupled with an overemphasis on grammar while using a single textbook, clearly hinders Palestinian EFL learners from developing a satisfactory level of English proficiency even after graduating from high school.

An additional challenge in the Palestinian EFL context is the policy of using EP as the sole textbook for each grade level. Indeed, fixating on a single textbook series severely restricts students from accessing an adequate and engaging range of target language learning materials, hampering students' learning across all English skill areas. In this connection, Yamchi (2006) laments the educational administration's preoccupation with covering all aspects of the textbook. Exacerbating this problem, Yamchi observes a serious lack of extra materials and teaching-support equipment. Thus, access to other books, articles, the internet, and production aides such as photocopiers and a printers are other obstacles to enhancing the curriculum.

The incongruence between the MoEHE English curriculum goals and those of EP, its chosen textbook, is another serious challenge. Dajani and McLaughlin (2009), for instance, observed that there was a clear disconnect between curricular goals for Grade 3 English and the textbook used for that grade. Also, within the materials themselves, they found a very restricted range of activity types in order to stimulate young learners. Such a situation not only negatively impacts students' engagement and motivation to learn English, but also affects their learning in the next grade level. Put simply, the lack of harmony between the textbook used and the curriculum goals for each grade level leaves students unprepared for the textbook material in the next grade. This results in a situation in which each grade level has become a separate entity by itself that is not connected to the subsequent grade level in terms of what learners are required to learn.

Ensuring a strong curricular connection between grade levels while enriching textbooks with relevant and interesting tasks are crucial elements in helping students to improve their English skills. In support of this observation, Rabba (2012) found in his study that the addition of supplementary texts above and beyond the authorized EP textbook was beneficial in keeping students' interest just as curricular variety was vital to successful teaching. This strict adherence to the textbook comes from the pressure placed on teachers to finish the units in the book on time. Such a deplorable situation is further compounded by a lack of workplace morale and motivation for teachers to do any extra work. According to Yamchi (2006), Palestinian teachers' lack of motivation is caused, to a great extent, by the meager wages that they earn. Indeed, the relatively low status of teachers in Palestine combined with the inadequate compensation and benefits that they receive discourage many bright students from considering teaching as a profession. For instance, within the English diploma programs at some of the universities in Palestine, most English majors, who are considered some of the top performers on the Tawjihi exam (91.5/100) seem to pursue an English diploma as a back up option. Regrettably, virtually none of these high academic achievers seriously consider the teaching profession as a first choice for their future careers.

All of these issues adversely impact the quality of English language teaching in Palestine. Consequently, students graduate from high school with such poor English skills that they are not ready for the English courses that they have to take at university. Enriching the textbooks by incorporating other stimulating materials is a vital first step in enhancing classroom learning. Next, harmonizing the goals embedded in the textbooks and any additional materials with those of the English curriculum is a critical next step in order to help learners meet curricular expectations. Needless to say, every teacher must be given a copy of the MoEHE's English curriculum given that, lamentably, a large number of EFL teachers in Palestine do not seem to have a copy of this document. Worse yet, some teachers do not even know of its existence (Personal Communication 2016).

Lack of knowledge and awareness about the curriculum in a textbook-driven learning environment where little enrichment exists has a profoundly negative effect on students' English levels. This, coupled with the imperative to move students through the system so that they can get out of school and into the workforce quickly, only makes matters worse. According to Yamchi (2006), students can only be failed a maximum of two times, resulting in mixed ability classes where teachers struggle to teach effectively across wide levels of proficiency. In an English class of 30 students at the intermediate or high school level, it is not strange to find students who are unable to read or write properly. At the intermediate level, it is not uncommon to encounter students who are unable to write the English alphabet correctly. Consequently, even after graduation from high school, a large number of students are unable to communicate effectively in writing or speaking.

In addition to the aforementioned English language teaching issues, the context in which students live also makes it even more challenging to teach and focus not only English, but on learning in general as one of the present authors, who currently lives in the OPT, witnesses firsthand. Thus, we concur with Yamchi (2006), Nicolai (2007) and Fennell (2009) who have all pointed out the consequences of living under the Israeli occupation; frequent road closures and checkpoints, strikes, demonstrations, funerals, and military incursions all amount to making ELT or any other educational undertaking, for that matter, extremely challenging. Life under the occupation is neither predictable nor normal in any sense. Teachers at the public schools and instructors at the university level try hard to take into consideration the context in which they work and live. They do their utmost to adapt to the current circumstances and lead a normal life. However, no matter how hard they try to cope, the deplorable living conditions have an unmistakable impact on Palestinian students' engagement, motivation and willingness to learn English or any other subject.

Despite such great obstacles, staying engaged and motivated to learn might be achieved through online study when students are unable to physically attend school for any of the reasons cited above. For instance, Shraim and Khlaif (2010) look at how the use of IT can overcome some of the contextual challenges discussed above in Palestine. While not replacing face-to-face learning altogether, Shraim and Khlaif note the value of e-learning as supplementary to more traditional learning environments. However, they also note that an admitted drawback, of course, is that Internet

and/or power is not always available or reliable, especially in rural areas. Further, due to the ongoing potential for conflict, internet access cannot always be guaranteed.

Putting these logistical challenges to one side, let us return to ways of improving the teaching of English at the school level. In this regard, Aqel (2009) conducted a comprehensive study of ELT curriculum and teaching practices among 11th graders. As a result, Aqel recommends the following: (1) reduction of curricular units to allow for deeper mastery of content (2) revision of EP textbooks on a frequent basis (3) consultation with teachers on modifications to the textbook (4) inclusion of a greater variety of literary genres (5) using a variety of materials for mixed level classes (6) focusing on fluency (7) encouraging independent learning (8) integrating more technology into the classroom and (9) including a greater variety of writing tasks and types. Having reviewed the major challenges that Palestinian ELT professionals face with the government schools, a discussion of ELT at the post-secondary is now in order.

2.2 English Language Teaching Challenges at the University Level

All Palestinian Universities place a great emphasis on developing their students' English Language proficiency in all language skill areas. After graduating high school, most of these students enter Palestinian universities. Their English proficiency is mediocre at best except among a minority of students who graduate from private schools where the medium of instruction is English. Consequently, the majority of Palestinian students do not proficient enough in the English language to succeed at university, where a sound knowledge of English is imperative. Indeed, at the university level, all academic programs require students to read material in English. This is because most of the readings and textbooks are written in English. This lack of proficiency in English comes as no surprise given the various issues and challenges that have been discussed above. Yet despite this deplorable situation, to date, there has not been much quality research done on the English language teaching challenges at the university level.

As mentioned, students at the undergraduate and graduate levels face enormous challenges when required to read materials and textbooks in English. Despite this, many university professors continue to assign readings in English at both undergraduate and graduate levels. As a result, students have no choice but to get outside help in translating such material. Sometimes they pay large sums of money for these translations, which are usually poorly done. And even when Arabic translations of English language textbooks are available and are provided by some professors to their students, these translations are also substandard. In light of the above, it is of paramount importance to improve university students' English language skills before and during their studies at the university.

While any enhancements to pre-university ELT will take time to yield results at the university level, given the present situation in which high school graduates do not have the requisite English skills upon entering university, post-secondary institutions should plan for some remedial courses or specific programs to improve students' English skills. Currently, most universities oblige their students to take two English courses, regardless of their major, as part of their undergraduate degree requirements. For instance, at one Palestinian university, all students must take ENG 141 and ENG 231. ENG 141 course focuses on reading while ENG 231 focuses on writing. Even though each course concentrates on a specific skill, the other skills are also integrated into the instructional process. However, clearly, a couple of courses are not enough to improve students' English proficiency. Thus, there is a critical need for more courses and programs to assist students to improve their English skills particularly those whose academic programs require intensive and high level reading in English.

Developing an intensive English program where university students spend a semester or two learning English would be a worthwhile and important initiative that should be taken into serious consideration. Some Palestinian educators even recommend developing English for academic purposes (EAP) or English for specific purpose (ESP) programs. To illustrate, Qaddomi (2013) calls upon ELT professionals and administrators working at Palestinian universities, who wish to serve the needs of their students, to develop such career-specific skill-related EFL curricula sooner rather than later. Thus, according to students' needs, tailored programs could be developed. For instance, in Qaddomi's own study, students reported the need to learn and improve their English to assist them with their jobs.

English programs could be designed to offer a variety of courses where each course or group of courses focuses on specific English skills depending on students' needs. Therefore, an EFL needs assessment should be conducted for specific groups of university students. For instance, Abu Alyan (2013), who investigated students' oral communication and pronunciation issues among University EFL students at a large university in Gaza, recommends providing learners with authentic EFL listening materials and speaking opportunities. Other researchers such as Abu Shawish and Abdelraheem (2010) investigated writing challenges among EFL majors at Gaza University. They suggest incorporating a greater variety of writing activities that build on students' prior knowledge and experiences. In contrast, Saleem (2010) based on his own research among university students, argues for the implementation of an intensive reading program not only at the university level, but also across the Palestinian education system as a whole. What all these studies indicate is that a needs-based approach to ELT program design would be most appropriate.

In addition to developing English programs that focus on specific purposes and courses that cater to specific English skills, there is a vital need to enhance instructional strategies at the university level. A large number of instructors still use the traditional way of lecturing without engaging students in the learning process. A shift from teacher-centered teaching approaches to student-centered ones could assist in better engaging students in the learning process. To illustrate, Farrah (2011) found that collaborative learning activities were very effective in teaching English

and were rated highly by students. Yet improving instructional strategies alone is not enough; using interesting, context-related and nationally-relevant material is also crucial. For instance, Nasser and Wong (2013) discovered that de-contextualized and de-nationalized content embedded in EFL teaching materials impairs the overall effectiveness of ELT in Palestine. They attribute the use of such de-nationalized content as part of an effort to downplay Palestinian nationalism. However, such de-nationalized material only serves to alienate both the teachers and students who have to use it.

Pedagogical challenges aside, the harsh circumstances under which the Palestinian people live negatively impacts the education system at all levels i.e. at the public schools and universities alike. In the OPT, armed conflict, death, injury, social and economic distress, and a lack of freedom all have serious consequences for the education system. Thus, Nasser and Wong (2013) stated that key challenges to EFL in Palestine are related primarily to the Israeli occupation. Citing just one such challenge, these researchers observe that road blockades and checkpoints, a function of the chronic militarism in the area, exact an enormous toll on students' and teachers' ability to reach schools regularly.

2.3 Palestinian English as a Foreign Language Curriculum

For ELT in Palestine, teachers from Grade 1–12 use textbooks. These textbooks are selected by the MoEHE and the teachers have no say whatsoever in the selection process. In fact, teachers often complain about the content and density of the material that needs to be covered during the school year. The English textbooks and the teachers' manuals are the only documents that teachers are given to teach English at all grade levels. Before 1993 the situation was not much different; Palestinian EFL teachers used textbooks selected by the Jordanian and Egyptian education authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip respectively. Teachers in West Bank used to use the Jordanian English textbooks while English teachers in the Gaza Strip used the Egyptian English textbooks.

As discussed above, the current Grade 1–12 education system in Palestine is textbook-driven. This raises the significant and critical question: Is there an English as a Foreign Language Palestinian Curriculum? There appears to be widespread confusion; For many Palestinian EFL teachers, the textbook *is* the curriculum. This is because they are not provided with a document that specifies the general and specific expectations that they are required to achieve by the end of each grade level. An effective English curriculum would specify what students are expected to achieve at the end of each grade level through Grades 1–12 in areas such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and socio-cultural competence and media literacy.

In the absence of such a curriculum document, Palestinian EFL teachers are left with a textbook that prescribes not only the way they must teach, but also the material that they are required to teach. Usually, an English textbook has 12 units on a

variety to topics. A typical unit has two reading lessons on a related topic such as business. The activities in each unit focus on reading, vocabulary development, listening, speaking, writing, and grammar. From our observations and after speaking with a large number of Palestinian teachers, we have come to understand that virtually all of them prioritize teaching vocabulary and grammar over all other areas. Consequently, listening, speaking, and writing, if taught at all, are not taught properly. This is why Palestinian students graduate from high school with a relatively solid knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. In comparison, their listening, speaking, and writing skills are very weak.

The general and specific expectations for each of these skill areas, which each teacher must teach by the end of the grade level that s/he teaches, are not clear. Also, the density and the amount of the material that Palestinian EFL teachers are required to cover make it very challenging for them to adequately teach the other skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. Beyond the absence of a guiding English curriculum document, it is worth noting that the vast majority of Palestinian EFL teachers are English majors who do not even possess a diploma in teaching. As a result, in 2014, the MoEHE started to mandate that all new teachers possess a diploma in education in addition to their undergraduate degrees. In the meantime, while in-service professional development opportunities exist, the quality of such development is still questionable. Thus, the actual training of Palestinian EFL teachers is another issue that impacts the effectiveness of their teaching. We will expand on this issue in the next section.

3 Assessment and Evaluation Practices in TEFL in Palestine

Using a variety of student-specific assessment and instructional approaches will assist teachers in meeting the learning needs of each student in their classrooms. A teacher will be able to adapt both teaching and assessment strategies to individual student's needs, if the teacher has received appropriate and up-to-date training in both areas. As mentioned above in this chapter, the majority of Palestinian in-service EFL teachers lack the required teacher preparation and in-service professional development to achieve these goals. Consequently, their knowledge of a variety of assessment strategies is limited. So what are the current assessment and evaluation practices among today's in-service Palestinian teachers?

In terms of assessment, in the observation of the authors, Palestinian EFL Teachers appear to rely almost entirely on summative evaluation techniques. Summative assessment tests are administered at the end of each unit or on a monthly basis. The main purpose of these tests is to gauge students' grasp of the material taught. In addition to summative assessment, formative assessment is also used, though to a much lesser degree. Formative assessment is used to provide students with feedback for improvement. From our observations and after talking to many in-service teachers, we have come to believe that most teachers wish they had more time to use formative assessment techniques. However, this is almost impossible because these instructors are under great pressure to cover the mandated textbook units within the allotted time frame. Adding to this pressure is the fact that,

during their annual performance appraisals, the teachers' instructional supervisor can raise an issue if the teachers are not covering the textbook material quickly enough, especially if they have not taught all the units that they are expected to by the time the appraisal period begins.

Besides summative and formative assessment, proficiency tests and portfolios are also used, though to a far lesser degree. Indeed, due to the limited scope of assessment at present, the MoEHE is trying to train teachers to incorporate different types of assessment and evaluation practices. In terms of the actual development of these assessment tools, it is the teachers themselves who must develop them, often without adequate training or support. Such tests usually focus on grammar, vocabulary, and reading. Still, other language skills such as speaking, listening and writing are also assessed sporadically through specific activities designed to allow students to practice these skills such as conversational speaking, listening to conversations and/or stories, and writing essays or business letters. At the present time, however, due to several factors, speaking, listening, and writing skills are not prioritized in the curriculum and so they are neither taught nor assessed sufficiently.

In an exam-based educational environment such as Palestine, teaching to the test is a serious issue. It is no exaggeration to say that the Palestinian education system is test-driven. The ultimate symbol of this is the Tawjihi exam that all students graduating from high school must take in their final year. The results of this exam, through which students are evaluated across all subject areas during a 2-week period, determine a student's future. Indeed, according to their exam scores, students are able to choose the university and the specialization that they would like to pursue. Given the incredibly high stakes of such an exam, all teachers, particularly at the high school level, wind up teaching to the test; their main concern is to help their students score the highest possible grade on this exam.

The backwash effect of this situation is that EFL teaching and learning are dominated by the Tawjihi exam and the items that are expected to appear on it. Consequently, at the end of each unit, students are faced with simple fill-in-the-blank type questions, vocabulary exercises, grammar exercises, and reading comprehension tasks, with virtually no focus on speaking, listening, or writing. The net result of this is that, in order to avoid surprises for their students, teachers stick to exam-format activities in teaching each unit in the textbook. Put simply, the format of the English lesson is determined by the format of the exam. To address this lamentable state of affairs and thus minimize the backwash effect, teachers would do well to create more balance in their classes. For instance, they could prepare the students to expect certain test types and test items in the context of a general discussion of exam-writing skills, rather than focusing single-mindedly on exam practice. For the sake of developing real fluency in English, teachers must leave the test behind from time to time in order to avoid creating monotonous lessons that are not conducive to learning English. Yet, leaving behind the test is easier said than done. It requires teachers who are both flexible and resourceful because a lack of teaching skills is part of the reason that many instructors focus on the test. This leads us to our next area of focus, EFL teacher training in Palestine, which we will examine in depth below.

4 Palestinian EFL Teacher Training and Development

Palestinian teacher training is quite unique and exceptional compared to teacher training trends as observed by one of the authors in other contexts. Normally, educational authorities require that prospective teachers possess a diploma in education in addition to their undergraduate degrees. However, in Palestine, the situation was markedly different at least up until 2014; from 1967 to 2014, the requirement for becoming a teacher was simply to obtain an undergraduate degree in one's own specialization. Further, a large number of Palestinian teachers do not even have a BA in English; they only hold a 2-year college degree in English. For instance, before 2014, Palestinian EFL teachers were required to have either a BA in English language and linguistics/literature from an accredited Arab university or else just a 2-year college degree in English. However, such easy to achieve requirements are no longer acceptable as the MoEHE has made myriad changes to align with international standards in teacher certification, education, and training as witnessed personally by one of the current authors through his collaborations on MOEHE projects.

As of 2014, according to the new Teacher Education Strategy, all prospective teachers are required to have a diploma in education in addition to their BA in English. This change, though long in the making, has come about as a result of the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) after the Oslo Peace agreement between the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. In 1993, when the PA took over the West Bank and Gaza it established several ministries. One of these ministries was the MoEHE. Thus, for the first time since 1967 the Palestinians exercised control over their education system. Since the establishment of the MoEHE, several changes and initiatives have been introduced to upgrade the Palestinian education system to international standards with the financial support of many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the World Bank. One of these initiatives is to improve teacher education preparation programs in Palestine, as we shall see below.

4.1 Pre-service Palestinian Teacher Preparation Programs

In order to meet the new teacher preparation requirements, Palestinian universities began developing teacher education preparation programs that lead to a diploma (certificate) in teaching. The Diploma Program consists of 30 credit hours taught in 10 three-credit-hour courses, covering a wide range of areas. To complete a single three-credit-hour course, students meet in class for 48 regular hours during a 16-week-long semester. The following courses are required: philosophical and social foundations in Education, teaching in heterogeneous classes, educational psychology, ethical issues in the teaching profession, Teaching English as a foreign Language I, Teaching English as a Foreign language II, two teaching practicum

courses, and two additional elective courses. Among the electives, students could choose either the Critical Thinking course, the Integrating Information Technology in Education course, or any other two courses from a list developed specifically for teachers.

4.2 In-Service Palestinian EFL Teacher Continuous Professional Development

As mentioned above, the current workforce of in-service Palestinian teachers do not possess a diploma in education in addition to their undergraduate degrees. During their careers, some of them may attend some professional development workshops on various topics such as instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and classroom management. However, the quality of such training workshops varies from satisfactory to poor (personal communication with teachers, 2016). Practicing teachers are selected to attend training sessions based on their annual performance appraisals. Basically, the instructional supervisor decides who needs professional development in which areas based on classroom observations of the teachers' teaching and thus chooses the teachers who will participate in these training workshops. Similarly, the instructional supervisors also select exemplary teachers to conduct some training sessions for their colleagues. The instructional supervisors nominate these teacher trainers from the pool of teachers that they must evaluate. Yet not all training is carried out by the selected candidates. The instructional supervisors also conduct some training sessions themselves. Regardless of who conducts the training workshops, based on the authors' personal communications with a number of currently serving EFL teachers, the quality of the training is mediocre at best. These same teachers report that they and their colleagues are not motivated to participate in these sessions due to several issues; their lack of confidence in the abilities of the trainers, the lack of relevance of the chosen training topics, and the poor timing of the training sessions (personal communication with teachers, 2016).

In addition to the local professional development that some EFL teachers receive from the MoEHE, the British Council and AMIDEAST provide some in-service training to Palestinian EFL teachers. Such training is conducted in collaboration and coordination with the MoEHE. For example, each year the British Council sponsors a group of EFL teachers to attend the annual International Association of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) convention in England. The British Council also conducts training sessions in Palestine for some Palestinian EFL teachers. Usually, they invite trainers from the UK to conduct the training. While these efforts are no doubt appreciated by many, according to Shinn (2012), having too many sponsors for training and development of Palestinian teachers can actually impede teacher development. Thus, Shinn believes that more local autonomy among Palestinian educational administrators would allow them to better cater to their own teachers' needs. Clearly, though, local autonomy must go hand-in-hand with con-

ducting needs analyses among Palestinian EFL teachers in order to address the issues that lead to an overall lack of motivation to attend such training as discussed above.

As mentioned earlier, in the wake of the Oslo Accords, the PA has been trying to upgrade all of its teachers' credentials and equip them with an adequate training to improve their skills. One of these initiatives was the Teacher Education Improvement Project II (TIEP II) financed by the World Bank. The goals of TEIP II project include: (1) Upgrading the competencies and instructional skills of grade 1–4 in-service Palestinian teachers who do not have the required qualifications specified by the MoEHE under the new Standards for the Teaching Profession; (2) Assisting teachers, who are identified as being under-qualified, to pursue and meet the graduation requirements for the Palestinian teaching certificate, which is now required to be able to teach at Palestinian Public Schools; (3) Helping the teachers to become life-long learners by providing them with a comprehensive teacher education program that fosters critical thinking and learning how to learn; and (4) Encouraging and preparing all teachers to pursue a graduate degree in education after successfully obtaining teacher certification and upgrading their teaching skills.

To accomplish these goals, four training modules were developed: *Module I: Curriculum and Instruction*, *Module II: Recent Teaching and Learning Methods*, *Module III: Assessment and Evaluation*, and *Module IV: Creating Healthy, Effective and Engaging Schools*. These modules are offered sequentially during two back-to-back semesters so that the training can be completed within one academic year. Thus, Modules I and II are offered in the first semester of the school year and Modules III and IV are offered in the second semester of the same school year. The length of each semester is 16 weeks and trainees meet once a week from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Each module's session is 3-hours long. Abdel Razeq, one of the present authors, has first-hand knowledge of these training modules as a teacher trainer who developed the modules and participated in conducting the training.

Some of the topics included in Module I are: methods of curriculum integration, instructional design, differentiation of instruction and introduction to recent teaching methods such as project based teaching, inquiry, group work, case-based inquiry, planning for inclusion, developing effective Annual Learning Plans (ALPs), developing effective unit and lesson plans, etc. In Module II, the trainers focus on topics such as selecting, adapting and using teaching and learning materials based on students needs and learning styles, creating and designing instructional aids, selecting and adapting learning materials according to students' needs and learning styles, and using analysis and reflection for improving instruction.

Module III Focuses on developing and designing assessment and evaluation instruments, identifying and analyzing students' thinking, types of assessment, differentiation of assessment, alternative assessment and use of rubrics, use of Information Technology (IT) in the learning and assessment process, providing feedback, methods of tracking students progress and reporting to parents, and self-evaluation as a

process for improving instruction and student achievement. In Module IV, the trainers concentrate on communicating and cooperating with parents and guardians to create effective and healthy schools for enhancing students' academic and social performance, school policies and rules, school codes of conduct, methods of enforcing and implementing school policies, creating safe and motivating classroom environments, modeling and sustaining the school mission and vision, strategies for building healthy relationships with students and staff, strategies for students engagement (cognitively, emotionally, and physically), cooperating with parents and guardians as sources of information for assisting students, methods of instilling good morals and values in the students' character, the teacher as a role model, and how to use real life events to bring the curriculum to life. The authors concede that training these in-service teachers was challenging. We will outline the key challenges encountered during the training followed by recommendations for their improvement.

4.3 In-Service Teacher Training: Challenges

During the project, the trainers faced several challenges that affected the training. Bearing in mind that the trainees were typically mid- to late career adults, many of whom had been teaching for a long time (some had even been teaching for more than 20 years), a fair number of the trainees believed that it was too late for them to enroll in such an upgrading program due to their considerable age and experience. Others shared that they felt that their previous teaching experience was somehow being discounted. Still others felt affronted by the initiative and saw no need for such training. Thus, overall, the trainees' enthusiasm and morale constituted a serious challenge. This was evidenced by irregular attendance on the part of the trainees and their lackluster participation during the training sessions.

Because the training was held at weekends (during their days off), the majority of the trainees resented this and thought that the training should have been held during school days and that they should have been relieved from their teaching duties in order to participate in the training. Indeed, such an approach might have encouraged more in-service teachers to participate in the program. All of the trainees reported that having to come on their day off from school was highly disruptive because, as adults, they all had families and other social responsibilities.

Implementing technology in the training sessions was another challenge that the trainers encountered. On the one hand, schools lacked the appropriate technology to assist teachers in their instruction and performing other duties. On the other, most participating teachers also lacked the appropriate technological skills required to use whatever technology was available. Even outside of the actual physical school setting, communicating online and sharing documents were very challenging during the training. Having identified these various challenges, we now turn our focus to addressing these.

4.4 In-Service Teacher Training: Recommendations

Based on experience gained from coordinating TIEP II project and other in-service teacher training and professional development initiatives, a number of valuable lessons were learned. In order for the in-service teacher training and development to be effective, we recommend the following:

- Recruit only teachers who are willingly and interested to participate in the training.
- Conduct needs assessments. All training and professional development sessions must be based on teacher input. In-service teachers must be consulted on the topics chosen and given the choice to choose the training sessions that they would like to participate in. One size fits all professional development is a waste of time and very ineffective.
- Offer the training during the school days and relieve the teachers from their teaching duties so that they will be able to participate in the training.
- Compensate teachers for transportation costs immediately. Late compensation affects their motivation and attendance.
- Communicate the purpose and the benefits of the training clearly. Let the teachers know about the training initiative and how they will benefit from it.
- Promote the training effectively: Make as many teachers as possible aware of the training and encourage all of them to take advantage of it.
- Translate the training into tangible results: Based on the training they have received, assist the teachers to conduct some action research projects to address the challenging situations they encounter in their classrooms in order to improve student learning.
- Celebrate trainee participation: To keep the momentum going and to improve enthusiasm and motivation, the MoEHE should hold a graduation ceremony at the end of the training for each group.
- Keep the teaching dialogue alive: Opportunities for ongoing dialogue and information sharing among the teachers, instructional supervisors and principals pertaining to recent teaching methodologies and instructional techniques must be provided and encouraged.
- Involve administrators and supervisors: Principals and instructional supervisors should attend training sessions whenever possible, particularly, the learning circles where trainees share their knowledge and application of the new skills in the classrooms.
- Maintain an “Open Door” policy: Invite other teachers, particularly lead teachers, who are not participating in the program, to attend some sessions. Also, offering professional development on similar topics outlined in the training modules will bring these same in-service teachers up to the appropriate level to help them cooperate and implement the new knowledge and skills acquired.
- Promote IT skills: Continue to use information technology in facilitating the training modules and encourage the trainees to use it in their daily teaching and planning activities.

- Make the most of Learning Circles: Expand the use of learning circles during the training where all trainees will be able to share their application of the new skills and practices acquired and show their effect on student learning.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly, Palestine presents a very complex ELT context. Its history right up to the present has been one of foreign intervention and control. As a result, Palestinians are actually more in need of a sound education as a means to improving their own economic and socio-political situation. And since English is esteemed by Palestinians to be a crucial part of their education, great emphasis must be placed on its effective acquisition. However, to date, logistical challenges in the form of poor and antiquated pedagogical training, administrative pressures to “teach to the test”, and demographic realities such as oversized classes have all conspired to create less than favourable conditions for learning English. When the contextual factors of conflict are included, it is a wonder that Palestinian students are able to gain an education at all.

In light of such daunting challenges, ELT stakeholders in Palestine need to come together to the extent possible in order to take stock of the situation. The MoEHE now has a rather large body of research to provide it paths forward. In this regard, the key recommendations that can be made are the following:

1. Enhance and expand both pre-service and in-service EFL teacher training, focusing on student-centered and constructivist pedagogies.
2. Revise EP curricular materials in consultation with EFL teachers to make them more culturally relevant and authentic to Palestinian teachers and students
3. Overhaul the Tawjihi exam to reflect more global and authentic use of English in order to stimulate positive testing washback
4. Provide access to technology for the EFL classroom

Clearly, since the funds required to make such changes to the educational system of Palestinian are limited, donors should refocus their funding to comply with the recommendations above, especially if they are serious about contributing to the future socio-economic development of Palestine in a globalized world where mastery of English is of vital importance.

In the end, it appears that more grassroots and local level involvement offers hope to ameliorate the situation. As noted in the QCERD initiative discussed above, teacher development is a key instrument in the process. In this connection, donors such as UNESCO, the World Bank, and the US Agency for International Development would do well to invest their time and effort in promoting such local initiatives to achieve their stated aims of enhancing education in general in the OPT. In so doing, they will have gone some way toward improving the teaching of English in Palestine as well. This, in turn will have the knock-on effect of contributing to economic development in an area that is dire need of such growth. And by supporting and empowering teachers locally, not only will English be taught more

efficiently, but it will also be taught in harmony with prevailing cultural and social values, resulting in greater appreciation for English on the part of teachers and students alike.

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Qatar's English Education Policy in K-12 and Higher Education: Rapid Development, Radical Reform and Transition to a New Way Forward

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Abstract The State of Qatar is a small peninsula in the Arabian Gulf that remained relatively unknown outside the region from its independence from Britain in 1971 until the late 1990s. An ambitious education reform and development program, on a scale—and at a speed—rarely if ever seen before, has seen Qatar go from a few schools and no universities at independence to a comprehensive K-12 system, three technical colleges and 15 universities (at the time of writing), most housed Education City, that combine the best of foreign education with local institutions. Education reform at all levels is fraught with difficulty in every country and has a long record of failure in most jurisdictions. It is not surprising then, that Qatar's English for a New Era reform (EFNE), launched in 2002, came under heavy local criticism for rapidly instituting English as the medium of instruction in the K-12 system and for a failure to deliver promised improvements. In 2012, as a result of these perceived failures the Rand Corporation, author of the reform, did not have its contract with Qatar renewed. At the same time, the medium of instruction at the K-12 level reverted to Arabic. Similarly, simmering discontent with the dominance of English in higher education—and the perceived primacy of the imported education institutions—resulted in Qatar University officially becoming Arabic medium of instruction in many subjects. Therefore, Qatar is now at a policy crossroads. Does the leadership maintain the remaining EFNE reforms in the K-12 system now that Arabic has been restored to prominence? Do the Education City universities continue their dominance of higher education while continuing to be fully funded by the State of Qatar? At present, it seems that Qatar intends to stay the course and concentrate on a reform of teacher education in order to boost the number of Qatari teachers and to further improve the school system. Given that EFNE was producing improvements, albeit more slowly than desired, this seems like the prudent course.

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However, the Supreme Education Council, the body that oversees all levels of education in Qatar is known for making massive changes or reversal of policy with extreme rapidity. Therefore, only time will answer the question: “Whither education policy in Qatar?”

Keywords Qatar • Language policy • Education policy • Education reform • English as a medium of instruction • K-12 • Higher education • International education • Arabian Gulf • Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

1 Introduction

The State of Qatar is a small peninsula (approximately 11,586 sq. km) in the Arabian Gulf. It borders Saudi Arabia and juts into the Arabian Gulf¹ The island Kingdom of Bahrain, lies some 15–30 miles (24–48 km) northwest of Qatar (CIA 2014). Qatar’s history as a nation is relatively recent; it was first recognized as a national entity separate from Bahrain in 1868. Although nominally under British influence from the nineteenth century, Qatar officially became a British Protectorate in 1916 (Smith 1994). It achieved independence from the United Kingdom on September 3, 1971.

Like many countries in the Middle East, Qatar’s educational terrain is marked by the tension that arises from the need to preserve cultural identity on the one hand and the desire to adapt Western educational methods (and the English language) on the other. This discord between heritage and the economic imperative of learning English will be explored in greater depth in Sects. 2 and 3 following an analysis of Qatar’s past and current English education policies. Like most of the Arabian Gulf States, the formal education system in Qatar was practically non-existent until the mid-twentieth century. The nation’s first school did not open until 1949. Before this, learning took place in *Kuttabs*, i.e. informal schools that had been set up in mosques or private residences. Significant development of modern K-12 and tertiary education systems did not begin in earnest until after independence (Rostron 2009).

1.1 *Current Political Situation and Demographics*

Qatar is ruled by the Al-Thani clan which has primarily followed the primogenitor rule of succession since the founding of the dynasty in 1825 (Onley and Khalaf 2006; CIA 2014). A de-facto constitutional monarchy, Qatar experienced a smooth transition of power as the Crown Prince, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani

¹Although this region is commonly referred to as the Persian Gulf, the term Arabian Gulf will be used throughout this work as it is the preferred nomenclature of all nations in the region excepting Iran.

succeeded his father, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, as Emir on June 25, 2013. This type of transition is rare in the Arabian Gulf where rulers tend to die in office rather than abdicate (UPI, 26 June 2013; CIA 2014). The country's economy is driven by revenues from oil production and natural gas. Qatar is the world's largest producer of liquid natural gas (LNG) and has the world's third-largest natural gas reserves (CIA 2014). Like most of the Arabian Gulf states, Qatar's population is dominated by expatriate workers. Estimates vary, but the breakdown is approximately 40 % Arab (of which only 13 % are Qatari and 27 % are expatriate Arabs—Egyptian, Syrian, etcetera); Indian, 18 %; Pakistani 18 %; Iranian 10 % and Other 14 %. Qatar has an estimated population of 2.1 million and nearly 80 % of its citizens are Muslim (CIA 2014; UN Data 2014; UN Statistics Division 2014).

1.2 Qatar's Education Policy Is Qatar's English Education Policy: The Inextricable Links Between English Language Learning and Education in Qatar

Qatar is striving to improve the state education system so that the potential of its young people can be more fully realized. More qualified graduates are also a key cog in the success of Qatarization initiatives to get more nationals into the workforce and reduce the country's dependence on foreign labor (Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, nd). The process of preparing the youth of the nation for further success in life and work begins in kindergarten. Therefore, public education is compulsory for Qatari citizens from kindergarten through high school. In 2012, the illiteracy rates of Qatar were the lowest rates among Arabic-speaking nations (Qatar Statistics Authority 2012).

English is the lingua franca in Qatar, as a result of the substantial percentage of the population that is made up of foreign nationals working in the country. Over 94 % of Qatar's workforce is comprised of non-Qataris (Chalabi, 26 September 2013). For this reason, the Qatari government insists that its citizens learn English. At the same time, the Qatari government desires to safeguard the country's cultural identity, and therefore, also emphasizes Arabic. These two opposing poles of concern have resulted in extreme language education policy shifts throughout the past decade.

Along with math, science and Arabic, English is one of four subjects that all students are required to learn (Zellman et al. 2009). The Supreme Education Council (SEC), the government body responsible for overseeing education, was founded in 2002 as a result of the educational reform called "Education for a New Era" (Brewer et al. 2007). The SEC composes standardized tests that must be passed in these subjects and offers recommendations as to the amount of classroom hours that should be set aside for teaching English in each grade. Currently, the independent schools can take or ignore this guidance, which means the amount of English education students receive is up to each Independent school. However, until an abrupt

change in late 2102, English was the medium of instruction at all Independent schools (Brewer et al. 2007; Khatri 2013a)

At the tertiary level, English language is paramount. Higher education institutions in Qatar are international branch campuses with the exception of Qatar University (QU), Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Community College of Qatar, Qatar Aviation College and the Qatar Faculty of Islamic Studies. Except for QU, which recently changed to Arabic as the language of instruction for most programs, instruction is predominately in English at all tertiary institutions. One of the reasons for this is that there has been a drive (starting with the establishment of Qatar Foundation) to promote English as a medium of instruction and to introduce international education to Qatar (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014).

2 The Development of Qatar's K-12 System

2.1 Early Development to 1995

As noted in the introduction, prior to the discovery of petroleum, and the riches generated by oil exports, Qatar did not have a formal public education system. Some children learned basic literacy in *kuttabs*, informal schools located in mosques or private homes, taught by literate men and women in the community. Qatar's first official school was opened in 1949 with one teacher and 50 male students. Starting in 1951, the school was sponsored by the government. In the next 3 years, three additional schools for boys were opened. The curriculum included Arabic, Islamic studies, arithmetic, English and geography. The Department of Education was created in 1956 and the first girls' school opened in that year. By 1971 at independence, the number of girls and boys in formal education were approximately equal (Toth 1994). Even at this early stage, girls were performing better academically than boys. This performance gap, which persists to the present day, will be discussed in Sects. 2.4 and 3.4 of this chapter.

The population of Qatar has grown rapidly particularly since HE, the former Emir, Hamid Bin Khalifa Al Thani began a rapid program of modernization and infrastructure development in 1995. As a result, the school system has also grown rapidly (Table 1).

2.2 1995 to Present: Ambitious Reform and Reform Again

In a radical move to overhaul an underperforming school system, the Qatari government contracted with the Rand Corporation in 2001 to evaluate the K-12 system and recommend options for reform. The Independent School model was chosen and an ambitious educational reform initiative "Education for a New Era" (EFNE) was

Table 1 Growth of the Qatari K-12 System (From Toth 1994; UNESCO-IBE 2011; SEC 2012)

Date	Schooling milestone	Important details
1949	First school	One school; 50 (male) students
1956	Department of Education established	5 schools; First girls' school opened
1995–1996	Over 66,000 students	207 schools
2001	Over 100,000 students	Nearly doubled school population in 6 years
2002	English for a New Era Reform launched.	Supreme Education Council created
2011–2012	Over 196,000 students	School population nearly doubled again in a decade

launched in 2002. The first stage of reform resulted in the Supreme Education Council (SEC) being established to oversee the reforms and (gradually) phase out the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Brewer et al. 2007). At the same time, a number of Independent schools were established. The process of converting MOE schools into Independent schools started in 2003 with the goal of phasing out all MOE controlled schools by the 2010–2011 school year. To ease the transition, a number of MOE schools operated under a hybrid structure—designated as “semi-Independent schools” (Oxford Business Group 2010). All former MOE schools (i.e., all government schools) officially achieved independent status by 2010 (SEC 2014a, b). In addition to Independent schools there are three types of private schools in Qatar: community schools, which are sponsored by the embassy of a particular nation and primarily intended to serve the children of expatriates from that country; international schools which offer an international curriculum (often International Baccalaureate) and are open to expatriates and Qataris; and private Arabic schools which offer a more traditional Arabic curriculum (Rostron 2009). Until late 2012, the Independent schools were English medium of instruction, but they now teach all classes (except English language classes) in Arabic.

All schools must meet the SEC's curriculum standards including those for English, but the number of hours per week of instruction is suggested not mandated. The system is focused on the learning outcomes embedded in the standards and the process and procedures are left to the individual schools within limits. For example, English is a core subject and must be taught at all independent schools to a level that allows students to enter the workforce or higher education. In 2008, the SEC suggested that students receive 5 h of English tuition in grades 1–6, 4 h in grades 7–9, and 2.5 h at foundational level in grade 10, or 4 h at advanced level in grade 10 (Supreme Education Council 2008); however, this was only a guideline and schools were not required to follow the suggested number of instructional hours.

All the Private International schools are English medium of instruction, while some community schools offer English medium instruction. Other community schools offer instruction in the students' native language. For example: the Doha Japanese school follows the Japanese National Curriculum.

2.3 The Strengths of Qatar's K-12 System

The main strengths of Qatar's K-12 system under the EFNE were intended to be flexibility and choice. The EFNE reform started in 2002 had a significant effect on the way schooling was offered in Qatar. From the traditional, rigid, hierarchical Ministry of Education, Qatar moved with amazing rapidity towards a new model predicated on autonomy, accountability, variety and choice. National Curriculum Standards were developed in four areas: Arabic, mathematics, science and English (Brewer et al. 2007). All children in Qatar are required to attend primary and secondary school (up to the age of 16). All K-12 education is either provided by independent, international or private schools. The government funds independent schools but they function autonomously (Brewer et al. 2007). Tuition is free for all citizens and attendance at international schools is funded under a voucher system. By allowing schools to be independent (that is, by allowing them to create their own operational plan, curriculum, and philosophy) the government had hoped to foster diversity within the educational system, thereby expanding the educational options for students and parents and boosting achievement. Initially, the government received international acclaim for enabling its schools to be independent (Yamani 2006). However, as will be discussed below, while the EFNE resulted in significant improvements in some areas it was partially overhauled in 2012 due to widespread public dissatisfaction and then ended in 2013. Currently, a return to centralized control is progressing (Abdel-Moneim 2015).

2.4 Limitations and Disadvantages of Qatar's K-12 Policy Choices

As with any rapid reform movement there are areas that need ongoing improvement and re-evaluation of goals and objectives. For example, under EFNE, mathematics and science were taught in English in the Independent schools which led to a great deal of frustration for teachers and students who did not have the language skills to deal with this change—and for parents who lacked the English language skills to help their children with their homework. Further, this emphasis on English led to a feeling among parents, students and teachers that Arabic language and culture was being devalued (Romanowski et al. 2013). In response, the SEC reversed that policy: as of 2012, independent schools and Arabic private schools began teaching math and science classes in Arabic in an apparent effort to preserve Qatar's cultural heritage. Regrettably, this has renewed fears that students will not be as well prepared for higher education opportunities in the Education City universities which are almost exclusively English medium of instruction (Khatri 2013a).

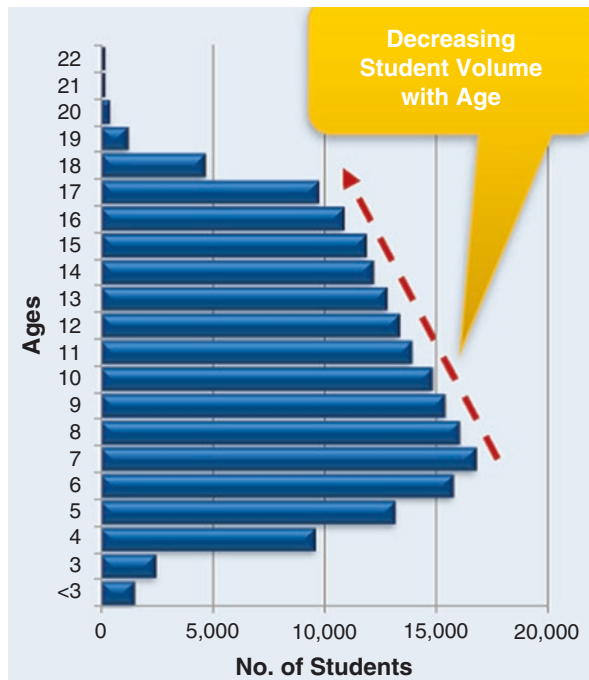
The decision to have English as the medium of instruction in schools was controversial. However, many parents, students and school administrators believe that the SEC's tendency for last minute changes in policy coupled with the failure to hire, or

train, enough teachers sufficiently fluent in English was a root cause of the perceived failure of the EFNE reform—not the language policy itself (Paschyn 2013; Romanowski et al. 2013).

Only time will tell if this rapidly instituted reversal of policy regarding language of instruction is a necessary correction of a flawed policy or simply another example of a Gulf state suddenly altering well planned and partially implemented policies when subjected to societal pressure (Hvidt 2013). The answer to that question will largely be determined by Qatar's strategy beyond the EFNE plan. In addition to the second, hastily implemented, change to the language of instruction in a decade the Government of Qatar did not renew its contract with the Rand Corporation, the architects of the EFNE reform. While this reform did not yield the promised results, the removal of Rand means that Qatari students and parents will have to endure another iteration of school reform. A failure to increase test scores was cited as a primary reason why the Rand Qatar Policy Institute did not have their contract renewed with the Qatar Foundation after their 10 year contract expired in December 2013 (Qatar Foundation 2013). The rhetoric in the Qatar press was overwhelmingly negative: "... almost a decade after the reform began, students in the system continue to have some of the worst standardized test scores in the world, and concerns about attracting quality staff are growing". It was also an issue that Qatari parents are increasingly entering the voucher program which allows them to send their children to international schools at subsidized rates (Khatri 2013a, b). The fact that Qatar, while still having a high failure rate on national exams and sub-par performances on international tests like the PISA, still showed the greatest amount of improvement of any Arab nation could be taken as an indicator that the EFNE reform was working but that the SEC had unrealistic expectations around the speed of improvements. (Paschyn, October 25, 2013; Sedghi et al. 2013). Unfortunately, as in many Western jurisdictions, the reliance on test scores to measure the efficacy of educational reform raises concerns about cheating. Al Marzouki (2009) asserts that cheating at many Independent schools was systematic and initiated by teachers and administrators in order to raise test scores (as cited in Abdel-Moneim 2015). Did the possibility of a widespread cheating scandal contribute to the end of the EFNE reform? Ironically, given all the angst over test scores in Qatar, in an article entitled, "Will Qatar outperform Arab countries in education by 2020?", Dr. Muhammad Faour (a senior associate at Carnegie Middle East Center, Beirut) lauds what he perceives as Qatar's amazing increase in scores on all aspects of the International Reading Literacy test (PIRLS) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) between 2006 and 2012 (2014 March 07).

In summary, it can be seen that the K-12 system is in a state of flux. On the one hand, the SEC is maintaining the Independent schools; on the other, curricular and other decision-making has been almost entirely re-centralized and these schools are "independent" in name only. Originally open to non-Qatari directors, and based on a for-profit model, independent schools must be run by a Qatari and must be non-profit (Abdel-Moneim 2015). The question remains will the SEC consolidate the gains made under the EFNE and be content with incremental improvements? Or, will those in charge choose to put their own stamp on Qatari education with a new,

Table 2 Number of students in Qatar by age (2010–2011) Collier's (2013)



ambitious program of reform? Given the history of failure of large-scale school reform in the Gulf, and around the world, it can only be hoped that Qatar will buck the international trend, stay the course on its most current reforms and not attempt to implement the newest “instant solution” (Bishop and Mulford 1999; Fullan 1998).

In all of the discussion of the fallout from the failure of the EFNE reform, a significant additional problem with the Qatari K-12 system was largely ignored by commentators, namely, that the drop-out rate rises significantly as students progress through the system. As can be seen from Table 2, enrollment drops significantly as students enter secondary schooling which is not compulsory. The dropout rate at this stage is also much higher among males which contributes to the under-representation of men in Qatari higher education (Al-Misnad 2012; Colliers 2013). Some of this effect can be attributed to expatriate parents sending their children to their home country as Qatari nationals comprise 65 % of the student body at Independent schools and only 18 % of the student body at private schools. However, this trend is clearly not compatible with Qatar’s vision of maximizing citizens’ employment and developing a knowledge economy (SEC 2011).

Ultimately, however, the greatest weakness of the Qatari K-12 system is its teachers. The level of education and experience required for teacher licensure vary in Qatar. Normally, the minimum requirement for teachers is a university- level qualification, most commonly a Bachelor of Education. Secondary schools generally

also require a relevant subject-area specialization. To regulate and improve teacher education and development, the SEC launched a National Professional Standards for Teachers framework in 2007 (SEC 2007a, b).

A teacher licensure program for Independent schools was launched in 2008 and expanded to include all private schools in 2010 (SEC 2010). This process was due to be completed by 2011. The guidelines of the licensure process explicitly state that teachers are only permitted to teach in the subject areas in which they are qualified (Iqbal 2010; Jaafar 2012). Further, the SEC announced in early 2012 that all Independent School teachers would have to take an aptitude test, to determine their fitness for their profession, regardless of their age or experience (Toumi, 02 April 2012). The researchers could find no follow-up announcements or data related to this edict.

The reason for all of these quality assurance measures is that there are a high percentage of teachers in the Qatari K-12 system who are not academically qualified to teach. According to the SEC (2012), in the 2011–2012 school year 98 % of Independent school teachers held at least a bachelor's degree while only 67 % had a formal education qualification. In private Arabic schools, 85 % of teachers held at least a bachelor's degree while only 66 % had a formal education degree and in international schools 93 % of teachers held at least a bachelor's degree while 82 % had a formal education qualification. While these numbers are actually an improvement over 2011, it still means that the average student at an independent school has approximately a 33 % chance of being taught by a person who has not been formally trained to do the job. Romanowski and Amatullah (2014) suggested that teacher resistance to the licensure process, or their inability to implement the standards effectively, might be a by-product of their unsuitability for teaching or it might be a result of teacher perception that the standards are just one more foreign requirement—unrelated to their teaching practice—that they are being forced to deal with. In either case, it brings into question the efficacy of ongoing professional development as the answer to Qatar's teacher qualification problem.

The situation with school leadership is not much better: 72 % of Independent school leaders had formal education credentials while only 54 % have school leadership training. In the Private Arabic schools these numbers fall to 60 % with an education credential and only 40 % with leadership training. In International schools the numbers are somewhat better with 79 % of school leaders with an education credential and 59 % having school leadership training (SEC 2012).

This widespread practice hiring of unqualified teachers who do not meet the licensure requirements is the result of both the relatively late implementation of a teacher licensure system and of the inability of schools to recruit sufficient numbers of qualified teachers to meet the demands of Qatar's burgeoning school-age population (UNESCO 2011, Colliers 2013). Part of this difficulty in recruitment is caused by the relatively low salaries of teachers in Qatar (Peninsula 2012; InfoQat 2014; SEC 2014a, b). In an attempt to alleviate the teacher shortage, the SEC has developed a recruitment program targeting qualified teachers from countries including Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Oman.

In addition, in response to the difficulty in recruiting Qatari teachers (Qataris tend to view teaching as a low status position) the SEC has both dramatically increased the salaries offered to Qatari teachers and reduced the qualifications required for Qataris to teach. While this appears counter-intuitive, given the plethora of unprepared teachers in the system, the recent Qatari graduates in this program will teach in independent schools while completing an in-service qualification program developed by the SEC in concert with Qatar University (SEC 2013). Despite these measures, the major concerns at a 2014 meeting between SEC officials and the public were the perceived lack of Qatari teachers, long- working hours, insufficient salaries for teachers and poor discipline and attendance among students (SEC 2014a, b).

2.5 Qatar's K-12 Policy Compared to Its Closest Neighbors, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Qatar faces many of the same educational challenges in the K-12 sector as its neighbors. Issues with English language—too much or too little; students' struggle with Arabic; under-prepared teachers and a shortage of local teachers—particularly men; school graduates who are scoring far below average on international tests and who are unable—or unwilling—to study in science technology, engineering and mathematics, (STEM) fields of higher education (Deloitte 2013). What then is Qatar's response to this? What is the policy that embodies the vision that the Qatari leadership has for the future of its youth? The EFNE reform was intended to ameliorate many of these weaknesses by helping Qatari students learn to become more critical and creative thinkers and by helping them to achieve greater mastery of English—which has become the de facto world language of science, technology, and to a great extent, education. In line with this vision, Qatari K-12 English language policy was emulating the early English adoption favored in the UAE. Again, similar to its neighbors it has embarked on a new round of reform before the previous one has had time to fully take effect, but so far there has not been a full-scale re-modelling but only a return to Arabic as a medium of instruction. This change leaves Qatar with a very similar approach to English as its neighbors. Although the SEC now mandates more hours of English per week than the other Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia, the system is not working. As discussed, students routinely score below average on international standardized tests. Moreover, the Qatar curriculum standards (SEC 2004) call for students at year 12 Foundation (not advanced) English to be able to score a 550 Test of English as a Foreign Language/ Band 6 International English Language Testing System (IELTS). This level of competency in English is an atypical result for the majority of Qatari students as evidenced by the preponderance of foundation and preparatory programs offered by institutions of higher education in Qatar to help students to reach a similar level. For example, a 4.5 Level

IELTS or equivalent is required to enter the Academic Bridge preparatory program for Education City Universities where entrance requirements for direct entry to programs varies from 550 to 600 on the TOEFL exam (ABP 2014).

3 The Development of Qatar's Higher Education System

3.1 Early Development

Shortly after independence, in 1973, the country was ready to open its first institution of higher education, the College of Education with separate campuses for men and women (Al-Attiyah and Khalifa 2009). This would become the founding college of Qatar University (QU). The College of Education expanded in 1977, adding the faculties of Humanities, Science, Social Studies, and Islamic Studies to the existing teacher training colleges, and Qatar University was established (Al-Attiyah and Khalifa 2009; Stasz et al. 2007). Today, QU comprises seven colleges and a number of research centres including the National Center for Educator Development. During its first year of operation in 1973, the university had a total student body of 150 (QU 2013). Currently, academic year 2013–2014, there are 15,000 students enrolled at the QU, while student enrolment is projected to reach 20,000 by 2015–2016 (James 2013)

In 2003, a reform project, led by the University's Board of Regents and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, was initiated to define the new mission and vision of the university, and to formulate a plan of action to achieve that mission and vision. The reform's main goals were to, "...evolve the quality of instruction and educational services, and promote its administrative efficiency" (Al-Attiyah and Khalifa 2009).

In the mid-1990s, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and his wife Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al-Misnad felt that the higher education system offered unsatisfactory options for their children and other young Qataris. As a result, they established the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) in 1995, with the intention of providing a comprehensive range of higher education courses for Qatari citizens (Stasz et al. 2007). Education City, an independent organ established by the QF in 2003, now hosts a number of research centers and educational organizations, chief among them the Rand-Qatar Policy Institute,² as well as six world-class US colleges, including Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Cornell's Weill Medical College, Northwestern and Georgetown University. In addition to the American institutes in Education City, there is a French university, HEC Paris; a British university, University College London as well as two national universities, Hamid Bin Khalifa

²The Rand Corporation concluded their 10 year contract with Qatar Foundation in 2013. Qatar Foundation Press Release: <http://www.qf.org.qa/news/qf-and-rand-corporation-to-conclude-rqpi-agreement>

University for Graduate Studies and the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Qatar. Outside of Education City, there are also two Canadian institutions, University of Calgary and College of the North Atlantic (SEC n.d.), and a Dutch university Stenden, formerly known as CHN (Stasz et al. 2007).

3.2 The Importation of Foreign Education Institutions, Systems and Policies

The development of Qatar's education system is closely tied to the discovery of oil, the resulting increase in revenues and the need for major transformations that the job market imposed. Qatar has huge gas and oil reserves, which are responsible for 70 % of government revenues and 50 % of its GDP (Al-Misnad 2012). The massive growth of the gas and oil industries from the 1990s until the present day requires an educated and skilled workforce that Qatar is simply not capable of providing. Companies rely extensively on the expatriate population, which in 2009 had a growth rate of 15 %, compared to the growth rate of 3 % for Qatari nationals (Al-Misnad 2012).

The development of the economy has provided the government with an unprecedented opportunity to improve the education systems in Qatar. Education City was populated with imported branch campuses of international institutions in hopes of maximizing the education of the population, in order to develop a knowledge based society, which would secure Qatar's political and economic status after petroleum reserves run out (Altbach and Knight 2007). To achieve this goal, the State of Qatar has invested heavily in developing relationships with the US colleges and other international institutions based in Education City, and they now offer scholarships and grants that allow Qatari students to attend these institutions. Through this, they aim to educate the population so that Qataris can maximize their contribution to society (QGSDP 2011; SEC 2011).

English is the primary language used for instruction in nearly all higher education institutions and programs in Qatar. In Education City, internal procedures, policies, and methods of teaching and assessment are all imported directly from the home campus of each individual institution. Qatar University is the only institution that does not have English language entry requirements (i.e. TOEFL/IELTS). It is also the only institution to have Arabic as its official language even though not all courses are taught in Arabic. Courses taught in Arabic at Qatar University include law, international affairs, media, and business administration courses. The change to Arabic occurred in 2012 when the SEC reversed a long-standing policy of providing instruction in all higher education courses in English (Katri 2013b). In short, English has a dominant presence in tertiary education in Qatar.

As far as entry standards are concerned, all tertiary institutions except for Northwestern (Nu-Q) require students to achieve a minimum TOEFL score of 550 or IELTS score of 6.0. Nu-Q does not specify a minimum TOEFL or IELTS score, but applicants with scores lower than 600 on a paper-based TOEFL exam are generally not accepted (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014).

3.3 The Strengths of Qatar's Higher Education Policies

The internationalization of Qatar's higher education system provides a number of advantages for Qatari nationals. International institutions offer Qataris a modern and diverse range of subjects (Supreme Education Council 2008). The colleges offer high standards of education and globally recognized qualifications, potentially making Qatari graduates employable all over the world. Employment and literacy rates are high, with literacy rates well above the regional average for both men and women (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014). Political and economic development go hand in hand with education, as highly skilled graduates start to fill important positions in the government and other national institutions, and research centers develop new initiatives (Yamani 2006). The predominance of English as the lingua franca and language of instruction in almost all higher education institutions allows Qatari students and graduates to engage in global scientific discussions, as well as to develop social and political connections with other countries, particularly the US. Further, the more exposure Qataris have to high academic standards and world-class, international professors, the better they will be able to assess the characteristics of a quality education. As more Qataris become involved in the K-12 system, as a result of programs such as Teach for Qatar, those who have experienced high educational standards and adopted them will be able to pass them on to their students.

Lastly, the introduction of English education and international universities has given Qatari females the opportunity to study at top foreign universities with excellent professors in their home country. Without having these institutes in Qatar, the opportunities for females to study anywhere other than Qatar University could be very limited due to cultural and religious reasons (Stasz et al. 2007). This has had the positive effect of opening higher education choice to females. While it produces benefits for women, this gender gap creates troubling prospects for men (Al-Misnad 2012). The gender gap will be one of the topics addressed in Sects. 3.4 and 4.2.

3.4 Limitations and Disadvantages of Qatar's Higher Education Policy Choices

The vast majority of students attending universities in Education City are not Qatari nationals, but the children of expatriate workers, or employees of companies based in Qatar that offer further training opportunities to their staff. Providing higher education institutions that cater to the needs of these individuals is necessary so as to ensure the continued growth and development of Qatar's economy and infrastructure. However, the international nature of these universities and the high level of English that is required to be accepted by these universities put Qatari nationals graduating from secondary education at a distinct disadvantage. Further difficulties are encountered by Qatari citizens who wish to attend foreign universities,

including the high cost of tuition, rigorous standards of education, and the culture shock involved in attending mixed gender institutions for the first time (Gonzalez et al. 2008).

English instruction at higher levels causes problems lower down the chain of education on a national level. The need to speak English to a high standard in order to be accepted at international universities led the SEC to decree that science and math must be taught in English at K-12 levels, to better prepare students for English language studies at university. Regrettably, due to inadequate staff training and sudden implementation, this initiative failed and was overturned in 2012 (Paschyn 2013). This has led to widespread disruption and difficulties for both students and teachers in K-12, which will have a negative effect on students upon entering post-secondary institutions in Qatar.

Finally, according to a recent doctoral study (Abou-El-Kheir 2014), one of the negative aspects of the internationalization of education is that it may lead to an erosion of culture and the loss of identity and language. A specific example delineated by one of the participants in the study, is that there is sometimes an aspiration to mimic Western identities and habits, and the idea speaking English is “cool” and that Arabic is “weak” This is analogous to the findings of Findlow (2006) where there seems to be a binary opposition between English and Arabic.

3.5 Qatar’s Higher Education Policies Compared to Those of Its Closest Neighbors

Along with Bahrain and the UAE, Qatar aspires to become an education hub in the region. All three countries have invited foreign universities to set up in their countries and all have a strong emphasis on English as a medium of instruction. They also have each developed an ‘education city’. Qatar has ‘Education City’; the UAE has ‘Knowledge Village’ and ‘Academic City’, while Bahrain (along with investors from Kuwait) has pledged a billion dollars for their own ‘Higher Education City’. In addition to investing in clusters of higher education institutions, these countries are also heavily investing in research and development and science and technology. This drive to become an education/knowledge hub is happening for similar reasons. Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE are trying to move from oil/gas based economies to knowledge based economies. It remains to be seen whether or not the region has the capacity to house three similar education hubs (Knight 2014a).

All three countries see education as a way not only to diversify their economy, but they see education as crucial for the development of their citizens in order for them to be competitive in the job market and to contribute to the society and country. Overall, Qatar’s educational project demonstrates the combination of planning and investment. All of the institutions in Education City are meant to complement and not compete with each other. This does not just prevent duplicate programs, but also makes it easier to manage the partners and to control the development of higher education. In contrast, in the UAE they do not even coordinate on a national level,

and each Emirate independently decides its course of action. Bahrain has steered a middle course where foreign universities are encouraged to establish in the country, but are under the close oversight of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training. Finally, of the three countries, Qatar is the only one where there is no private investment. The projects are fully funded by the government of Qatar. (Dou and Knight 2014; Fox and Al Shamisi 2014; Knight 2011; Knight 2013; Knight 2014a, b; Ibnouf et al. 2014).

Conversely, Qatar's higher education policies differ significantly from those of its closest neighbour, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia and Qatar share many socio-economic characteristics and are both very conservative societies. However, while Qatar has been able to implement sweeping reforms, Saudi Arabia has had to follow a more cautious path due to non-educational factors that make modernization more difficult. One of these difficulties is that the leadership of Saudi Arabia places great importance on maintaining its religious image and both adhering to—and being seen to adhere to—the strictest principles of Islam. This is necessary as legitimacy of the al-Saud regime depends in large part on its close relationship with the Wahhabi institution, a conservative religious establishment that controls the entire educational system in the country. Any sweeping reform that is perceived as moving away from traditional Islamic educational principles or moving toward significant modernization (i.e., towards Western educational philosophies) of the educational system could cause a rift between the Wahhabi and the al-Sauds (Yamani 2006).

The main differences between the higher education systems of the two countries are that Saudi universities are domestic and controlled by the state while Qatar's higher education institutions are state controlled but are primarily international institutions. Also, Saudi Arabia does not provide its women with nearly as many educational possibilities as Qatar. Despite being controlled by the religious Wahhabi right, all Saudi universities teach English as either an elective subject, or as a major field of study. All students, despite their major, are required to take an introductory English course, and English instruction is standard for most courses run by the departments of science, engineering, medicine, allied health, and other technical subjects. Some newly founded private universities choose English as the medium of instruction in other areas as well (Al-Seghayer 2012).

4 Controversial Issues in English Language Policy in Qatar

4.1 The Perception of Failed K-12 Reform: After Rand, the Conflict Between Arabic as Mother Tongue and English as Lingua Franca Continues

Unsurprisingly, most the controversial issues in Qatari K-12 policy have been discussed in the sections on the strengths and weaknesses of the K12 system. There were two recent interesting developments in the Qatar education scene. The first is

that the SEC is holding what they indicate is a series of public meetings to get stakeholder feedback on the system. Such meetings are not controversial, but one of the major issues in the meeting was that even after the restoration of Arabic as the medium of instruction, many parents in Qatar are still concerned with promoting Arabic in school. Qatari students often struggle with the differences between the spoken dialect used in Qatar and Modern Standard Arabic which is used for writing and formal speech (Toumi, 23 January 2014a, b). Perhaps to address this concern, the government of Qatar needs to put more resources into the teaching of language. While Qatar Foundation International (QFI) runs high profile teacher training opportunities for teachers of Arabic as a second language in other countries, there are currently no teacher training opportunities focused either on the teaching of Arabic or English which seems a significant oversight given the new emphasis on teacher quality and the importance of language to learning (QFI 2014). Secondly, the SEC has established a Teachers' Council to gain teacher feedback on improvements to the education system. Again, this is not truly controversial, but it is a first for what has been a strictly top-down managed system. It will be interesting to see what will happen if this council dare to publically disagree with government policy.

In a related development, a segment of parents in Qatar are calling for a shortened school day due to hot weather and upcoming national examinations (Toumi, 04 May 2014). Despite the public calls for this reduction, it is unlikely that the SEC will shorten the school day given that other Gulf States such as Bahrain have recently expanded the school day to get closer to UNESCO's recommended standards around hours of instruction.

4.2 Higher Education Systems: The Economic Necessity of English Versus the Cultural, Religious and Historical Imperatives to Promote Local Language

Due to the petroleum industry, large companies set up in Qatar, built necessary infrastructure, and brought in hundreds of thousands of people from outside nations to work for them. This was necessary, since Qatar's native population was too small and their education system was not adequate to meet the overwhelming demand for skilled workers to fill roles in these companies. As a result, a huge majority of Qatar's population is now made up of non-nationals. People have come to live and work in Qatar from regions as close as other Gulf countries, Asia and Africa, but also nations as far away as Australia, Canada, the US, the UK, and all over Europe. This influx of expatriates has firmly established the role of English as the lingua franca in Qatar. Most secure, lucrative jobs outside of the public sector in Qatar have a high level of English as a basic requirement, which means that if Qataris hope to compete for private sector employment with expatriates, English education must be cultivated at every stage of education in Qatar.

It is not only essential for Qataris to be educated in the English language, but also to be educated to rigorous international standards. In order to compete professionally, they require comparative qualifications. Looking ahead—when the oil runs out—the Qatari government aspires to have a stable economy based on a knowledge economy. Having highly skilled workers trained at international institutions is a crucial part of the foundation necessary to make this vision a reality. Also, English is likely to remain important as the international language of science. All these factors mean that the establishment of leading US colleges and the implementation of courses with English tuition were necessary in order for Qataris to compete in the present and to progress towards achieving their future goals.

Despite its perceived necessity, the predominance of the English language means that Arabic is starting to become marginalized. Along with the loss of language, there has been a tangible shift in terms of culture and values (Khatri 2013a, b). The education system previously was based on religious teachings, but this has changed with the modern reforms. Many Qataris see this as a serious problem. It is less of a political imperative for Qatar to maintain an educational system based on conservative Islamic beliefs than it is for other Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, since there are no education ministry religious links in the country, and the monarchy does not derive its legitimacy from links with a religious organization. Qatar is nevertheless a very conservative culture, and many Qatari citizens have voiced concerns about what they see as the introduction of disruptive Western influences and damaging Western ideals (Yamani 2006).

There was a recent controversy concerning inappropriate reading materials published in English that were accessible through the library database at Qatar University. A 19-page letter was written by members of the university community detailing the titles of books that were considered to be inappropriate and asking that they be removed from the database. In response to this letter, the university implemented a policy of censoring reading materials and deleted from its database any books that it deemed to be in violation of Qatari values (Al Romaihi 2013; Doha News 2013). There have been some similar reports of censorship at Education City (Abdul Jawad 2014). While these are fairly minor incidents, they clearly illustrate the tension between academic freedom and modernization, and traditional cultural values. Striking the correct balance is a difficult task, but it is central to any further reforms of Qatari higher education systems (Khatri 2013a, b).

4.3 Cultural and Linguistic Conflicts Resulting from Qatar's Policy of Importing Higher Education Institutions and Policy

One phenomenon in the higher education scene in Qatar, which is not unique to Qatar but appears in other Middle Eastern nations as well, is a post-secondary gender gap. There are almost three times as many females as males enrolled in higher

education. For every 100 women in higher education, there are only 46 men. On average, Qatari women spend 3.4 years longer in education than Qatari males. Traditionally, jobs in the public sector have been highly prized. These jobs do not require higher education, and so many men do not feel compelled to continue their education beyond the secondary level. Instead, they pursue careers in the police force or military, which offer security, decent pay, and a certain prestige. Women are more inclined to continue their education, with the result that many more women than men are entering jobs in the private sector that require post-secondary education and specific skill sets (Al-Misnad 2012).

Another possible reason for this gender gap is the high level of English that is required for entry into the international universities in Qatar. Studies conducted throughout the world suggest that, in general, women have the ability and motivation to learn languages more easily than men (Swaminathan 2008; Burman et al. 2008; Rua 2006; Kissau and Salas 2013; Merritt 2014). It may be that Qatari men lack the language skills to successfully pursue higher education at the international universities, and that this influences their decision to not pursue post-secondary education. In order to address this, the SEC has decreed that Qatar University offer certain courses in Arabic. These courses are both central to Qatari culture, and likely to appeal to men. Moves to offer more vocational courses have also been suggested (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014).

The implications of this gender bias are not yet fully clear. There are concerns that men will start to find it more difficult to compete for employment, particularly in the public sector. Statistics also show that disparities in the level of education of spouses can lead to marital problems. Having a higher proportion of well educated women than men could have negative repercussions in marriages, leading to further disruption of the Qatari culture (Al-Misnad 2012).

Linguistic conflict arises within the Qatari educational system most notably in relation to the transition from K-12 to higher education. Qatari K-12 instruction is in Arabic. While it is compulsory to teach English in K-12, students often do not attain a level of competence that is sufficient to gain a place in a higher education institution where English is the primary or sole medium of education. Many Qatari nationals find that they have to spend extra time and resources completing an English foundation course before they are able to successfully apply to an institution of higher learning. This deters potential students and puts Qataris at a disadvantage in terms of time and money (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014).

To counteract this issue, in 2010 the SEC decreed that K-12 math and science classes were to be taught in English. This sudden change, however, left teachers ill equipped to teach their subjects properly. Many teachers did not have sufficient English skills to give English instruction, which led to classes being taught in Arabic with English textbooks. Low pass rate ensued and the decision was reversed in 2012 (Khatri 2013a, b).

5 The Future of Education Policy in Qatar

5.1 *After Rand? Whither Qatar's K-12 Policy?*

After reverting to Arabic as a medium of instruction (a reasonable correction given the low level of English language ability of a large segment of Independent school teachers) and the dropping of the originators of EFNE, the Rand Corporation, Qatar faces a major decision. Where does K-12 reform go from here? At present, the Qatari focus—similar to that of Bahrain—seems to have shifted to teacher education reform as means to improve the K-12 system. In addition to the teacher quality assurance measures discussed in Sect. 2.4, the SEC partnered with Qatar University's, National Center for Educator Development (NCED). The NCED was established in 2010 with the mandate to develop well qualified teachers for the Independent Schools and to conduct research in order to develop best practices for teachers in Qatar, and to inform policy decisions and to facilitate leadership development (QU 2014). The Center aims to expand QU's capacity to develop high quality educators for Qatar's schools, to develop high quality PD activities based on current research and embedded in Qatar's educational and cultural context; to conduct ongoing research/evaluation to ensure the quality and effectiveness of education in Qatar. To achieve these aims, the NCED offers professional development support for teachers throughout the academic year and offer school- based support programs to participating schools and consultancy services on an ad hoc basis (QU 2014).

In addition, the SEC—in concert with Qatar Foundation and Qatar Petroleum—has just launched Teach for Qatar (an affiliate of the Teach for All non-governmental organization, NGO). The NGO recruits young professionals and recent university graduates and trains them in the teaching profession and places them in independent schools. After the 2 year stint, participants emerge fully qualified and they continue to receive professional development support and evaluation throughout their teaching career (Teach for Qatar 2014). A new professional development center for teachers, under the auspices of Qatar Foundation is also in the planning stages. There have been several advertisements recruiting for leadership positions at this, as yet unnamed, center but no other details have been released to date. The SEC has recognized that a crucial element in realizing its goals for students is improved teaching.

The Education and Training Sector Strategy (ETSS) 2011–2016 (a key component of part of the Qatar National Development Plan intended to facilitate the realization of the Qatar 2030 Vision), is an integrated strategic plan for education in Qatar. The goals of this plan are in Table 3.

Table 3 Improving K-12 Education in Qatar, 2011–2016 (SEC 2011)

Program: Improving K-12 General Education		
Outcome	Key Performance Indicators and (NDS Targets)	Project
10. K-12 National curriculum aligned with higher education, TVET, work skills and individual student needs developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More students approach or meet national standards in math, science and English • High school graduation rates increase • Fewer students directed to foundation/non-credit bearing programs/courses • Increase Qatari enrollment in higher education • Reduced rate of dropouts from higher education institutions • Higher enrollment ratio in higher education for male Qataris • Greater student skills in knowledge-based economy • Greater student employability 	10.1. Align and coordinate K-12, Higher education, and TVET programs and services and establish feedback mechanisms)
		10.2. Improve the breadth and quality of the national curriculum, learning resources and programs to address the diverse learning needs of all students including the educational and working skills needed to enable them to fulfill their potential

5.2 The Future of Higher Education in Qatar

By 2030, Qatar aspires to be an advanced, knowledge-based society that is capable of sustaining its own economic and political development and providing a high standard of living for all nationals. The nation subscribes to a Human Capital ideology that sees education as central to achieving these goals. In order to project what may possibly happen in the future, it is necessary to look at the past so as to predict the direction of current trajectories and trends. With this in mind, let us review the major milestones in Qatar’s educational reforms.

In 1995 the Qatar Foundation was established, and in 2002, the Education for a New Era (EFNE) reform initiative was launched. Under this program, the Supreme Education Council (SEC) was set up to plan and implement major changes to the educational system. Over the intervening decade, sweeping reform occurred at all levels of education. In terms of higher education, this has led to the establishment of international universities and vocational training colleges within an area known as Education City. Opportunities have been opened up for men and women alike, allowing Qatari nationals to compete with the non-national population in terms of education and employment (Supreme Education Council 2008).

As we have seen, the introduction of international universities and courses taught in English at institutions of higher learning has led to various conflicts in terms of

culture and language. This in turn has resulted in recent steps away from English medium of instruction in the K-12 system and away from a fully English-medium higher education system. This change is based on the acknowledgment that there is a conflict between Western education and Qatar's traditional language and culture. In addition to attacking the cultural problem, this solution addresses the issue of Qatari nationals (particularly males) not seeking higher education due to not having the requisite time, aptitude, or desire to study English. It is hoped that this will lead to more Qatari men enrolling in institutions of higher learning, which would ideally result in a healthy state of equilibrium between the genders in higher education.

This proposed solution to the gender gap issue raises the question of whether teaching courses in Arabic to cater to Qatari men's possible difficulties with English is a desirable solution in the first place. Could it be that teaching courses in Arabic to decrease the existing gender gap is like placing a 'Band-Aid' on a serious wound? After all, if Qatar is seeking to engage with the global scientific community and to make advances in knowledge across the world, it would be to the advantage of the government to ensure that Qatari males are taught English sufficiently at the primary and secondary levels so that they can be better prepared to continue their education rather than to give them a buttress simply so that the government can have a greater proportion of male citizens attending institutions of higher learning. This is also obvious deterrent to the employment prospect of Qatari citizens versus expatriates outside of the public sector in Qatar that was described in Sect. 3.1. Without knowing English, Qatari men would be ill-equipped to compete with expatriates for jobs in the private sector.

Qatar currently has a great deal of financial resources at its disposal, and it is certain that the country will continue to invest in the development of its educational systems. However, it is not certain what specific direction future reform of higher education is likely to take. Recently, the QF decided not to renew its contract with RAND Corporation, the think tank responsible for producing the EFNE reforms. This is due to a general feeling that EFNE has been largely unsuccessful. Recent statistics show that students have failed to perform better on standardized tests than before the reforms were introduced, and that Qatar remains near the bottom of education tables for the developing world, despite its relative wealth and the huge investment it has made in its educational systems. Many commentators believe that this perceived lack of success is largely due to changes not being given long enough to see if they succeed. New policies and procedures have repeatedly been put in place, and then have been scrapped if they have not led to immediate results. In many cases, it is possible that these policies would have produced the desired results if more preparation, training, and time were given (Abou-El-Kheir and MacLeod 2014). At any rate, it remains to be seen what effect these changes will have as the students who have endured these sudden changes in policy filter into higher education. To a large extent the outcome(s) will be determined by the next steps taken by the government of Qatar. New policies at the primary and secondary levels of education could lead to major changes in the percentages of Qatari nationals attending university and their success rates (Gonzalez et al. 2008).

It seems inevitable that Qatar's future will hold continued change in terms of higher education. We may well see further moves aimed at preserving Arabic language, culture, and traditions. More national institutions offering a wider range of vocational course that are not taught in English may be set up (QGSDP 2011). Whatever the future holds, women are likely to play a large part. With more women than ever acquiring under-graduate and post-graduate degrees and filling important posts, government offices, and prestigious roles in the private sector, a gender regress in regards to women's role in Qatari education has been rendered virtually impossible.

6 Conclusion

Qatar has developed quickly as a nation and has invested a large amount of money, time and resources in developing strategies to reform their educational system. The K-12 system has undergone exponential growth in the four decades since independence. In 2002, frustrated by the repeated failures of MOE reforms, the leadership of Qatar instituted the English for a New Era reform on the recommendation of its chosen partner the Rand Corporation. After 10 years of reform, Qatari students have made huge improvements, but still rank well below average in international tests and do not perform well on national exams. In response to this perceived failure, the SEC severed ties with the Rand Corporation, reversed the 2002 decision to have English as the medium of instruction and embarked on a series of initiatives to improve the quality of teacher education in Qatar—which many experts, parents and administrators had blamed for the failure of previous reforms to reach their potential. The SEC has also launched a series of public meetings on K-12 education and a teachers' council in an unprecedented (for Qatar) attempt to engage stakeholders in a meaningful way. It seems that for the present, Qatar is content to tweak the EFNE while it attempts to ameliorate systemic weaknesses of long standing.

Qatar's major policy choice in higher education was to import branch campuses of prestigious, American and European universities, to Education City. At the same time, Qatar University underwent a major revamp. As a result of these reforms, young Qataris have many promising educational opportunities and choices that were not available to previous generations. Some of the major achievements of the education reforms include very high literacy rates among men and women, the encouragement of women to pursue education and fill important roles within society, and the formation of strong ties with the global community through international educational institutions.

Unfortunately, various conflicts have also arisen. Chief among these conflicts are the dearth of men in higher education, the perceived marginalization of the Arabic language, the difficulties faced by Qatari nationals with low levels of English when applying for institutions of higher education, and the seeming adoption of Western values that contrast with Qatar's more conservative beliefs and traditions.

While there are many changes yet to come in Qatari education, English will continue to hold an important place in the educational system. The diverse society of non-national residents ensures that English will remain the lingua franca and therefore will remain the language of choice for most courses in higher education. It is necessary for Qatari K-12 policies to bring English education to the fore, without sacrificing traditional values or damaging the culture.

It is hoped that future reforms will lead to a more balanced proportion of the population in higher education. The steps taken to provide courses in Arabic at the national university herald a move in this direction. Presumably, if men and women were to both enter higher education in more proportionate numbers, Qatar would have a better opportunity to make major advancements towards accomplishing the goals set out in the 2030 National Vision. It is clear that developing the self-sufficient, advanced society to which Qatar aspires depends on the State of Qatar's ability to successfully educate its entire population. Balancing the gender gap would, in theory, lead to greater cultural stability, with jobs in both the public and private sectors being filled by Qatari men and women. This would in turn increase competition and help to fuel further growth and development opportunities. The question remains whether teaching courses in Arabic is a viable solution to the gender gap problem.

Qatar's education system at all levels is still a work in progress. From almost zero in the 1970s Qatar has built a complete K-12 and higher education system in an amazingly short period of time. There is still a great deal to be done in achieving its highly ambitious goals, but through a decade of educational reform, Qatar has set itself firmly on the track to success. With continued commitment to development in education, the world can expect to see Qatar gradually rise through the world rankings in educational achievement and social development in the years to come.

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English Education Policy in Saudi Arabia: English Language Education Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Current Trends, Issues and Challenges

Osman Z. Barnawi and Sajjadullah Al-Hawsawi

Abstract This article critically examines current issues and challenges in policy and practices of English education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It argues that although the current critical decisions on the language education policy being applied in the KSA are driven primarily by the forces of global changes, in order for this policy to be implemented successfully it is essential that a strategic plan to be designed, guided by local intellectual conditions and exigencies. Otherwise, it is likely that these policy changes will not only jeopardize the classical Arabic and national cultural identity, but also they may put Saudi national interests at risk. It further contends that it is crucial for the Saudi government to deeply understand the intersection of current English language policy and practices in both public and higher education, ‘the internationalization of education and ‘national cultural identity’ in order successfully to promote mass literacy in English in the country and at the same time maintain national interests. It also suggests that an epistemic and cognitive shift needs to take place in the English education policy and practices of the KSA in order to effectively realize the intended outcomes of current Saudi education policy: i.e., promoting mass literacy in English, and meeting religious needs as well as the growing economic and social needs of the Saudi nation.

Keywords Internationalization • Mass literacy • Policy • National • Identity

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1 Introduction

As a global language, English represents a social, cultural, intellectual, linguistic, political and economic capital. Today, the worldwide demand for competent English language users has resulted in a critical need for high-quality education for English language learners all over the world (Barnawi & Phan 2014). This continuing global demand for English education has led policy makers in different ‘expanding circle’ countries (Kachru 1986), including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), simultaneously to attempt to appropriate English in their national interests. In this context, the Ministry of Education in the KSA (*formerly it consisted of two separate entities: (i) Ministry of Education (MoE) which foresees all public education, and (ii) Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) which is in charge of higher education*), the largest country in the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, has been making tremendous efforts to appropriate English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) instruction in the interests of the country.

The geopolitical reality of the globalization of English (Crystal 1997), the impacts of 9/11 on the Islamic countries’ education systems, the ‘Arab Spring’ scenarios, the global financial crisis of 2008 and its impacts on global/local labor conditions, the birth of ISIS—‘Islamic State of Iraq and Syria’—coupled with tumbling oil prices have “played major roles in accelerating English education policy reforms in the KSA”. Specifically, the “past two decades [have] witnessed several major government initiatives to promote mass literacy in English” (Barnawi and Phan 2014, p. 6) across the country. Among other major acts, in 2004, the Saudi MoE allocated a budget worth millions of dollars, with Royal Decree No. 171 dated 14/08/2004 (corresponding to 27/6/1425 H), for the introduction of the English language as early as grade 6 of primary school. With Royal Decree No. 160 dated 02/05/2011 (corresponding to 28/5/1432 H), the MoE launched another project called English Education Development (i) to introduce English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school, and (ii) to enhance the quality of English education at secondary school level. Likewise, in 2005 the MoE endorsed preparatory-year intensive English programmes at all local higher education institutes, in order to help Saudi first-year college/university students to enhance their linguistic and communicative competencies together. In 2015, under direct supervision of Saudi Minister of Education Dr Azzam ibn Muhammad Al Dakhil, the MoE launched a program called ‘*Education for Career*’ which puts great emphasis on English education within the country particularly English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes and English for Vocational/Occupational Purposes, to name a few.

The Saudi government has been spending billions of dollars and offering generous incentives to international institutes and/or training providers to internationalize its public as well as higher education system through various means—for example, by encouraging local higher education (HE) institutions to enter into partnerships with overseas universities, by positing English as a fundamental tool for academic knowledge production and dissemination, by adopting international curricula in

both public and HE sectors, by opening branch campuses, by offering joint programmes, and by franchising international programs to local people, to name a few (See Barnawi 2016; Phan and Barnawi 2015 for more accounts on these issues).

While this is happening, the implementation of successful policies for promoting mass literacy in English continues to remain a major concern for the Saudi government. Studies on the implementation of English education policies in the KSA constantly report that actors (e.g., teachers, employers, senior officials, and parents) are still apprehensive about the current English education policy and practices, on the grounds that such acts could form overindulgence of English Education, commercialization, Westernization, colonial remnants, and diminishes of local language and knowledge, to name a few (Almansour 2013; Al-mengash 2006; Kazmi 1997; Phan and Barnawi 2015). Paradoxically, while Islamic activists have been lobbying government officials in order to block moves to teach English to youngsters as well as adults (Morgan 2002), business friendly government, neoliberal universities, and corporate bodies, in collaboration with international institutes (Barnawi in press), have been aggressively projecting and imposing English as a 'global academic excellence' (Sapiro 2010) in order to shape public thinking about its supposed merits in local capacity building. Such discourse of tensions among different actors has created ongoing debates over English instruction in the KSA at various levels including cognitive, epistemic, policy, curricula, pedagogy and practices.

Taking the literature of language policy, Bakhtin's (1981) work of language and identity, and recent debates on internationalization and commercialization of education as point of departure, this article critically examines current issues and challenges in policy and practices of English education in the KSA. It argues that although the current critical decisions on the language education policy being applied in the KSA are driven primarily by the forces of global change and neoliberal free market doctrines in order for this policy to be implemented successfully it is essential that a strategic plan to be designed, guided by local intellectual conditions and exigencies. Otherwise, it is likely that these policy changes will not only jeopardize the classical Arabic and national cultural identity, but also they may put Saudi national interests at risk.

2 English Language Education Policies in the KSA: A Brief Historical Overview

English, as a global language, carries multiple meanings, memories, histories and experiences in different contexts around the world. While it carries memories of a painful colonial past for people in postcolonial countries, it has been seen as a language of advancement, development and empowerment in other contexts. It is also considered as a language of identity liberation and yet constraint in other places (See Phan 2013; Pennycook 2008 for more accounts on these issues). Hence, critical examination of a history of English education in a particular context could

always help in understanding its language ideologies, cultural identities and pedagogical practices, among other endeavors. In this account, social individuals are continually in the process of “ideological becoming”; i.e., “assimilating [their] consciousness to the ideological world” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 341), as they place themselves between the “authoritative discourses” and “internally persuasive discourses” in order to meaningfully interpret their own experiences.

From these perspectives, the desire for EFL instruction in the KSA is considered to be fascinating and yet complex, owing to the ambiguity that surrounds the primary rationale and steps for introducing English in Saudi schools, as well as to the ongoing investment, that is worth billions of US dollars in order to promote mass literacy in English across the country. Below we will delineate these issues in chronological order in order to shed light on how the ambiguous rationale behind teaching EFL in the country has been shaped and reshaped, enacted, and the extent to which current desires have been satisfied. This in turn will lead us toward a better understanding of the future directions of English education policy across the country, when we critically examine the intersection between EFL teaching in the country, the internalization of HE systems and questions of “national cultural identity” (Phan 2013) in a later section of this article.

2.1 The Birth of Teaching EFL in the KSA (1937)

As guardian of Islam’s two Holy Mosques—Makkah and Madinah—the KSA has worldwide commitments that entail spreading and maintaining the Islamic faith, in collaboration with other Muslim countries around the world. Thus, since the establishment of its education system in 1925, the formation of the General Directorate of Education was based on Islamic law and tradition. That is, religious courses are predominant components of its curricula, pedagogies and practices. Also, importantly, according to the specific Islamic law endorsed by the KSA, boys and girls are segregated in the education system from the early years of schooling up to post-graduate levels (Barnawi 2011). In the former education system, Saudi students would study for 3 years in a ‘preparatory school’ and then move to an ‘elementary school’ where they studied for 4 years. After 7 years of education, they would be qualified to work in a variety of government sectors (Al-Hajailan 2006).

Since its inception, the Saudi Ministry of Education (formerly General Directorate of Education) has declared in its education policy documents that Arabic is the medium of instruction in public education settings unless necessity dictates otherwise. Interestingly enough, the first Saudi education system “was a clone of the education system of Egypt” because at that time Egypt “was the more advanced country” (Habbash 2011, p. 33). The KSA has fully adopted the education system of Egypt with regard to its curricula, pedagogies and practices. It should be noted, however, that Egypt was a former French colony, and thus the education system of Egypt itself had been significantly influenced by the French education system. Also, historically, both English and French were taught in Saudi schools, before French

was officially removed from the curricula in 1970, with Royal Decree No. 774/2. The reasons for removing French from the public school curricula remain unknown.

English as a foreign language, however, was first offered in Saudi schools in 1937, and was taught four times a week (45 min each session) in grades 4, 5 and 6 (of elementary school) according to the old education system, as scholars like Al-Hajailan (1999) and Zafer (2002) point out. Owing to the shortage of qualified Saudi EFL teachers at that time, English was taught mainly by teachers from neighboring Arab countries, namely, Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Sudan (Zafer 2002). Although traditional Islamic beliefs constantly urge Muslims to learn other languages (not specifically English) for the purpose of disseminating the Islamic creed, the primary rationale for introducing English as a foreign language in the county remains ambiguous, as studies on the history of EFL education in Saudi Arabia report (e.g., Al-Seghayer 2005; Al-Hajailan 1999). We believe this ambiguity may have arisen owing to the fact that studies in language education policy often investigate the tensions or desires that exist in societies in different parts of the world with regard to which of one or two languages is dominant from the perspectives of the economy, politics and ideology (e.g., Appadurai 1990; Block 2008). There is, however, an acute shortage of studies on the desires of particular societies with regard to appropriating a particular language in the national interests from religious perspectives. Since its foundation, the KSA has enjoyed its strategic location on the economic map of the world as the biggest oil producer and destination for most Muslims all over the world. Hence, it is possible that the primary rationale for introducing English in the KSA might have been in order to disseminate the Islamic faith among non-Arabic speakers; i.e., in a similar way to other languages used in the Islamic Madrasah system—the traditional system of Islamic education in which Muslim scholars sit in a circle and construct Islamic knowledge—to teach Islamic studies. However, today's geopolitical globalization of English (as an official and the most powerful language of the world's army-NATO as well as economy) might have significantly changed the interests of the KSA with regard to English education; i.e., English has been perceived as a gatekeeper to national development, and it became more than a language for disseminating Islamic creed.

2.2 EFL Education in Saudi Intermediate and Secondary Schools (1942—to Present)

In 1942, the General Directorate of Education became the Ministry of Education (MoE), with full responsibility for setting the guidelines and policy of the educational system of the KSA. In this role, the MoE restructured the public education system by merging the 3-year preparatory school with the 4-year elementary school (forming 6 years of elementary school). It has also officially endorsed the 3-year intermediate and 3-year secondary school (which consists of science and art tracks) levels in its education policy. English as a subject has been removed from the old

education system (i.e., elementary school), and reintroduced at both intermediate and secondary school levels, with Royal Decree No. 2802 dated 11/07/1942 (corresponding to 1361/06/26 H) (Al-Hajailan 2006). In 1974, the Supreme Committee for Education Policy in the MoE endorsed six 45-min sessions per week of English education at both intermediate and secondary school levels. This policy, however, was modified in 1980, with Royal Decree No. 107, and the number of contact hours of English instruction become four 45-min sessions per week at both intermediate and secondary school levels. Since then, the number of contact hours and the divisions of English education at the above two levels have been not changed. It is also importing to note that the reasons for changing contact hours of EFL in Saudi public education system were not clear.

2.3 English Education for Saudi Youngsters (2004—to Present)

The 9/11 events, ‘Arab Spring Scenario’ and the birth of ISIS had a great impact on the Saudi education system. The Saudi government has experienced international pressures, particularly from the USA, calling for major reforms to be made in the Saudi education policy so as to foster “more liberalism, and counterbalance the extremist ideology allegedly encouraged by some components within the Saudi curriculum, especially religious education” (Habbash 2011 p. 34). In this account, more English education across the country is seen as a strategic response towards realizing healthy educational reforms. This asserts that English is not use to develop Saudi students’ linguistic and communicative competencies but also to pass on a foreign culture to Saudi learners. In response to these pressures, in 2004, the Saudi MoE allocated a budget worth millions of Dollars, by Royal Decree, for the introduction of the English language as early as grade six of primary school. Additionally, in 2011, also by Royal Decree, the MoE launched another project called English Education Development (i) to introduce English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school, and (ii) to enhance the quality of English education at secondary school level. Various committees and bodies have been established by the government, in collaboration with the MoE, to design and develop a curriculum that suits the local intellectual conditions. The government has been “spending billions of dollars from time to time for English teachers’ recruitment, language labs, curriculum development and teachers’ training” (Rahman and Alhaisoni 2013, p. 114). It has also, for example, recently contracted a variety of international publishers (e.g., Macmillan, McGraw Hill, Oxford, Pearson Education, to name a few) to design English syllabi/curricula that are based on the communicative approach for public education.

These critical decisions regarding teaching English to youngsters were in fact primarily taken for the sake of inculcating in the minds of the Saudis the message of tolerating and accepting other religions, tradition and culture. Nevertheless, these

decisions have created great tensions between liberal Saudis and conservative wings. Many parents have become resentful of the idea of teaching English to youngsters on the grounds that their children should master proper Arabic in the early stages of their education in order to be able to read and understand Arabic; an important tool to access Islamic text such as the Holy Quran and the Holy *Hadeeth* (the sayings and heritage of the Prophet Mohamed peace be upon him). Others even claim that there is a conspiracy to destroy the Arabic language in the country and the Islamic heritage associated with it.

Senior officials in the MoE are insisting that English a national strategic choice. They regarded it as a great weapon for national survival in the twenty-first century, as well as being an urgent public requirement; since this is the case, opponents need to reconsider their reactions. Local and international media have also contributed to this ongoing debate from different perspectives (see Phan and Barnawi 2015; Morgan 2002, for more accounts on these issues). Frankly speaking, both parties hold valid points with regard to EFL instruction in the country; however, the fact that such debates are continuing is a result of the absence of a clear language education policy, guidelines and strategies across the country, as well as of the paucity of studies on English education policy in the KSA. We hope that the findings of our review presented in this article will contribute to the knowledge of English education policy in the KSA and open up more paths for further investigations.

2.4 English as a Language of Development in the Higher Education System (2005—Present)

Recently, English has been characterized as a “tyrannosaurus rex” (Swales 1997) and as a “gatekeeper to positions of prestige in society” (Pennycook 1995, p. 39). It has become an accepted fact that “English is integral to the globalization processes that characterize the contemporary post-Cold War phase of aggressive casino capitalism, economic restructuring, McDonaldization and militarization on all continents” (Phillipson 2001, p. 187; Phan 2013). Saudi policy regarding English language teaching in higher education is torn between the desire to preserve the Arabic language on the one hand and the pressure of globalization and the desire to move towards gaining more access to international communication, scientific information, trade, politics, commerce and so forth on the other. This can be observed in the policy statement of the MoE (formerly Ministry of Higher Education) centered on language policy:

Arabic is the language of instruction in universities. Another language can be used if necessary; however, this should be made by a decision from the council of the university concerned (MHE 1999, p. 17).

Today, however, the forces of global change including financial crisis of 2008, Oil Prices Fall, and rapid internal developments in the KSA have significantly changed the status of English. Despite the attempts by or desire of the MoE to

preserve the Arabic language, the practice of institutions is to move towards a greater use of the English language, for several reasons. Employers in leading industries across the country constantly report that Saudi university graduates are good in specific subject knowledge but lacking in workplace skills such critical thinking, collaborative working and communication in English. Local communities and the media have been aggressively attacking the Saudi higher education system for producing manpower with poor English language proficiency for job markets that see English as an essential tool for national development. "This problem has led to KSA's heavy dependence on foreign workforce for its economy and other important matters" (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 6). It has been argued that the outcomes of the higher education system have had a negative impact on the local labour force (Bahgat 1999). That is, the population of the KSA is 22 million, and yet about six million foreign workers constitute the engine of the economy. Worse still, 25 % of Saudis are unemployed. "There are too many PhDs and too few mechanics" in Saudi, adds Looney (1994, p. 45).

In a strategic response to this gap, in 2005 the MoHE endorsed a policy, by Royal Decree, that requires English to be taught as a compulsory subject at all Saudi HE institutions (the implications of this policy for the Saudi higher education system and national cultural identity will be discussed in detail in a later section of this article). Importantly, like the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), as well as the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes (RCCI) at Jubail and Yanbu that have been using English as a medium of instruction over the past decades, all Saudi private and government universities/colleges/institutions are now considering using English as a medium of instruction in their programmes, especially in areas like engineering, medicine, business and information technology.

Overall, from the above discussion it is clear that the original rationale behind the Saudi government's desire to teach English at different education levels was ambiguous (possibly for the purpose of disseminating Islamic creeds); it then shifted drastically to being for the purpose of gaining access to scientific knowledge and ensuring intellectual and economic capital for the development of the nation as well as softening the discourse of the 'othering' the West and encouraging peaceful understanding of the non-Muslims West. English education has become a core business in public and higher education policy across the country. Nevertheless, language policy cannot be deeply examining how it is being translated into classroom practices. In the next section we attempt to capture how current policies are being put into practice.

3 EFL Teaching and Learning in the Saudi Context

3.1 *Profile of Teaching and Learning in Saudi EFL Classrooms*

Language policy in any EFL context cannot be analysed without critically examining how it has been put into classroom practices at different educational levels. Brief descriptions of the profile of EFL instruction across the KSA can be obtained in various published documents (e.g., British Council) (Shamim 2008), on official websites, and in unpublished works (e.g., Al-Ahaydib 1986). Although the Saudi educational policy was established in 1970 and the English education was officially published in 1993, the number of studies that evaluate English educational policy in the country is very limited (e.g., Al-mengash 2006; Al-Hamid 2002; Habbash 2011). Importantly, in the Saudi context there have been very few in-depth studies that specifically examine EFL teaching at classroom level in public schools across the country.

Zaid (1993) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the practices of EFL instruction in Saudi public schools in order to examine the efficacy of the system. Using questionnaires and several on-site classroom observations, he examined the EFL textbooks, teaching methods and teacher preparation at government schools. His questionnaire was distributed to officials at the MoE, language supervisors in major cities of the KSA (i.e., Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam), and EFL teachers. Classroom observations were also conducted in several sites across the KSA; the foci of his observations were primarily on the various pedagogical strategies employed by teachers in classrooms and students' reactions to these strategies. The findings of his study reveal that EFL classrooms are mainly teacher-centred and that the audio-lingual method is dominating teachers' practices, although some respondents believed that these methods need to be replaced with other methods that promote skills of communication in English. He also reports that

English teacher preparation programs in Saudi Arabia were assessed as good programs but need various improvements in English teaching methods, and speaking English, decreasing [the number of] English literature courses. Students' achievement was viewed by the subjects of the study as less than what the Ministry of Education expects (p. vii).

In another in-depth study of EFL instruction in Saudi public education, Zafer (2002) surveyed public school teachers' as well as HE professors' perspectives on the topics and roles that should be emphasized in EFL teacher preparation courses. The findings of his study reveal that the audio-lingual and grammar translation methods are preferred and also used by the majority of Saudi teachers. He concludes that traditional methods of teaching are still extremely popular in public schools. As a result, Saudi students are having difficulties carrying on basic conversations in English, even on topics they are familiar with. He emphasizes the importance of incorporating more modern communicative methods that could achieve the purposes of our English education. Zafer (2002) also points out that there is no

constructive alignment between the contents of the EFL textbooks used in schools, the teaching methods used by teachers and the EFL programme goals defined by the MoE. He further remarks that the EFL teaching materials are dominated by topics such as 'desert life', 'keeping livestock' (e.g., camels and sheep) and 'stories of ancient Arabic heroes'. Such obsolete materials, as he believes, are unlikely to help Saudi EFL students to learn and use English in situations related to modern advanced technologies, travelling or airports, for example. He further concludes that

...having national guidelines of what is expected from EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia should serve as a framework and not another burden on the teachers. It should aim at advancing the country to meet its needs and challenges and... (p. 143)

Although the findings of these few in-depth studies have revealed several crucial aspects related to teaching methods and the EFL textbooks in use in Saudi schools, they fail to address the sociopolitical and cultural aspects of the spread of English and its role in public education across the country. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) describes the scenario that is prevalent in many EFL contexts as follows: "there are too many debates about methodological microproblems while the house is on fire" (xxii). Also, importantly, these findings give rise to some serious questions such as: why are in-depth studies of EFL teaching at Saudi public schools so scarce? Should not the Saudi government operationalize regional research centres which evaluate the practices of EFL instruction across the country, instead of centralizing the entire English education process in the ministries? Should district schools be given more autonomy to operate their EFL programmes, and to evaluate and reflect on their own practices? Are our students' current levels of English language proficiency satisfactory in the eyes of the stakeholders/government? Below we attempt to unpack the learning of and achievements in English skills in the KSA.

3.2 Learning and Achievement in English Across the KSA

As far as the learning and achievements in English among Saudi public school learners are concerned, the findings of recent studies on the outcomes of English education in public schools are crucial in understanding the impact of the current policy and practices in the KSA. Although the Saudi MoE has conducted several evaluative studies to measure the effectiveness of its English education across the country, the results of most of these studies have astonished the Ministry, since students' English proficiency is decreasing (Alresheed 2008). Findings of several studies conducted to examine the achievement of English language among Saudi students report that most students are not able to write their names in English after studying English for over 6 years (see for example Alresheed 2008).

Such alarming findings have raised red flags across the country and also created great tensions among EFL educators. This is particularly the case with senior officials in the MoE who constantly express their worries about the poor public education outcomes in the country, despite the fact that 26 % of the country's oil revenues/

national income is spent on education. In its attempts to address this gap, the MoE has also conducted several regional conferences on EFL education in the KSA, and invited representatives from the MoE, the MHE, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Economic and Planning and the Ministry of Civil Service, in addition to representatives from large Saudi companies, chambers of commerce and industry, academics from all universities, and international speakers to discuss and find solutions to the unsatisfactory outcomes of English education programmes across the country. Disappointingly, the findings of presented papers, discussions of plenary sessions, and workshops have often centred on issues such as textbooks, teaching methods, the use of technology in EFL instruction, and language teacher preparation programmes. These aspects are indeed important in raising the awareness of language educators and keeping them abreast with up-to-date EFL pedagogies. However, crucial issues related to the spread of English and its role in shaping the country's English education policy as well as 'the geopolitical reality of the globalization of English' (Block 2008) are rarely discussed at these events (see, for example, the proceedings of the recent conference on English education in the KSA organized by Taibah University, in 2011, for more accounts of these issues). Researchers like Nunan (2003) consider such negligence a universal phenomenon; i.e., "despite the apparent widespread perception that English is a global language, relatively little systematic information has been gathered on its impact on educational policies and practices in educational systems around the world" (p. 589).

Another recent report released in late 2013 by Education First (EF), the world's largest educational company with branches in more than 54 countries around the globe, also questions the low English proficiency among Saudi learners. The EF calculates a 'country's average' learner's English skill level through the utilization of data from two different EF English tests taken every year by hundreds of thousands of English learners. The first test is a free online test accessible to users worldwide, whereas the second test is an online placement test administered by EF to determine students' proficiency in English before they start an English course. Both tests consist of 'grammar', 'vocabulary', 'reading' and 'listening' components. Over a period of 6 years (2007–2012), the EF tested the English skills of about five million learners across the world. Findings on the latest national rankings as well as changes in worldwide English proficiency over 6 years reveal that Saudi Arabia occupies the lowest ranking in the English proficiency index of 2013, compared to other oil-rich Gulf States countries of the Middle East. Simply stated, Saudi Arabia was listed in the very low proficiency rank—59, one point before the last country on the list (i.e., Iraq/60) (a comprehensive report on these findings can be obtained at www.ef.com/epi). The EF report also stated that,

- "Some Asian countries, in particular Indonesia and Vietnam, have transformed their English proficiency over the 6-year period. China has also improved, although less dramatically. Japan and South Korea, despite enormous private investment, have declined slightly".

It is crucial to note that the contents of the aforementioned tests and their backwash effects on the Saudi context are questionable. Nevertheless, such findings

indicate that the overall achievement of English proficiency in the Saudi context is poor. Additionally, these findings suggest that development of English language among nations is not so much related to the wealth of the state but mostly related to how the policies of foreign language learning are designed and clearly articulated; and this will lead to successful implementation of policy and achievement of goals. On the other hand, once a country is not very certain about its needs to learn English, its policy reflects complete disorientation and lack of direction as the case in most of the Middle East and North African countries. The EF report captures this as follows:

- “The Middle East and North Africa are the weakest regions in English. These oil-rich nations have staked their futures on developing knowledge economies before their oil production peaks. An exception to the region’s lack luster performance is the United Arab Emirates, which has improved significantly” (www.ef.com/epi, p. 5).

Notably, the high performance of English proficiency among UAE students in EF tests may be related to the fact that the country is clear about the purpose of English instruction in its educational policy and practices. Hence, a strategic collaboration between the UAE and KSA in areas centered on successful implementation of English education policy and practice might be beneficial. This is because both countries have the same cultural, linguistic, ideological and religious values.

With such lack of clear direction in Saudi English language policy, it is undisputable that today Saudi public school students’ English literacy is very weak, to the extent that some high school graduates cannot even differentiate between different phonics of English, let alone accomplish the tasks of writing their names or conducting a basic conversation in English”. Despite the findings of both “local and international” studies that question the low English proficiency levels among Saudi public school graduates, the MoE is striving to internationalize its higher education systems (by adopting English as a medium of instruction in post-secondary education, importing Western “training products and services, [franchising] international programmes, [and inviting] overseas institutions to establish branch campuses” (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 4), on the assumption that such endeavours will address the current gaps. In the next section we shed light on these issues.

4 English and the Internationalization of the Higher Education System in the KSA

English as a global language as well as a language of international communication “is an accepted understanding that internationalization of higher education is based upon and from which globalization of knowledge is generated [and disseminated]” (Phan 2013, p. 162). Internationalizing your higher education institutions in many non-English speaking contexts means adopting English as the medium of

instruction, and constructing knowledge through English language ‘products’ and ‘services’ (Phan and Barnawi 2015). It is “the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” (Knight 1999, p. 16). Like other countries in the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, Barnawi and Phan (2014) state that

[the Saudi MHE has] been adopting top-down internationalization policies to promote national, institutional and individual competitiveness in response to the increasing globalization of English. [Saudi] universities and colleges are revising their mission statements to ensure a commitment to internationalization, franchising international [programmes] to their local people, cultivating partnerships with foreign institutions, launching joint [programmes, and] adopting international curricula, among other endeavours (Barnawi and Phan 2014, p. 6).

For example, Technical and Vocational Training Cooperation (TVTC), the largest organization in the KSA which runs all the Technical Colleges (over 35 branches), Girls’ Higher Training Institutes (17 branches) and Vocational Institutes (70 branches) across the country, is now adopting international curricula, syllabi, instructional strategies and assessment practices, and English is considered as the medium of instruction in most of its programmes. What is more, the TVTC has recently, in 2012–2013, contracted the Interlink Language Centers, the leading association of intensive English programmes in the USA, to provide intensive English programmes (two consecutive semesters and 30 h per week) for all TVTC alumni across the KSA. This intensive English programme, which is based on the communicative use of English, cultural orientation and academic preparation, is offered for over 4000 male and female Saudi alumni every year, on the assumption that it will help them enhance their overall literacy in English communication and function well in the job markets. The TVTC has posted several incentives on its website to attract its alumni to join this English programme: for instance, an accredited certificate upon successful completion of the programme, a monthly stipend of 1000 Saudi riyals (270\$), and priority in obtaining a scholarship in the TVTC.

Other leading technical education institutions, namely, the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes at Yanbu and Jubail, are also actively internationalizing their engineering and business programmes through introducing English as a medium of instruction in all their programmes, among other endeavours. Recently, both Yanbu Industrial College and Jubail Industrial College, which are schools under the umbrella of the Royal Commission Colleges and Institutes, introduced a joint EMBA programme in collaboration with Indianapolis University in the USA for Yanbu, and Troy University in the USA for Jubail. Moreover, Jubail Industrial College has contracted McGill University in Canada to run its entire intensive English programme in the foundation year.

Recently, the Saudi government has spent over billion of dollar and lunched a project called “*Colleges of Excellence*” in order to reform its entire technical and vocational education and training across the country. In this account, it invites international training providers to open branch campus across the country. Today, there are over 37 international institutes operating in the KSA. “These colleges are managed by either Western training companies/ agencies, by Western colleges and

universities, by a consortium of two or three Western colleges, or by a group of Western training companies and local Saudi organizations. Among these, 24 colleges are UK-affiliated and the rest are affiliated with colleges and training companies in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands” (Phan and Barnawi 2015, p. 8).

Furthermore, there is a dramatic race among all local universities (e.g., King Saud University, King Abdul Aziz University and Umm Al-Qura University) towards gaining ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.) accreditation for their applied science, computing, engineering and engineering technology programmes. There is also a move towards obtaining ACBSP (Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs) accreditation for business programmes, and a race towards gaining American, British and Canadian boards’ accreditation for medicine programmes across the country. If a particular Saudi university/college obtains such accreditations for its programmes, the news is usually publicized via several local media, and also recognition letters pour in to that respective university/college from senior officials at the MHE and within the university/college. Discourses of “accreditation, international partnerships, joint ventures, English as the medium of instruction, and the internationalization of higher education are highly regarded in Saudi university/college communities as well as at senior official talks” (Barnawi and Phan 2014, 6).

The regulations of these accreditation organizations require local Saudi HE institutions to use English as a medium of instruction throughout their academic programmes, which in turn creates great demands for English education across the country. To the best of our knowledge, there are no empirical studies that have specifically examined “classroom discourse and its effects on learning in subject classrooms” (Shamim 2008, p. 242), the cognitive and educational consequences of learning concepts in English, and the other pedagogical challenges of using English as the medium of instruction in the context of Saudi Arabia. Thus, several crucial questions related to current practices need to be answered. This is because, as Tollefson and Tsui (2004) articulate,

Medium of instruction policy determines which social and linguistic groups have access to political and economic opportunities, and which groups are disenfranchised. It is therefore a key means of power (re) distribution and social (re) construction, as well as a key arena in which political conflicts among countries and ethnolinguistic, social and political groups are realized (p. 2).

We personally believe that the notion of having English as the medium of instruction is continuing to gain popularity in Saudi post-secondary education owing to the paucity of empirical research studies that deeply examine the pros and cons of such practices from classroom discourse perspectives. Moreover, Saudi universities/colleges will continue to spend more resources on getting the assistance of Centre experts for re-training their cadre. The government also exercises its right to endorse these practices by financially and logistically supporting local institutions to achieve these ends and by normalizing such discourses across the country. The King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), established in 2009, is

one good example. The budget of the Saudi MHE has nearly tripled since 2004, more new universities have been opened, and King Abdullah himself has offered \$10 billion of his own money to launch a graduate-level science-and-technology university called KAUST with international standards (Barnawi 2011). According to Corbyn (2009), KAUST has already embarked on collaborative ventures with 27 universities worldwide and created five international alliances of academic excellence. These international universities offer advice at various levels (e.g., equipment requirements, staff selection, and curricula in science and engineering) and have participated in several collaborative research studies with KAUST. Imperial College London, for example, will receive US\$25 million over 5 years for taking part in a piece of collaborative research with KAUST (Corbyn 2009; Wilkins 2011).

It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is not alone in such ambitions. Over the last two decades, the mission to internationalize the higher education system has also been undertaken in other countries of the oil-rich Gulf States of the Middle East, namely, Oman, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. These countries are striving to internationalize their higher education systems through a variety of endeavours. According to Wilkins (2010), the United Arab Emirates “is by far the largest host of international branch campuses globally, having over 40 providers at the end of 2009. The UAE higher education market has become highly competitive and, in the private sector, supply currently exceeds demand” (p. 389). Elsewhere, Wilkins (2010) points out that,

American, Australian and British universities have particularly benefited from the process of globalisation that has occurred in higher education, as the countries in which they are based have generally well-regarded systems of higher education and because English has become the *lingua franca* in international higher education (pp. 389–390).

The current practices involved in the internationalization of post-secondary education in the KSA as well as in other Arabian Gulf countries demonstrate that English no longer “belongs just to native English speakers from the English-speaking West” (Phan 2013, p. 163); instead, there are other users of English who are now striving to appropriate it in their national interests (Saudi Arabia, in the case of this article). There is clear evidence that Saudi universities/colleges are moving towards a policy/practice of international collaboration through various means, such as recruitment, accreditation, benchmarking academic programmes, and establishing partnerships with overseas universities. There are also strong beliefs among policy makers that English-medium education is the primary tool for improving the quality of teaching and learning in the KSA. However, this rapid internationalization of higher education scenarios gives rise to several important questions related to the national cultural identity of the country. What are the possible benefits that could be gained by Saudi students who have low English proficiency in their former education (i.e., public education)? Do Saudi students have the option of not studying English at all? Or are their choices limited by the ‘constraints at both global and local levels’? (Shamim 2008; Wright 2004)? Will there be any concrete outcomes in the shape of intellectual and economic growth and increased competitiveness?

Below we critically analyse some of the major issues and consequences of the current English education policy in the KSA.

5 Current Issues and Challenges

This section presents some major issues and challenges arising from recent government initiatives concerning English education policy and practices across the KSA. It is argued that it is crucial to understand the intersections between current English language policy and practices in both public and higher education, and the internationalization of education and national cultural identity in order successfully to promote mass literacy in English in the KSA while at the same time maintaining the national interests (e.g., Arabic language, Islamic cultural and tradition, etc.). This is because the aforementioned aspects are interrelated and manifested in a complex way through recent government initiatives.

As stated above, historically, the primary rationale for teaching EFL in the KSA was ambiguous; however, in 1993 the government officially announced the English education policy of the country through its official documents. Since then, it has been found in several studies that the English education policy documents have several limitations, including vague terms, too general terminologies, and repetitions that constantly cause confusion in interpretation. Also, the structure and content of these education policy documents lack consistency and coherence (see Al-hamid 2002; Al-mengash 2006 for more accounts of these issues). Worse still, to date, there is no clear English language education framework that provides “a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabi, curriculum guidelines, examinations and textbooks” (CoE 2001, 1) in the KSA. This has resulted in constant changes being made in English education curricula, policies and practices across the country. English has been taught in Saudi intermediate and secondary schools since 1974; however, the outcomes of English education have been below stakeholders’ expectations. Consequently, in 2004 the Saudi government endorsed the idea that the English language should be taught as early as grade six of primary school, and later, in 2011, it introduced English as a core subject in the 4th grade of primary school. These initiatives, indeed, have caused the government to spend billions of Saudi riyals on contracting international publishers to prepare English curricula, on training teachers, and on buying different teaching and learning resources, among other things. Despite all these efforts, studies on EFL education in Saudi schools, as stated earlier, frequently report that the outcomes of English education are below expectations, which is also astonishing for the entire MoE community.

We strongly believe that the absence of a comprehensive framework that defines the target levels of English proficiency for Saudi learners at each stage of their learning and on a lifelong basis is one major issue that needs to be addressed by the government. This framework should include topics responsive to the local cultural and intellectual conditions, and also have an international correlation in terms of grades, levels, examinations and instruction times etc. It should also articulate

required knowledge, attributes, awareness and skills they have to develop in order to be able to act effectively. It is regrettable that because of the absence of a clearly defined language framework in the country, local universities and colleges are uncritically using ‘*The Common European Framework Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, and assessment*’ (CEFR) to operate their intensive English language programmes. International publishers are also very quick to invade the Saudi markets with the so-called CEFR-based commercial materials (e.g., EFL textbooks, CDs, DVDs, portfolios, test banks, placement tests). It has been widely accepted that this European framework, with its political, ideological, socio-cultural, psychological and pedagogical issues, is not even relevant to Europe itself—the framework’s main target (See Barnawi 2012; Bonnet 2007; Fulcher 2004; Alderson 2007, for comprehensive accounts of these issues). Surprisingly, however, education institutions in the KSA have been uncritically using it as a benchmark for their language programmes.

Using one of the Saudi universities as an example, Barnawi (2012) conducted a comprehensive study to examine the pedagogical effectiveness of the CEFR in the Saudi context. He reports that this framework has produced extremely loud reactions to almost every component of the prep-year intensive English programme (e.g., planning, curriculum, syllabus, teaching, assessment and materials) at that university, but its pedagogical effectiveness remains invisible. Worse still, students have become primary victims of a framework that openly condemns Confucianist approaches to teaching and learning, and forcibly transplants inappropriate Western pedagogies into the Saudi context. The current EFL teaching practices in both public and higher education settings reflect clearly what scholars like Shamim (2008) describes it ‘disconnected’ as well as ‘fragmented implementation’ endeavours at the various stage of education in the country. These practices have also not only demonstrated internal contradictions in the entire English education policies and practices, but also created self-doubt among policy makers who often believe that top-down policy changes coupled with internationalization practices would be the most effective approach for promoting mass literacy in English in the KSA.

Another critical issue to which we would like to draw the attention of policy makers in the KSA is centred on the practices of internationalization of the higher education system. It is clear that, in this era of the knowledge-based economy and emerging ELT pedagogies, English is seriously considered by the Saudi government to be a primary tool for human resources. Issues such as the unequal ownership of English, neocolonialism, commercialization, and discourses of Western hegemony are frequently embedded in today’s ‘educational policies’, ‘pedagogies’ and ‘practices’ (Canagarajah 2005; Phan 2013; Phillipson 2009). Hence, the internationalization of higher education in the Saudi context is neither immune nor free from such troubles. Although there is a clear “celebration of the dominance of English in the internationalization” (Phan 2013, p. 164) of the Saudi HE system, the process of this internationalization is similar to Phan’s (2013) description in her study: it “is still largely geared towards importing and exporting English language products and services from the English-speaking West” (p. 164). English medium education is directly linked to an increase in the quality of education across the country. Local

universities are constantly competing against each other to import pre-existing knowledge such as the CEFR, franchised programmes and accreditations, without taking the role of critical consumers and responsible producers into account. This tendency will inevitably shape policies and practices for internationalizing Saudi higher education system in such a way as to reinforce an English-only mentality, the use of Western pedagogies and a type of intellectual dependency (Singh 2011), and this in turn will create a widespread perception of ‘Western is better’. This would further adversely affect the values, tradition and national cultural identity of the country (Phan 2013; Phan and Barnawi 2015).

The practice of internationalizing higher education through the use of English as a medium of instruction is often encumbered by the dominance of Western theoretical knowledge and the dominant role played by English, exercised through Western universities’ moves towards commercialization and global ranking practices (Kim 2005; Singh 2011; Yang 2002). Using one of the Saudi governments’ ambitious project called “Colleges of Excellence” as a case study, Phan and Barnawi (2015) explored how the ‘intersection between English, the internationalization of HE, desire, and neoliberalism has played out’ in the CoE project. The findings of their study demonstrated that while the Saudi government’ CoE project is loaded with educational agendas, international training providers “tend to pay particular attention to opening new markets and how to multiply ‘surpluses’ in SA and how to market their training services more widely” (16). They further report that

Market value of education is often expressed using vague and generic vocabularies, for example ‘highest performing’, ‘global leader’, ‘outstanding’, ‘leading’, ‘success’, ‘rich tradition’, and ‘excellence’ as in the case of all the three colleges presented above. Through the employment of these vocabularies and rhetorical flashes to promote their business overseas, these colleges hope to attract more international business and represent themselves as the-already-reputable global training providers (ibid)

In addition to the above issues, Saudi government efforts to internationalize the country’s higher education and maintain its national cultural identity are actually being effectively realized across the country. Yet, these practices can always be interpreted differently, owing to the unrest and tensions between senior officials and conservative wings over English education policy in the country, as well as constant international pressures that have continued to question the Saudi education curricula since 9/11. On one level, to the Saudi government internationalization might be considered as one way of proactively engaging with the world in order to promote its identity through its English education policies, solidify Saudi culture and reject Western influences on Saudi society. On another level, these rather simplistic and highly problematic practices imply, particularly to those conservative wings, that the Saudi government, through the superficial appearance of having English-medium programmes in its university/college curricula, is unknowingly increasing academic capitalism and the hegemony of Western heritage in the country. This is because English has been adversely influencing the values and cultural identity of the KSA in much complex and deeper ways: i.e., it is creating a colonial mentality—the superior Western ‘Self’ and the inferior ‘Other’ (Saudis).

This dominance of English in the Saudi higher education system further raises the question of whether local science, humanities, business and engineering faculty members are ready to catch up intellectually with advanced overseas universities in Europe and North America. University/college scholars are often pressurized to publish in top Western journals indexed in the Institute for Science Information (ISI) in order to obtain authentication and recognition of their intellectual capacity within their own disciplines. This, however, calls into question the extent to which the professional identities of Saudi scholars might be affected by their desires to be in an English-only environment in their own countries. Many studies have pointed out how representation and identity in Asia, including Middle Eastern countries, can be negatively affected by the massive promotion of English in knowledge construction and scholarship building (e.g., Ishikawa 2009; Phan 2013; Wilkins 2010, 2011). Ishikawa (2009) warns that the increasing numbers of publications in English across the world are “smothering the nascent scholarship at local, regional, and national levels, and thus this problem is surely not a matter of language alone, but of representation and identity” (p. 172). The history of English-medium instruction programmes at all Saudi universities, with the exception of KFUP and Royal Commission Colleges Institutes, is relatively new (i.e., it started in 2004–2005), and these programmes are underdeveloped. Such practice may lead to a loss of intellectual engagement and knowledge production in Arabic, which we consider a serious matter that should be taken into consideration. These accounts also mirror what Phan (2013) describes in her analysis of Japanese government projects designed to internationalize the country’s higher education system through the use of English-medium instruction. In this regard, she believes that the internationalization practice

tends to most powerfully (re) produce superficial engagement with scholarship under the banner of internationalization largely driven by commercialization, the overindulgence of English in the government policies as well as the nation building discourse that tends to take a shortcut to English while undermining local languages (pp. 171–172).

Indeed, a lack of understanding of the intersection between the above critical issues in the current English education policy and practices across the KSA will not only militate against successful policy implementation, but may also produce a society which is literate neither in Arabic nor in English.

6 Suggestions and Conclusion

In today’s era of the ‘newness’—‘new economy’, ‘new knowledge’, ‘new vocationalism’ (Dovey 2006), it is important for the Saudi government to have an implementation plan that is based on effective strategies for the acquisition of mass literacy in English (Cooper 1989; Shamim 2008). Through English, as a global language and a language of advancement, international communication, military links, commerce, trade and so forth, countless national borders and boundaries across the

world have also become porous. Additionally, competition for knowledge production becomes extremely fierce, owing to the intense focuses on innovation and capability building among nations (Canagarajah 2005; Crystal, 199; Pennycook 2008). This focus on innovation and capability building, as Dovey (2006) puts it, “has lead to a new focus on knowledge, making it a highly valued form of capital-hence the use of terms such as ‘knowledge workers’, ‘the new knowledge economy’, and ‘the new capitalism’” (p. 390). We are grateful to Gee et al. (1996, p. 5) who articulate that,

Globally competitive businesses don’t any longer really compete on the basis of their products or services per se. They compete, rather, on the basis of how much learning and knowledge they can leverage [i.e. capture and exploit in profitable ways] in order to expeditiously invent, produce, distribute and market their goods and services, as well as to innovatively vary and customize them. (p. 5)

These trends suggest that practices such as mastering pre-existing knowledge of language pedagogies, products and services, and obtaining accreditation from external agencies, training faculty members or students in stable and routinized competencies by the so-called Centre language education experts, adopting Western language learning frameworks at local universities, and inviting external agencies to design and assess EFL programmes, among other things, seem to be promoting the paradigm of ‘knowledge about’ (Mode 1 knowledge) rather than that of ‘knowledge how’ (Mode 2 knowledge) in English education. A detailed definition and description of Mode 1 knowledge and Mode 2 knowledge can be found in the very widely cited work of Gibbons et al. (1994): *The new production of knowledge: The dynamics of science and research in contemporary societies*.

Notably, the practices of English education in the KSA are based mainly on top-down approaches which consist of importing Western ‘products’ and ‘services’, and this in turn continues to shape and reshape policies, research, pedagogies and practices of English instruction across the country. In a constantly changing world of knowledge, importing Western products and services means laboriously acting in a vicious cycle of dependency, self-doubt and tensions with regard to focusing on small problems (e.g., searching for the best methods of EFL teaching and piloting commercial international textbooks, etc.) while the whole house is on fire. Off-the-shelf standardized products of English education with generic contents that are developed in Centre applied linguistic circles are often irrelevant socio-culturally, ideologically, politically and linguistically to the Saudi contexts. Thus, we believe that, in this era of the knowledge-based economy, English education policy and practices in the KSA should be based on the Mode 2 knowledge paradigm: learning *how* to learn (Gee et al. 1996). A “major epistemic/cognitive shift” (Delanty 2001, p. 3) should be taking place in the English education policy guidelines, curricula and strategies of the country. The old term ‘competence’ in the goal and mission statements of the English curricula of the KSA should be replaced by the term ‘capability’. The argument is that “capability is a forward looking notion that focuses on the ability to learn from and adapt to a diverse society”, as Dovey (2006, p. 392) points out. Also, importantly,

both the new capitalism and sociocultural theory alike disown the idea of knowledge and learning as locked into and ‘owned’ by private minds. They both—for different reasons—argue that knowledge and learning are social and distributed across people and technology—beyond individual minds and bodies. (Gee et al. 1996, p. 67)

Informed by Mode 2 knowledge epistemology, actors, authorities, stakeholders, the MoE should work together to map/link the language levels, knowledge, skills and attributes of public education curricula to the higher education curricula through a locally designed language education framework. This locally designed language education framework then should be proactively correlated to other international standards in order to enable Saudi citizens to think locally and act globally. In this way, we are not suggesting isolating the Saudi English language policy from the rest of the world nor advocating blind adoption of international frameworks. Instead, we are calling for development of national policies that put the interest of KSA first and negotiate the link with the international framework second. In this sense, the enactors of English education policy in the KSA would not so easily fall into the trap of knowledge consumers; instead, they would become responsible producers of knowledge in this era of new: new knowledge, new economy and new vocationalism (Dovey 2006). Such an epistemology in English education policy could also liberate language educators “from thinking that effective/efficient methods come from centers of research and expertise in the West” (Canagarajah 2002). It could also help to ease tensions among senior officials, parents and conservative wings to re-imagine the geopolitical reality of the globalization of English, and negotiate the practices of English education in the KSA, and yet together proactively appropriate it in the interests of the country. This in turn would enable Saudi EFL learners to develop meta-knowledge about their own English learning processes (Dovey 2006). Thus, they would be able to pursue successful careers in a constantly evolving job market that sees English as an essential tool for national development, and they would also be able to respond to new and challenging circumstances.

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Education Interrupted: English Education Policy from the Rubble in Syria

Language Education Policy in Syria

Rabia Hos and Halil Ibrahim Cinarbas

Abstract In this chapter, we provide an overview of Syria's overall social, political and ethnic background. Syria, located in a geographically critical location, is home to people different ethnic background such as Arabic, Kurdish, and Turkmen. Having gone through political instability, Syria was under the influences of colonial forces. With the rise of Arab Spring in 2010, civil unrest began in Syria in 2011 and Syria has been in a civil war since then. We, then describe specific approaches to education and policies attached to social and political developments in Syria. Specifically, the chapter first introduces Syria's political history and current situation and its effect on education. Then, it examines English language education policies and its social, economic, and political impact on society. Additionally, English language policy is discussed within the realm of historical, political, and social context.

Keywords Education in Syria • English language policy • Education policy

1 Introduction

This chapter concentrates on a brief background on the Syrian people and its language, then briefly reviews the history of education policy in Syria and then examines language policy in particular and compares it with the neighboring country Turkey.

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2 Syria and Syrian People

Syria (Arabic: سورية Sūriya or Sūryaīc (السورية العربية الجمهورية), is one of the Arab countries which is located in Southwest Asia, bordering Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, Israel to the southwest, Jordan to the south, Iraq to the east, and Turkey to the north. Syria shares borders with countries like Israel and Turkey, which have international, economical and political powers.

According to 2008 population statistics, the population of the Syria is under 20 million (CIA 2013). The population consists of Muslims from various schools and branches and Christian minority. In addition to this, Syria hosted 1,852,300 refugees and asylum seekers for many years (World Refugee Survey n.d.).

Diversity in population shows us that Syria, unsurprisingly, has various ethnicities in the country such as Kurds and Turkmens. However, those ethnic groups are minorities in Syria because “the largest of these groups, the Kurds, constitute about 9 % of the population (1,800,000 people)” (Bacsich n.d.). Most of the Kurd population lives in the northeastern corner of Syria living together, preserving and protecting the ties among them. This allows the Kurds to be able to preserve their language and still speak the Kurdish language.

Syrian Turkmens, the other ethnic group, live in Aleppo, Damascus and Latakia. In addition, in the north and northeast areas (al-Qamishli, al-Hasakah), Assyrian/Syriacs Christians are a significant minority that reside there and their approximate population is around 700,000 in Syria. What is more, it was estimated in 2007 that approximately 1,300,000 Iraqi refugees lived in Syria. Roughly 50 % of these refugees were Sunni Arab Muslims, 24 % Shi’a Arab Muslims, and 20 % Christians. As a result of the long-lasting war in Iraq, Syria opened its doors to the Iraqis and welcomed them.

In addition to the ethnicities and languages in Syria, approximately 88 % of Syria’s population is Muslim and 12 % is Christian, though the percentage of Christians has reached 20 % due to the high stream of refugees from Iraq. “Among Muslims, 70 % are from the Sunni branch and are ethnic Arabs, Turks, Kurds, while the rest are divided among other Muslim sects, mainly Alawis (accounting for 20 % of the total population) and Druze Isma’ili (6 %).” (Bacsich n.d.). According to Article 4 of the 1973 Constitution, Syria’s official language is Arabic. As Quran and other Islamic books are mostly in Arabic, Arabic language has a higher status among other languages spoken in Syria. Being proficient in writing, speaking and understating Arabic language has vital importance in Syria’s education system and society.

3 Political History of Syria

After World War I, France mandated the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. Until Syria gained its independence in 1946, the French administered the area. However, the new country lacked political stability, and a

series of military coups took place during its first decades. Syria united with Egypt in February 1958 in order to form the United Arab Republic. “In September 1961, the two entities separated, and the Syrian Arab Republic was reestablished.”

In November 1970, Hafiz al-Asad, who was a member of the socialist Ba’th Party, seized power in a bloodless coup and brought political stability to the country. “Following the death of President al-ASAD, his son, Bashar al-ASAD, was approved as president by popular referendum in July 2000”. (CIA 2013) In the July-August 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizballah, Syria kept its neutrality, but it placed its military forces on alert.

In May 2007, Bashar al-ASAD was elected as president for the second time by popular referendum. In March 2011 in Dar’a, antigovernment protests broke out with protesters calling for some demands. Those demands were “the repeal of the restrictive Emergency Law allowing arrests without charge, the legalization of political parties, and the removal of corrupt local officials” (CIA 2013). Since then demonstrations and unrest have spread to nearly every city in Syria, and the protests turned out to be a civil war in Syria, but the size and intensity of the protests have fluctuated over time.

Even though the Syrian government tried to meet some of those demands such as approving new laws permitting new political parties and liberalizing local and national elections, the use of military force and on going security operations have caused to extended and intense violent clashes between government forces and rebels.

“International pressure on the ASAD regime has intensified since late 2011, as the Arab League, EU, Turkey, and the United States have expanded economic sanctions against the regime.” (CIA 2013) The attempts to broker a cease-fire between the two sides decreased tension in Syria for a while, but the attempts were not influential enough to resolve the conflict.

In December 2012, more than 130 countries recognized the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Unrest persists in 2013, and the death toll among Syrian Government forces, opposition forces, and civilians has topped 100,000 (Euronews 2013).

4 Current Situation in Syria and Its Impact on Education

As seen above, Syria has been at the center of foreign concerns after its independence and France, United Nations, United States and Iran have been the main countries involved in Syria’s internal and external affairs (Bashshur 1966). Syria’s affairs are both complicated and problematic enough to be comprehended.

We should go back to 2011 to understand current situation of Syria. Syria began to fall apart “when several demonstrators were killed by security forces while protesting against the arrest of some teenagers who had painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall” (Euronews 2013). Escalating protests turned out to be a civil war when the Syrian government used military forces to destroy any opposition.

Although the government tried to crush the opposition, the protests became a nationwide civil war. At first, it was thought that the civil war was Syria's internal affair, yet massive and uncontrolled use of military forces raised worldwide concerns.

At first glance, "the conflict in Syria appears on the surface to be a battle between those loyal to President Bashar Al-Assad and those who oppose him. However, reducing the situation to a fight between the 'good' masses struggling for freedom against an 'evil' government is both simplistic and inaccurate" (Euronews 2013), because of the multidimensional nature of the region, Syria's ethnic structure, and Arab Spring resulted in the intensification of the civil war. In addition, foreign powers, chemical weapons and approximately two million refugees rendered the civil war without resolution.

Unfortunately, neither Assad-forces nor rebels accepted to negotiate and resolve the conflict because both sides cannot guarantee to keep what they promised. Including external pressures upon Syria and rebels, the conflict and civil war do not seem that it will be sorted out anytime soon. Sadly, the whole world is helpless and witnesses a country and its nation diminishing and disappearing.

In such a chaotic environment, nothing can be spoken, except for politics and war because the most important and functional governmental institutions are military and parliament. Other units of government, including ministry of Education, have become dysfunctional. As there is no or very little control over educational units in Syria, the educational institutions that manage to stand are used to convene supporter for either loyals or rebels. According to one of the school administrators we interviewed, many of the schools "have been burned down and people have burned the desks and chairs in the schools to warm up from the cold" (Interview transcript, 23/10/2013).

There have been educational improvements since Syria's independence, which will be explained in following sections, yet current situation in Syria leads a nation to rebuild its education from zero because the mentality and perception of education became manipulative, and there are almost no buildings for people to live in, let alone to turn it into a school. In terms of education, Syria should focus on constructing and rebuilding its education more than ever in its history if the conflict in Syria is resolved soon, which seems unlikely anytime soon.

5 Education Policy in Syria

Syria is located at a critical area to the Middle East and Africa. It is a neighboring country to Turkey, Iraq, and Israel, and Lebanon. Historically, Syria has been under the influence of the Ottoman Empire, then France, then Britain and the United States. After its independence, the Syrian education system was adopted from the French, which made it a highly demanding system. The system required applying French language and its mentality to political and educational issues. For this reason, French language became more powerful than other languages in Syria at that

time. However, due to Syria's political ties with other countries, learning and knowing English played an important role in Syria. So as to teach English effectively, Syria had adopted policies for the teaching of English since English was seen as a more prestigious foreign language in Syria. Syria's educational policies were modified and changed depending upon the external influences. In order to understand the changeable nature of the Syrian educational system, in this section we will first present a historical and current overview of education policies in general and then specific language teaching policies in Syria.

Syrian education history should be examined according to historical highlights so as to be more clear and relevant. The history of Syria can be divided into three main periods: Ottoman times, the French Mandate and Independence (Bashshur 1966).

In Ottoman times, there was neither a direct emphasis upon education nor any demand or policy because "the Turks wanted primarily four things from their subjects: obedience, order, taxes and soldiers for their armies" (Bashshur 1966). It was reported that "not a single bookseller could be found in Damascus or Aleppo" during that time (Bashshur 1966). From this perspective, education was not the main concern of a ruling country because regional institutions, which were very rare, taught principally literature and religion, and those institutions were responsible for the education. Educated people in the area at that time formed a very small minority. Only a few people were able to obtain higher education. However, through the end of the Ottoman time, Syria witnessed "the form of institutionalized authority: that of the landlords, and that of the church and the religious communities" (Bashshur 1966). The demandingness of authority created an act to educate people according to their ideologies. The American University was opened with their teachings in Protestant ethics. In competition, the French University was opened and tried to flourish Catholicism in Syria. In 1912, as a reaction and precaution of what could happen in future, a Turkish law college was also opened in Damascus.

In French Mandate times, "a national system of education was created modeled strictly after the French. French state examinations were introduced and French schools multiplied in number" (Bashshur 1966), which was not very surprising. The government institutions became reserved for the French education system's graduates, so educational policies were forced to be modified accordingly. Most importantly, education became a political tool for foreign countries. Either organizing social life or manipulating politics through universities were primary concerns of education. As Syria neared its independence, the influence of the American and French universities continued and they were the institutions that established the foundation of Syrian Independence act. "The reforms introduced in the country made the people more aware of this simple fact" (Bashshur 1966) and the French university in Syria created an environment, in which a new and strong spirit of resistance to foreign rule was formed and this approach resulted in as Syria's independence. With the independence of Syria, "foreign schools in general and French ones in particular were suppressed" because strengthening the glory of independence required educational reforms so "the education budget was tripled" to accomplish such an objective. Along with this development, the pre-independence Syrian

University increased its impact on education and “in a period of thirteen years after independence the Syrian University graduated three times as many people as it graduated from its foundation up to independence” (Bashshur 1966). However, Syrian education system had a lot to do because “by the early fifties, when the national system of education started to feed the university with its students, the quality of the students received lowered drastically” (Bashshur 1966). This means that the Syrian University met the needs of elites, and secondary schools were still underdeveloped because of the army officers who had taught students. The dilemma in education in that period resulted in a way that “Syria found itself caught between secondary and university students on the one hand, and army officers on the other, all the product of the same educational system” (Bashshur 1966), yet both sides are dissatisfied with the slow pace of national growth and themselves incompetent at taking charge. Unfortunately, the case was an extreme one and two sides started to suspend the development of education in Syria.

Article 37 of the Syrian 1973 Constitution defines objectives of education as “to bring up a national Arab generation, which is socialist and scientific in its manner of thinking, attached to its history and land, proud of its patrimony, and satiates with the struggling spirit”(Syria National Republic Report, 2000). During the 1970s and 1980s there was an increase in the government’s funding for education: from 6.80 % in 1975 to 14.0 % in 1987, but it dropped to 12 % between 1998 and 1999. This drop in the funding reflects both Syria’s economic situation as well as the government’s difficulty in providing basic education for the growing population of school age children in Syria. Various developments in the educational policy was made (1973, 1976–1980), but it was not until the 1981 Law 35 education has become compulsory “for all Syrian children aged between 6–12”. Ten years after this law, in 1990s, the enrollment in primary education was claimed to have been 100 % for boys and 95 % for girls. In 2002, the primary education was restructured to cover ages 6–15 up until the 9th grade. From Syria’s independence on, education in Syria developed consistently and gradually. It is claimed “the government of Syria is among the best in the Arab world providing basic education to its citizens” (Huitfeldth and Kabbani 2005). After the grade nine, students need to take a national written examination in order to attend a general secondary school or vocational education for another 3 years. Then, post-secondary education includes university studies (4–6 years).

In addition to the mismatch between the primary and secondary schooling and the university education, Syrian education system “is also suspected of contributing to the current situation by failing to equip students with the skills demanded in the market” (Huitfeldth and Kabbani 2005). Moreover, there was an effort as Syria’s education policies were revised to deal with gender inequality and market needs. Female members of Syrian society demanded a good quality of education so that they can cope with the market competition. Although, Syrian education system is still struggling to diminish the inequality between genders, each of which has different attendance percentage in Syrian education system; the gap seems to be closing (Huitfeldth and Kabbani 2005). The school attendance rates among boys and girls up to 9th grade is pretty steady, however in rural areas the drop-out rates are high as boys have to work to contribute to the family and girls are married at a young age.

Education in Syria served varying purposes throughout its history. At first, Syrian education was a tool for foreign countries to manipulate internal affairs and education of Syria. It served and created an environment for religious institutions to influence Syrians' faiths. But later, it helped to increase awareness of Syrian people about independence, and it helped democracy to be established nation-wide. Even though it has many challenges, Syrian education system provided many opportunities to its citizens to receive education, which is a right. Sadly, current situation in Syria swept Syrian education system and education in Syria aside.

6 English and Foreign Language Policy

A language policy is defined as “a set of nationally agreed principles, which enables decision makers to make choices about language issues in a rational, comprehensive and balanced way” (Corson 1990, p. 151). Before Syria's independence in 1946, as mentioned in the previous section, the schools were primarily a tool for American and French forces to exert influence over social and religious life. In addition, only American and French schools emphasized the importance of foreign language education, yet it was only accessible for the elite. In this sense, knowing French or English was a way of becoming eminent. Speaking one of those languages helped people to gain prestige.

In 1967 after the Six Day War, many Christian schools and Muslim schools were converted to national schools (CIA 2013). Many of those schools were based on a Western model and provided foreign language education. However, with the nationalization of the schools both the Christian missionaries and the elite started to lose power. Converting private schools into state schools in the 1970s decreased foreign language impact among school children for a while. Although most of the private schools were turned into state schools, some of the upper class elite Christians in large cities still managed to preserve their private institutions and doing so they preserved their language and established an environment in which they can transfer their language to younger generation.

After the 2002 education reform, English language started to be taught from 1st grade. English is taught as a major subject and is provided seven hours a week by non-native language teachers. French on the other hand is taught from 7th grade until 12th grade as a second foreign language. The 2002 education reform indicates that Syria's foreign language education policy is modified to emphasize English language and English language is situated at the center of the language policy. This may be due to English language's status as a lingua franca throughout the world and Syria may be trying to stay within the outer circle countries. Although English is the main language taught at schools in Syria, French is still taught and its influence on Syrian education has not totally faded.

The language education curricula are not flexible to be modified by institutions or individuals because the Ministry of Education designed the language education curricula. The Syrian curriculum is strictly homogeneous and controlled by the gov-

ernment, therefore there is a lot of reliance on the textbooks by the teachers. In Syria, textbooks are considered as primary instruments for carrying out the English lessons (Raddatz and Hasan 2008). The expectations from all parties including students and teachers are for the teacher to be an authoritarian figure in the classroom and for students to be passive listeners. The students take in the information presented by the teacher and they are evaluated based on the information presented by the teacher directly from the textbooks provided by the government.

Recently having looked at an English course book used in Syrian schools titled *English for Starters* for the elementary students, there is a great emphasis on English alphabet and teaching listening and pronunciation to students. This is in part due to the fact that the alphabet systems between English and Arabic is different, therefore there is a need for the students to learn English alphabet to be able to differentiate the letters and comprehend reading. Additionally, the emphasis on listening and pronunciation may be due to part that in Quranic Arabic teaching, pronunciation plays an important role so the focus on teaching of listening and pronunciation in English may have stemmed from the Arabic language teaching traditions. Additionally, as we looked at the English books, the materials that are presented in the textbooks seem to be contextual and provide students with tools to relate to real life situations. There is a listening section provided for the dialogues, which take place between two non-native English speakers from Syria. The names that are used for the dialogues are local names used in Syria. Localizing the language content often leads in better language acquisition (Tomlinson 2003), therefore the use of local names and places contributes to the success of English curricula in Syria. Not only the names in the book, but Syrian cultural elements are also used in presenting traditional family life, homes, and other places in Syria. There is not an emphasis to use English or American names and places until later in the elementary books, where new names and places outside of Syria are starting to be introduced. It is helpful for elementary school students to be introduced to English language first without the imposition of other cultures and then slowly introduce intercultural possibilities.

7 The Balance Between English and Other Languages

English is seen as an essential second language in Syria due to the political and economical power asserted by various Western countries such as France, England and the United States. Proficiency in English promises a better education, career and life. After Syria received its independence, “foreign language (option of English or French) was taught in grades seven through twelve” (Potter 1961). There was no difference between the status of English and the French language. English and French were taught according to individual choice. However, the language education has gone through some changes. English is taught from 1st grade as a second language and French language is taught from 7th grade as a foreign language. The

changes in language education in Syria infer that English language has gained a higher status than French over time. Due to the globalization, technological and economical advancement, English has gained a status as a dominant language in the world (Pennycook 1994).

Additionally, nearly 4000 Syrian students travel abroad to attend higher education institutions in Turkey, United States, and Europe. In our interview with a Syrian student, “American universities are more valued than European universities” (Interview transcript, 22.11.2013), since United States is seen a place of freedom and opportunities, and Syrian students know English, which is the medium of instruction in United States. In addition, consistent with Turkey, American higher education institutions also serve as a tool to gain higher status in society in Syria. Also, despite France’s influence on Syria and its education, English’s dominance overruled and became more influential in Syria. French is losing its power in Syria as it is taught from 7th grade, which is not a very suitable age for third language acquisition.

Contrary to English’s dominance in education and other areas of life in Syria, French is more ascendant and presiding than English because politicians are mostly graduate students of French universities, which means people with French language background governs Syria. In our interview with a Syrian teacher, he stated that “even though French is used at the bureaucratic level, English language is the most prestigious language in Syria” (Interview transcript, 11.20.13).

Moreover, with technological developments and widespread use of social networking sites, English has been widely used by Syrians to stay current with the outside world. In addition to this, because of the current situation in Syria, Syrian people use social networking web sites to inform, acknowledge and announce things taking place there. As a result, English language has become a political tool for those who are trying to propagate their ideologies. Additionally, Western cultural influence is apparent in Syria, specifically American culture. Many of the Syrians have been under the influence of English music, movies and TV series. Neither subtitles nor dubbing is provided for movies and TV series, so Syrian people have to watch such films in their original language, English. As they watch, and listen to movies in English, consciously and subconsciously, Syrian people are exposed to cultural elements of Western culture, which leads them to modify their lives. As a result, Western cultures turn out to be more pivotal in daily life, since no localized elements are included in media imported from the West and this leads to direct exposure with influencing the culture.

To conclude, both English and French are utilized in varying purposes in Syria. While English is more powerful in aspects of education, culture and economics, French is prominent in terms of politics and internal affairs of Syria. However, social networking sites have diminished French language’s importance and impact over Syria and its people. Although the curricula are localized to fit the needs of Syrians, there are many other factors that contribute to the widespread influence of the Western culture in society.

8 The Status of English Language in Syria

The dominance of English in Syria is very clear: English is studied as an obligatory subject starting from 1st grade in Syria. With English becoming the global and dominant language throughout the world, it has gained more importance. Although Syria has not had an official language policy of English language teaching, the strict curricula followed by the Ministry of Education has allowed for consistent teaching of English since the official start of the education system.

With the growing field of academia, English serves as the language of international research and publications. While English is the dominant language of science and technology in today's world, it also has become a dominant language in Syria. In Syria, the academics are required to reach proficiency in English to be proved by the test of IELTS or TOEFL in order to be promoted in their positions.

If we were to look at the sociopolitical context of Syria it is obvious to see the importance of English on the country's foreign language policy. Syria is geographically located in an important part of the world. The learning of English becomes essential in order to be included in the international communication. English in Syria serve both international and intranational functions (Kachru 1995). In Syria from the government's perspective, English mainly has been used to communicate with the global world, but not to become westernized, on the contrary the general public is moving toward Westernization. Syrian government specifically emphasized the importance of becoming part of the Arab culture. The wide use of English in Syria may not be necessarily influenced by external factors, but it may be due to internal needs of its people (Spolsky 2004). On the other hand, at the national level, English is a tool to gain access to better education and a career. Therefore, the desire to learn English serves as an instrument for betterment of the individual in promotion to a higher status, and for the intranational level to achieve competitiveness in the international arena.

Syria, in regard to the use and status of English language, belong to the "expanding circle" countries (Kachru 1992). English is taught as a foreign language in the school curriculum. Although English has not gained an official status as a language, it has an instrumental value in bringing prestige to people (Bamgbose 2003). Mainly the use of English has become critical in Syria due to the impact of globalization. While there has not been strong language policy implementation in Syria, as Tsui and Tollefson (2007) highlight, the adoption of a language as a medium of instruction is the strongest form of language intervention. In Syria the impact of globalization can clearly be seen in the adoption of English as a major subject of study starting in the elementary school. Although there were other languages in the past of the country, English has gained dominance and prevalence over the other foreign languages.

9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have outlined a brief history of Syria, its historical overview of education policies including the language education policy. First we have provided a brief history of Syria as a country and its language and culture. Then, we touched upon the current situation in Syria and discussed its implications for education. Next, we provided an outline of Syria's education policies at large and specifically the language policies. In the last part of the chapter, we compared and contrasted the language education policies between Syria and Turkey, as we believe that both countries are in critical positions.

As we have described in detail, Syria's education and language policies have been mainly effected by political influences before and after its independence. Until Syria gained its independence as a sovereign country, French was first the influential language that was imposed on Syrians; however, only the elite were able to access education then. After American University was opened there were many missionary schools that taught English language. After Syria's independence, there was no education policy until the government stabilized in the 1970's. The first policy for education was written in the 1973 under the government. As the Syrian government became more stable, they increased funding for education in the 1980s and 1990s and made schooling mandatory for ages 6–12. Then the last reform in the education was enacted in 2002 to mandate schooling for pupils ages 6–15 years old. After the latest education policy, English has been taught starting from grade 1. The Syrian Ministry of Education has been in charge of the curricula and textbooks. The textbooks that are used in schools are all standard and as we have described in the chapter, there is an emphasis to teach phonetics, listening and pronunciation. This is partly due to the differences in Arabic and English language.

Education plays the most essential role in the success of a country. Within the general education, language learning is also a critical tool for communication within the global world. Although French has been politically influential in Syria, the importance of the French language has faded and with the increased use of English, the teaching of it has also gained importance in Syria. Given the fact that English has now become significant part of foreign language teaching, the Syrian government has taken some initiatives to create a consistent and standard teaching of the English language.

Language policy of English language has some implications for planning. Although the Syrian Ministry of Education strictly controls the curricula and the textbooks, foreign language teachers have crucial responsibilities to implement the curricula. They should be well-trained and professionally competent in order to match the policy rhetoric into classroom practice. With the support of the policy makers, the teachers should be given opportunities to stay up-to-date with the latest teaching methods. Once Syria as a country starts revitalizing, it is our hope that in planning the new education policies the government will be concerned with putting forth the effort providing ample resources and funding for education. In order for a country to flourish, the government has to be concerned with educating its citizens who will be adopt and learn new language skills at different levels in their educational lives.

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English Education Policy in Turkey

Yasemin Kırkgöz

Abstract The present article, which sets a global perspective, investigates foreign language education policy and planning (LPP) with reference to major education reforms that have taken place in Turkey. Adopting the six-point *language-in-education planning framework* developed by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003), the study focuses on the following issues: the geographical and historical context in which the LPP has developed in the Turkish context; motivation at the national and global levels that have been crucial in driving policy actors to introduce English in the medium of instruction (MOI) policy; roles and influences of the external/international as well as the national/indigenous LPP actors and organizations and their involvement in the LPP; the different goals – both linguistic and non-linguistic – set by relevant actors; implementation processes that are facilitated by the development of English LPP, and finally some insights are given into the educational outcomes of LPP at the micro-level. The article relies on empirical studies, education policies and relevant official documents as sources of data. Çukurova University is taken to illustrate how this institute of higher education has responded to the influences of globalization and internationalization at the micro level.

Keywords Education policy • Foreign language • Globalization • Internationalization • Language-in-education planning framework • Turkey

1 Introduction

It is true to point out that foreign language education-in policy and planning (LPP) and the medium of instruction (MOI) cannot be decontextualized from its social, geographical and historical context. An emphasis on this situatedness gives an opportunity to explore different aspects of policy and policy implementation. In other words, language policy does not exist in a vacuum; rather, it has a socio-historical identity (Hamid et al. 2013b).

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Hence, an overview of the various aspects of LPP and the MOI need to provide adequate descriptions of this context. Similarly, a particular language policy may have a long history and understanding the current state of the policy may require taking a historical perspective (Pennycook 1998). It is within the various layers of the context that the policy dynamics can be fully understood.

This study investigates LPP issues and the MOI, with reference to the major curriculum reforms that have taken place in Turkey in foreign language (English) education utilizing the *six-point language-in-education planning* framework developed by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003). Drawing on their framework, the study focuses on the following issues:

1. The geographical and historical context in which the LPP and MOI has developed in the Turkish context;
2. Motivation, that is forces at the national and global levels that have driven LPP actors to introduce a particular language (English) or MOI policy in the Turkish context. Globalization and the global spread of English are the main reasons for introducing English and English as the medium of instruction (EMI) in Turkish context as in many other many polities;
3. Actors and agency, i.e. this point relates to specifying roles and influences of the external/international as well as the national/indigenous LPP actors and organizations and their involvement in the LPP. An appropriate understanding of MOI policies requires specifying LPP actors involved in the policy and how they exercise their agency (Hamid et al. 2013b). Actors are understood to be political authorities at the macro level represented by various state agencies including the ministry of education, and school teachers and educators who are involved in sense-making and enacting MOI policies, with agency for policy enactment in the micro context;
4. Articulation of differing goals – both educational (linguistic) and non-educational (non-linguistic) – set by relevant actors;
5. Implementation processes that are facilitated by the development of English LPP such as curriculum and materials; and,
6. Finally, insights into the educational outcomes of LPP at micro-level in Turkey.

With a comprehensive focus vis a vis the six criteria, this investigation focuses on the context of education – primary, secondary and higher education – in Turkey, in addition to MOI policies and their implementation.

1.1 Geography and History

According to the first point in Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003)'s framework, LPP and MOI need to be contextualized within its social, geographical and historical context. Accordingly, a brief overview of the geopolitical context of Turkey helps us to situate foreign language-in-education policies and policy dynamics, in addition to appreciating the impact of globalization and the role English plays in Turkey's

foreign LPP. Turkey occupies a very vital strategic geopolitical location in the world; with 97 % of its total land area of 814.578 km² in Asia and 3 % in Europe, Turkey stands as a bridge between the two continents. English is the language most widely used as a *lingua franca* of communication among non-native English speakers (NNES); an essential tool for globalization and internationalization. The English language is increasingly important as a means of communication and interaction among different cultures; for increasing trade relations; for key sectors such as tourism and for individual job prospects. Given Turkey's ambitions to become one of the ten largest economies in the world by 2023, a workforce proficient in English language skills is crucial to enable integration of Turkey with the global economy. It has positive effects on Turkey's long-term economic growth potential through increasing its innovation capacity, the main driver of long-term economic growth (Vale et al. 2013, p. 11).

In Turkey, language policy making has seen tremendous changes in the last century. Unlike such countries as India, Pakistan, and China, which have had long colonial language policy histories, since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey has responded to the global influences of English in its education system through a planned education policy. Education is given a priority as the most important factor in attaining the level of the European countries (Grossman et al. 2007). With the implementation of policy to open to up to the Western world and the drive for modernization and internationalization, there have been several official measures to promote foreign language education, resulting in the spread of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the country. Turkish is the national and official language. In a NNES context, English holds the status of a foreign language (EFL), and is the only compulsory foreign language at all levels of education, as in China, Japan, and the Middle East.

1.2 Motivations, Goals, Actors and Agents

In their framework, Kaplan and Baldauf, draw essential distinctions between the motivations underlying LPP, including the need to reconcile competing goals for LPP, and the actors and agents that ultimately plan, justify, and implement language education policy. As the three factors in this equation are integrally related, they bear examining as a co-relational unit. Globalization as well as an array of local and international forces has played a role in motivating the establishment of MOI programs. In Turkey, the underlying motivations that drove LPP actors to prioritize English as the most prominent foreign language could be seen as bidirectional: linguistic and non-linguistic. Linguistic goals were driven by the benefits that acquiring proficiency in English would yield in developing human capital to communicate at the international level for economic, social, and business relations. At the national level, English has enormous prestige mainly due to its instrumental value – a means of gaining access to better education and a more prestigious job with good benefits and prospects for promotion (Kırkgöz 2005; Staub and Kırkgöz 2014). It could be

argued that the perceived language needs for national development and economic competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world tend to be the most powerful drivers in Turkey, as in many Asian polities (Chua 2010; Coleman 2011; Hamid 2010; Hsieh 2010). The non-linguistic goals relate to the underlying social, political and economic ambitions of Turkey to raise the overall standard of living of its citizens and to participate in a globalized economy through internationalization of education.

The introduction of two major language policy acts in 1983 and 1984 laid the foundations of foreign language planning. The 1983 Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Act laid the foundation for regulations concerning foreign language teaching in schools. The Act states that the language of instruction in Turkish secondary and high schools is Turkish, and all the decisions concerning foreign language teaching at these schools are vested in the Turkish Ministry of National Education [Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı (MEB)], which has the responsibility of centrally administering the English language curriculum and syllabi to be followed at these schools (Kırkgöz 2009).

After the mid-1980s, with the impact of the forces of globalization on education through the English language, highly competitive English-medium private and state secondary schools – Anatolian high schools and so-called Super English Language High Schools – were established to enhance the English-speaking capacities of Turkish youth. Admission to these schools was achieved through a centrally administered qualification exam. Unlike other schools offering 3-year education, the period of education in these schools was 4 years. The first year provided an intensive English language education, and in subsequent years, subjects in the curriculum such as mathematics and science were offered in English.

At the level of higher education, since the approval of The Higher Education Act in 1984, Turkey has maintained the policy of foreign language medium education. The 1984 policy document implicitly stated the instrumental value of English as a medium of teaching and learning. The enactment of this 1984 policy led to the spread of the English language, leading to an expansion in the number of English-medium universities, and a decrease in emphasis on other foreign languages such as German and French. As internationalization and globalization pushed the English as the medium of instruction agenda forward in many institutions of higher education in Turkey, the issue of the MOI – whether to use English or Turkish as the principal medium of instruction – was discussed at the macro policy level. It was in 1996 that the Turkish Higher Education Council [Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu (YOK)] (1996) established an initial list of criteria to be met in order for a university or a department to offer English as its MOI. This encouraged many universities in Turkey to offer EMI programs with the aim of developing national human capital with proficiency in English. This has coincided with the larger national, and global trend of massification through the expansion of private higher education (Mizikaci 2011; Staub 2016), ostensibly generating a significant increase in English language speakers. In the case of universities providing Turkish MOI, English language was incorporated as a compulsory component of the curriculum (Kırkgöz 2009).

In fact, Turkey was not unique in its LPP. Research on LPP and policy shows that the process of globalization has had direct and immediate consequences for language policies in education and that globalization has impacted the spread of EMI to the NNES Asian countries including Korea (Byun et al. 2011), Bangladesh (Hamid et al. 2013a), Taiwan (Hsieh 2010), and China (Hu and Alsagoff 2010).

The previous section focused on the historical development of English and LPP in Turkey, and motivation functioning at the national and global levels to introduce English in the education system, the different goals set by the relevant actors. To respond to global changes and become globally competitive, there emerged a need for education reforms to enable the country to keep pace with worldwide realities. The following section, therefore, discusses macro-level policy responses to the forces of globalization with reference to the major education reforms in the Turkish context with national as well as international actors playing a significant part.

2 Implementation of Language Policy

Three major curriculum reforms have taken place in Turkey in relation to foreign language (English) education: The first curriculum innovation in ELT took place in 1997; the second curriculum innovation in the year 2005 when further changes were introduced in the ELT curriculum as part of the government policy to harmonize education with that of the European Union (EU) norms (Kırkgöz 2007b), and the latest curriculum innovation was initiated in 2012 to be implemented in the 2013–2014 academic year.

2.1 The 1997 Curriculum Innovation

The different linguistic and non-linguistic goals set by relevant actors played an important role in initiating the 1997 curriculum innovation. In fact, the initiatives for the 1997 curriculum innovation was supported by the external funding from the World Bank, which also funded similar reforms in nearby countries, including Hungary and Romania (World Bank 1999). Between 1994 and 1997, YOK, in cooperation with the MEB, took on improvement programs in teacher education (Grossman et al. 2007) through the establishment of a 4-year – National Education Development Project – a major curriculum innovation project which aimed at improvement of Faculties of Education in Turkey to enhance the quality of teacher education. As a result of this project, in 1997, the curricula of teacher education programs were restructured (Kırkgöz 2007a, b).

The 1997 curriculum innovation holds significance in Turkish education history because it resulted in a number of changes. The pre-service teacher education component of the National Education Development Project, implemented by YOK, had several dimensions. The most important was the development of newly designed

teacher education curricula in 13 subject areas, of which English language was one. Towards the end of the project, new programs and courses were instituted, leading to a change in the composition of departments of the faculties of education, and revision of the course contents (YOK 1998; Grossman et al. 2007). In addition, the number of methodology courses and the teaching practice time in primary and secondary schools were increased to provide teacher candidates with hands-on experience in schools (Kırkgöz 2006).

2.1.1 Curriculum Innovation in Primary and Secondary Education

Parallel to The National Education Development Project, within pre-service teacher education, were a number of changes enacted by the MEB in primary and secondary education. Until 1997, the education system in Turkey consisted of a 5-year primary, 3-year secondary, and a 3-year high school education. Güven (2008) notes that following the worldwide commitment to basic education, in 1997 Turkey, pushed by international bodies, adopted 8-years of schooling to prepare an agenda for improving the quality of education and delivering mass compulsory education. At the level of primary education, one major impact of the 1997 curriculum innovation was to integrate primary and secondary education into a single stream, extending the duration of compulsory primary education from 5 to 8 years (Kırkgöz 2006, 2008a, b).

Turkey was faced with the same set of complex contemporary demands characteristic of societies responding to changing social, economic and political circumstances (OECD 2005). The governments of many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, such as China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan were also involved in curriculum innovation by introducing English as a compulsory subject at younger ages, as part of their national policy of globalization and internationalization of the education system (Nunan 2003). A similar change took place in Turkish primary education as Turkey sought to improve its schools to better respond to higher social and economic expectations. Thus, a further consequence of the 1997 reform was the introduction of English to young learners in grades 4 and 5, thus shifting the introduction of English from secondary to primary schools in order to provide a longer exposure to foreign language (MEB 1997). The policy received support throughout the country from primary schools and parents.

The major motivating forces underlying this decision were officially stated by the MEB in its policy document as follows:

Turkey's political and economic ambitions and the nation's desire to keep up its relations with foreign countries using English, particularly with countries of the European Union (MEB 1997, p. 606 author translated).

The 1997 curriculum innovation, at the primary level education, brought about innovative practices. First, the new policy initiative introduced communicative language teaching (CLT), borrowed from 'Western' approaches to ELT, into the education system (Kırkgöz 2006, 2008a, b). The objectives for learning English in primary

education were stated by the MEB as the development of learners' communicative capacity to prepare them to use the target language for communication through various classroom activities. Another effect of the curriculum was a change in teaching practice. Introduction of the CLT led to a shift in pedagogy from the traditional teacher-centered transmission oriented paradigm to student-centered teaching with a view to promote communicative language proficiency of the learners (Kırkgöz 2007a). Along with this, the role of the teacher was seen as a guide and a facilitator of the learning process, addressing students' different learning styles, and helping the development of their communicative performance in English (Kocaoluk and Kocaoluk 2001).

At the management level of the curriculum innovation were a number of national actors, working in close cooperation with the non-state international actors (Giddens 2001), to facilitate the implementation of change in teacher education curriculum. The involvement of national and international actors in the education reform complemented various change efforts initiated by the MEB and YOK, the two major intra-national governmental organizations that collaborated closely to facilitate innovation. YOK, an autonomous body, had the responsibility to administer the planning, co-ordination and supervision of higher education within the provisions set forth in Higher Education Law, and MEB had a similar responsibility to carry it out at the primary and secondary levels of education.

The cooperation of international actors involving experienced teacher educators was critical in supporting the new teacher education policy in Turkey. The curriculum developmental work involved 15 experienced teacher educators from different faculties of education in Turkey, working with 17 counterpart teacher educators from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. The team of consultants worked on needs analysis leading to the definition of objectives and content of the curriculum. Next, was the production of curriculum materials, the need to review and comment on the writing as it progressed, as well as the need to plan and teach training courses, and conduct trials of the materials. The team cooperated with the Project Co-ordination Unit appointed by the Turkish government to lead and oversee the development of the project. The curriculum reform involved 34 faculties of education in Turkey at the start of the project in 1995, rising to 42 by its end, including all faculties in the project's developmental work. In order to achieve nationwide implementation of the curriculum, the ideas generated by the project were disseminated throughout Turkey, first via curriculum books and workshops, later through other project vehicles (Grossman et al. 2007).

2.1.2 Innovation in Teacher Education Curriculum

While the directions of the education reforms vary from the widespread development of curriculum standards to implementation practices, one common feature of reform movements is that they are generally initiated on the claim that something is wrong with the current state of affairs, and that the existing system is deficient in its goals, accomplishments and responsiveness to global changes. Another frequent

assumption of educational reformers, conceived as a “problem” in need of revision, is that practicing teachers have not received sufficient – or the right kind of pre-service or in-service teacher professional development. As a result, government officials often call for reforms in teacher education (Güven 2008).

As noted by Dang et al. (2013) in relation to Vietnam’s policy of teacher education, reforms in teacher education are needed, if the education system is to respond to the call for the development of qualified teachers who can act as active agents in implementing the national language education plan. Similarly, in the Turkish context, policies enacted in 1997 called for continual adjustments on Turkish foreign language education policy, leading to a number of further changes, beginning in 2005 and continuing until the recent education reform. The following section discusses teacher education policy initiatives undertaken in 2005.

In the Turkish context, YOK specifies in its policy document the underlying reasons for the renewal of the 1997 curriculum as follows:

During the last eight years after the implementation of the 1997 curriculum, various conferences, workshops and symposiums held by the MEB and universities have indicated that the 1997 teacher education curriculum remained quite inadequate in preparing teacher candidate for the contemporary teaching profession (YOK 2014, p. 4; author translated)

The need to enhance the quality of qualified English language teachers has been expressed in a succession of language policy and planning developments. The political rhetoric has been that teacher candidates have not acquired sufficient competencies; i.e., the knowledge and skills needed for the teaching profession important for an expanding, competitive worldwide economy. For this reason, it was considered that the teacher education curriculum be renewed and restructured in order to raise the teacher standards as well as student performance in primary and secondary schools. In fact, this claim was confirmed by research findings indicating a gap between 1997 curriculum rhetoric and classroom implementation. At the primary level, Kırkgöz (see 2006, 2007a, b, 2008a, b), through a range of studies, investigated the impact of the 1997 curriculum initiative on Turkish state primary schools in terms of how well curriculum objectives put forward for the teaching of English at the macrolevel are projected into micro teaching level, and the teachers’ use of methodology in facilitating young learners’ acquisition of English. Teachers as implementers of the policy at the micro-level, remained unable to create the proposed communicative learning environment, as suggested by the policy documents. Thus, the translation of the policy from the macro level into the micro level was not in conformity with policy expectations.

Akar (2010) found that prospective Turkish university teachers felt themselves well equipped to cope with rapidly changing knowledge and were able to develop innovative curricula in their subject areas but were still concerned about how to teach in line with student-centered active-learning approaches. Issues of policy translation also emerged from the Indonesian study by Zacharias (2013) who showed that teachers felt constrained in their implementation of MOI policy in the school context.

2.2 *The 2005 Curriculum Innovation*

2.2.1 **Revision of the Primary ELT Curriculum**

In 2005, the primary ELT curriculum was revised by a Turkish team of curriculum specialists (MEB 2006). In addition to strengthening the communicative dimension of language teaching, the curriculum incorporated global trends by introducing other Western-derived educational approaches, thereby making a significant pedagogical change in classrooms. The 2005 curriculum accommodates a ‘constructivist approach’ to teaching and learning, ‘active learning’, ‘use of tasks’, ‘multiple intelligences theory’ and ‘content and language integrated learning’ to enable certain non-language cross-curricular subjects such as geography, music, and sports to be learned through English. In addition, performance-based assessment was introduced to offer an update for the assessment system proposed by the EU (see Kirkgöz 2007a, 2012 for details). In short, the 2005 English language and curriculum reform programs were motivated by the desire to align education programs with those of the EU.

As seen by Garcia and Menken (2010), school teachers and educators are actors with crucial agency for policy enactment in a micro context. At the micro level, in order to elicit teachers’ perceptions of the revised curriculum and to develop a picture of teachers’ classroom implementation, Kirkgöz (2012) conducted a multiple case study research. Participating in the study were 60 primary school teachers of English in primary grades 4 and 5, in 50 different state primary schools in one province in Turkey. The results of the study revealed that, overall, teachers had a positive perception of the revised curriculum. The findings with regard to how well the principles underlying the 2005 curriculum manifested in teachers’ classroom instruction indicated that 20 of the 60 participant teachers were transmission-oriented, 11 were interpretation-oriented, and 29 eclectic. This finding indicates that a changing trend from the transmission-oriented towards eclectic-oriented teaching seems to be taking place in Turkish foreign language classrooms, with many teachers trying to adapt the new teaching methods to their specific classroom contexts.

Following each education reform, English textbooks are updated. A textbook writing team, consisting of experienced ELT experts, assumes the responsibility of writing textbooks, under the leadership of the MEB, the responsible body for coordinating the production of textbooks in primary schools. Several textbooks with MEB approval were introduced in grade 4 state primary schools in 2005 and a single-textbook *Time for English* for Grade 5. The MEB also started to finance the books for all recipients of compulsory education. Textbooks play a crucial role in language education, functioning as agents of change. As argued by Hutchinson and Torres “the importance of the textbook becomes even greater in periods of change” (1994, p. 315).

Hence, an investigation into the responses of the students and teachers into the textbook-in-use provides insights into the extent to which curriculum objectives are implemented at the teaching level through the agency of textbooks. In another study,

Kırkgöz (2011) evaluated four English textbooks which were approved for use in grades 4 and 5 by the MEB in state primary schools after the 2005 curriculum renewal process. Perception data was gathered from 617 grade 4 and 5 students, and 124 teachers, from 54 primary schools in one province in Turkey. It was found that the grade 4 textbooks, *Trip1* was the most appropriate one followed by *Texture* and *Time for English*. While several favorable aspects were identified of the grade 5 textbook, *Time for English*, two shortcomings emerged: complexity and learnability of the language items. Overall findings indicated that the four English textbooks were well-designed to serve as potential agents for curriculum change.

2.2.2 Innovation of the Secondary Education Curriculum

At the level of secondary education, a number of changes in ELT policy took place. The decision was taken by the MEB to abolish the 1-year English language preparation program (ELPP) offered in Anatolian, Super English Language High Schools and most private schools offering intensive English language programs. In addition, the duration of education in all secondary schools was increased from 3 to 4 years, and English language was spread across the 4-year secondary education curriculum in order to achieve standardization in ELT in all types of schools (Kırkgöz 2007b). The removal of the English language preparation class received nation-wide criticism.

To assess the impact of this curriculum reform, an exploratory study was conducted to elicit perceptions of teachers ($n = 170$) who had already worked in one of the aforementioned secondary schools, and students ($n = 851$) who had received a 1-year intensive ELPP during their secondary education; at the time of the survey all participating students were receiving university education (Kırkgöz 2010). The survey findings revealed that while ELPP offered students several advantages as “constituting a foundation of English” and “contributing to students’ current university education”, the students in the open-ended section of the survey reported several disadvantages. Many students reported that receiving a 1-year ELPP had been a waste of time...an intervention in their education continuum; after receiving ELPP they experienced difficulties in adapting to non-English content classes. Students also complained that they had mainly received a grammar focused English language education. The majority of the students and over half the teachers expressed their support for abolishing ELPP owing to several unfavorable effects resulting from the program. Regarding the new ELT curriculum, spreading English across the 4-year secondary education was considered to be necessary in providing a better quality ELT. Both teachers and students agreed that the implementation of the 1997 ELT curriculum in which English language teaching starts at an early age at the primary school, would, in the long-run, be highly beneficial to Turkish learners of English.

2.2.3 Renewal of the Teacher Education Curriculum

The need for reform in English language teaching in Turkish schools foregrounds the role of pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education. According to YOK policy, as a result of the aforementioned reasons, curricular changes at the primary level to be implemented from the 2003–2004 teaching year were to be supported by a corresponding teacher education program. As a consequence, there was a need to improve the quality and content of the English language teacher education programs.

Unlike the 1997 teacher education curriculum, which was developed by a Turkish team of experts in consultation with international teacher educators, the 2005 teacher education curriculum was mainly developed by the involvement of the national actors under the supervision of YOK. In consultation with the administrators of the faculties of education and the faculty staff, a study was undertaken by YOK to deal with the shortcomings of the teacher education program that had been in effect for the previous 8 years.

A working team of 25 academics was involved in the curriculum renewal process. These national actors, in consultation with the faculty deans, worked on identifying objectives of the new curriculum and renewing the content of the core courses, prepared a draft new-teacher-education curriculum during a 7-day workshop, “Curriculum Development in the Faculties of Education” (March 5–11, 2006). As the aim was to involve and consult the opinion of as many stakeholders as possible, also participating in the workshop were educators from the MEB to offer suggestions for the content of the curriculum. The draft curriculum document finally received approval by YOK on July 21, 2006, and was to be implemented from the 2006–2007 teaching year. Rather than changing all teacher education courses, the decision was taken to simply update some courses (YOK 2014).

A list of courses, descriptions of course contents, and course credits was determined. A flexible arrangement was made in the composition of education programs; 50 % of the courses were allocated to education (subject-matter knowledge), 30 % to professional education (pedagogical knowledge), and 20 % to general culture. In the revised teacher education curriculum, emphasis was put on teaching communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, interpersonal and lifelong-learning skills. The revised teacher education curriculum was built on the conviction that language teacher education is a life-long process. What is needed, according to this argumentation, is to educate prospective teachers who are themselves capable of solving problems so that they can help students to solve problems. It is also stressed in the curriculum document that teacher education subjects be related to those corresponding programs prepared by the MEB, and enriched with real life examples.

There were also ideological and political reasons underlying this curriculum reform. The priority which was given to education accelerated in the context of Turkey’s EU candidacy resulting in a new period of change and innovation in teacher education curriculum (Grossman et al. 2007). To meet the challenges of globalization and European integration, there was a need to harmonize teacher education programs to EU standards. In particular, the EU teacher education program

had a great impact on the new curriculum, as stated by YOK, “Another important feature of the new curriculum is that it corresponds, in many aspects, with teacher education programs in EU countries” (2014, p. 4). The revised English teacher education program was implemented during the 2006–2007 academic year.

A number of studies have been carried out to evaluate the new pre-service English teacher education programs in different universities in Turkey. Coşkun and Daloğlu (2010) evaluated the pre-service English teacher education program in a recently-established university from the perspective of 55 final-year student teachers and three university instructors. The data collected through questionnaires and interviews revealed that although participating instructors and student teachers shared common views about some components of the program, their opinions differed concerning the balance among linguistic and pedagogic competencies. The instructors shared the common thought that the new program puts greater emphasis on student teachers’ pedagogic competence, but is insufficient to improve their linguistic competence. Student teachers stated that the pedagogic side of the program needs to be improved, highlighting the importance of increasing the effectiveness of the School Experience course offered during the final year to promote experiential learning. While accepting that this evaluation study was based on participants’ subjective judgments about the current English teacher education program, the researchers called for further research in order to gain broader insights into the effects of the new teacher education program.

Taking only one component of the teacher education program into consideration, Kızıltan (2011) investigated prospective EFL teachers’ perceptions of only the ‘Language Acquisition’ course. The results indicated that the participants held positive views about the importance of this course for their teaching careers. However, they stated that they needed some preliminary courses on linguistics prior to taking this course. In a similar study, Hismanoğlu (2012) surveyed 72 student teachers regarding their teacher education program. The study revealed that the program met the needs and expectations of the student teachers to a large extent, yet failed to develop their higher level thinking skills such as problem solving, creative thinking, and critical thinking.

In a recent study, Yavuz and Topkaya (2013) sought to understand 18 ELT teacher educators’ evaluations of the changes in the teacher education program. The teacher educators participating in the study were from five different state universities. They considered certain changes in the program as positive, such as the extension of the course ‘Approaches and Methods in ELT’, which was previously offered as a single course but is currently offered as consecutive courses during the two academic semesters. Positive reactions were given to the introduction of new courses such as ‘Public Speaking and Presentation’ and ‘Drama’, as well as the convergence of ‘Course Book Analysis and Material Evaluation’. However, teacher educators were surveyed expressed their concerns regarding the sequence of certain courses in the whole teacher education program. To illustrate, they stated that ‘Research Skills’ course, currently offered during the spring semester of the second year, should be allocated in the subsequent years since students are not cognitively ready

to cope with this course in the early stages of their teacher education program and this course requires practical experiences to prepare small-scale research designs.

2.3 The 2013 Education Reform

In 2012, a transition from the former model of 8 years of primary education followed by 4 years of secondary education was replaced with the new educational model called “4 + 4 + 4”, in which each 4-year-education corresponds to primary, elementary and secondary education. Such a structural change has led to the need for redesigning educational programs. With respect to English language education, this language planning goal resulted in lowering the starting age at which English is to be taught from grade 4 (age 9) to the current grade 2 (6–6.5 years of age). The teaching time devoted to English was increased, and textbooks were updated.

The need to enhance English language proficiency of Turkish school leavers has been one of the major concerns of actors involved in language policy and planning developments. The MEB, in cooperation with The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey [Türkiye Bilimsel ve Teknolojik Araştırma Kurumu (TUBITAK)] prepared an action plan to revitalize the primary ELT curriculum, which emphasized English language proficiency of the young Turkish adults as one of the key factors in national development. The revised curriculum, prepared by a Turkish team of specialists highlights the need for developing communicative competence in English as in the following statements:

There is no question that the key to economic, political and social progress in contemporary Turkish society depends on the ability of Turkish citizens to communicate effectively on an international level, and competence in English is a key factor in this ability. Yet, despite continual efforts at improving the effectiveness of language education in Turkey, a significant percentage of students leave school without the ability to interact successfully in an English-language medium. While it is understood that there are many variables at work in this ongoing problem, it is believed that one of the main reasons for the failure of such a large number of Turkey’s students to master competence in English lies in the fact that the language is presented to them as a subject to be learned in school – an academic requirement to be met – rather than as a means for communication (MEB 2013, p. ii).

In order to enhance communicative competence of Turkish young learners of English, the new curriculum adopts a new model, as stated by the same curriculum document:

In designing the new ELT curriculum, the principles and descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, Teaching, Assessment were closely followed (CoE 2001). Accordingly, the new curricular model emphasizes language use in an authentic communicative environment, drawing on an action-oriented approach in order to allow learners to experience English as a means of communication as learners work toward achieving communicative competence. At the second and third grade levels, speaking and listening are emphasized; while reading and writing are incorporated in higher grades as students become more advanced. Throughout each stage, developmentally appropriate learning tasks provide a continued focus on building the learner autonomy and problem-solving skills that are the basis for communicative competence (MEB 2013, p. ii).

This curriculum is intended to integrate the most recent methodological and technological developments and current, research-based practices related to the teaching of English to young learners (Kırkgöz et al. 2016). In addition, the English curricular model takes into account -learner autonomy, self-assessment, and appreciation for cultural diversity- as the three descriptors of the CEFR. In doing so, it was expected that learners will become confident and proficient users of English, develop an appreciation for their own culture and value a broad spectrum of international languages and cultures. The new ELT primary curriculum was put into practice during the 2013–2014 teaching year for grades 2 and 5, and in subsequent years for grades 3 and 6, and then grade 4 and 7.

As stated in an earlier section, a workforce proficient in its English speaking ability enhances a country's connectivity to the rest of the world, resulting in a higher innovation capacity, greater and more sustainable regional integration and more revenues from various sectors including education, tourism and textile. The early introduction of foreign language instruction from Grade 2 should in time demonstrate a powerful multiplier effect which will impact positively on all subsequent learning right up to and including tertiary level study (Vale et al. 2013).

The six criteria in the Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003) framework relates to the educational outcomes, that is, insights into the implementation of policies in practice. Kırkgöz and Yaşar (2014) investigated teachers' perceptions of the early foreign language learning curriculum in Turkish state primary education, challenges teachers encounter in teaching younger age and their preparedness to teach it. Teachers included in the study were all those primary teachers of English teaching grade 2 classes in state schools in one province in Turkey. While the findings revealed a high level of teacher acceptance of the new grade 2 primary ELT curriculum, research findings also pointed to gaps in teachers' perceptions of readiness to teach younger learners.

Discussions on how to improve the teaching and learning of English has been an ongoing issue from the primary to tertiary level in Turkey. In partnership with the MEB and the Economic Policy Research Foundation (TEPAV), the British Council carried out a large-scale research, *The Turkey National Needs Assessment (TNNA)*, into the teaching of English in state schools covering Primary, Middle, High and Vocational English language teaching in Turkey between February- July 2013 (Vale et al. 2013). The report concluded that Turkey is underperforming in the area of ELT and that this 'deficit' results from inadequate teaching in primary and secondary schools. Despite efforts to address gaps in education provision through the introduction of the 4 + 4 + 4 system, the reality is that very few students are able to achieve even basic communicative competency in state schools.

Furthermore, the report states that this English deficiency could threaten Turkey's economic development as in the following quote:

Turkey is yet to catch up with competitor economies in its level of English language proficiency. Turkey consistently ranks very low on various measures of English language speaking. For example, the 2013 English Proficiency Index (EPI) developed by English First puts Turkey 41st out of 60 countries. In 2012, the average total Test of English as a

Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of both native Turkish speakers and residents of Turkey was 75 over 120, similar to countries which do not have a Latin alphabet, such as Sudan and Ethiopia (Vale et al. 2013, p. 15).

The report identifies two main reasons underlying the relatively low level of success in English language teaching and learning in the state primary and secondary levels of educational system:

The first relates to the teachers. It was observed that most (80 + %) English teachers have the professional competence and language skills to deliver effective language lessons. However, teachers observed were teaching English as a ‘subject lesson’, and not, as a language of communication. As a result, students fail to learn how to communicate and function independently in English.

Another reason is the students. Despite the potential of the teachers and a positive classroom environment, the competence level in English of most (90 + %) students across Turkey was found to be rudimentary – even after 1000+ hours (estimated at the end of Grade 12) of English classes. Whereas the expected level of the student graduate from High School in Grade 12 was at least B2 level in English.

Although the MEB policy aimed for human capital development through English, achieving this goal was found to be seriously hindered by the inadequate English proficiency base of students graduating from the Turkish state schools. Based on the findings of the needs assessment across Turkish state schools, the main recommendation offered by the report to address the problems is to develop a comprehensive and sustainable system of in-service teacher training for English teachers to raise teachers’ competences regarding contemporary ELT methodologies and outcomes. It is expected that this pool of permanent teachers, when motivated and further trained, will take forward positive transformational change in schools from teaching grammar’, as is currently employed by the English teachers to teaching English as a tool of communication.

The quality and effectiveness of EMI versus native language instruction in higher education worldwide has been an issue of concern for LPP scholars. Kırkgöz (2014) investigated the perceptions of two comparable groups of final-year engineering students at a Turkish institution of higher education: one has received Turkish medium of instruction (TMI), and the other English medium of instruction (EMI). The positive-oriented perceptions of EMI students included *enhancing English language skills, gaining access to primary sources in English and keeping up with global developments in their disciplines*. Students anticipated instrumental benefits EMI would offer upon graduation i.e., getting higher-paid jobs. On the other hand, TMI students reported comprehending disciplinary knowledge more easily, learning in detail, and achieving long-lasting retention. TMI students, while not experiencing any specific problems in the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge, expressed concerns that might arise from TMI. For those whose English proficiency was limited, studying from English sources posed difficulties. Additionally, students expressed concerns over the prospects of getting jobs requiring high level English proficiency.

Similar to the study conducted at the primary to high school levels, another study was undertaken by The British Council in partnership with TEPAV, into English language provision in ELT in the higher education level in Turkey in 2015. About 38 universities in 15 cities across Turkey were visited and leadership teams and academic staff were surveyed, supported by class observations. While the study identifies numerous good initiatives in Turkish universities, it also reveals the challenges faced by teachers and learners of English at tertiary level.

Related to the MOI, findings revealed that while EMI universities have traditionally been more favored in comparison to universities without EMI, as the current English proficiency levels of both academic staff and students restrict effective learning, there are strong arguments for strengthening the quantity and quality of Turkish medium of instruction programs.

It was found that the English proficiency levels of EMI academics generally meet international standards, but problems exist in some universities in finding enough academics with adequate levels of English to meet current requirements or expand EMI programs. The main point focused in the research was the question of how English language teaching in Turkey may be improved in order to produce students with the foreign language skills necessary to contribute meaningfully to the ambition to position Turkey as one of the top ten global economies by 2023. The recommendation given was to provide improved EMI teaching training for EMI lecturers to enable them to take responsibility for their students' learning by adopting a range of language and technological strategies.

3 Turkey's Internationalization Dimension

In addition to Turkey's efforts to respond to globalization by EMI and by including English as a compulsory subject in school curricula, globalization is also manifested by internationalization, "a subtle response that not only affects academic programs, faculty, and students, but also creates new administrative structures and privileges" (Stromquist 2007, p. 81). An articulated goal for higher education in Turkey is the internationalization of education, which is associated with international standards systems, and covers a wide range of services, from study abroad and recruitment of international students, to combinations of partnerships abroad, internationalized curriculum, and research and scholarly collaboration.

A historical overview of Turkey's internationalization efforts shows that since 1999, Turkey has taken important steps to respond to the demands of the European Union's Copenhagen Criteria (Sozen and Shaw 2003). In 1999, the European ministers of education held a conference in Bologna, Italy to unify the European university degrees to ensure readability, transparency of degrees, and credit systems in order to gain international standards. With the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 2001, Turkey has undertaken to enact reforms in the framework of this integration process. Thus, 'Bologna' serves as a standard-setting instrument in Turkey, as in other countries.

The Report published by YOK (2007), *Towards the European Higher Education Area: The Bologna Process* discusses attempts to adjust Turkish higher education to international standards, covering the following main points: (1) The European Higher Education Area (EHEA), (2) Approval of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), (3) Students and academic exchange and mobility, and (4) Establishing an accreditation and quality assurance system in teacher education.

Student and academic exchange and mobility are an important component of the internationalization process. Within the process of the Bologna Declaration, several measures were taken to improve mobility of students and academic staff. Turkey participated in the mobility programs in accordance with the conditions laid out in the Framework Agreement of 26 February 2002 between the European Community and the Republic of Turkey under the terms and conditions set out in the Memorandum of Understanding. The Memorandum took effect in April, 2004. Turkey established the appropriate structures for the coordinated management of the implementation of the mobility program actions, including the Leonardo da Vinci II, Socrates II and Youth programs, to facilitate the free movement of students, teachers, trainees, trainers, university administrators, and other eligible persons between Turkey and the Member States of the Community.

In 2002, a National Office under the State Planning Organization was opened, acting as a national agency for the administration, promotion, supervision, and evaluation of European education programs. Upon signing the work plan with the European Commission, full Turkish participation and integration in EU programs was achieved from the end of 2005. Since then, the Socrates, Leonardo and the Erasmus mobility programs have been operating in Turkish universities, and international offices have been established in universities to deal specifically with such programs.

In line with the Bologna Declaration agreement, another change introduced in higher education is related to the national quality assurance system, lack of which causes quality-quantity discrepancies among the institutes of higher education at the national level, and diminishes the overall competitive effectiveness of Turkish institutions at the international level. The establishment of ‘The Turkish National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education’ was initiated in 2005 by YOK with the goal of ‘harmonization’ of institutes of higher education in Turkey to the EU, making it compatible with the framework of qualifications of the European Higher Education Area. The commission of National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education was established consisting of ten members – seven from YOK and three professors from different universities – to collaborate with a “working group”, which consisted of 13 Turkish actors to develop the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR) between 2006 and 2008. The framework was developed in terms of “knowledge and understanding”, “applied knowledge”, “competencies”, and “learning outcomes” to be acquired by an undergraduate as well as a postgraduate student. The effort to improve and coordinate the sharing of experience in the development of national qualifications frameworks was chaired by YOK (2009).

YOK disseminated NQF-HETR via its website (<http://tyyc.yok.gov.tr>). The institutions were required to design programs locally in conformity with this new framework. To illustrate, taking the Turkish National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education as a frame of reference, institutes of teacher education in Turkey designed the content of each course to equip prospective teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and other competencies; as a result, this led to greater transparency and portability of qualifications.

Another change taking place in higher education includes approval of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and Diploma Supplement, which were developed to increase the international competitiveness of the institutes of higher education, to make student exchange easier, study programs comparable and to lead to standardization in degrees, as stipulated by the Bologna process. Turkish universities responded favorably to such instruments to improve the compatibility of the Turkish degree system with the Bologna Process and to enable institutions to recognize each other's qualifications. Currently, the ECTS credit system is being applied in universities under the supervision of YOK.

An investigation into the web pages of the majority of Turkish universities clearly indicates that universities in Turkey mention internationalization in their current mission statements, and include it in their strategic plans. In the following section, I will illustrate Turkey's efforts to internationalize its higher education with reference to Çukurova University.

4 The Case of Çukurova University

The Turkish government's globalization and internationalization orientations directly affected Çukurova University (CU), as it did all other institutions of higher education in Turkey. Established in 1973 as a state university, CU is ranked among the top 500 in the World Universities and the top 5 in the country. A total of 1900 academic staff is employed to train a total of 44,000 students (www.cu.edu.tr).

The university's response to globalization manifested itself in the establishment of EMI programs. The decision to offer EMI in at least 40 % of the courses in the Department of Economics and the Department of Business Administration was taken by the university senate in 1983. This was followed with two more faculties. In the engineering faculty, The Department of Electrical and Electronics and Mechanical Engineering embarked upon offering all their subject courses in EMI starting from the 1990–1991 Academic year (Kırkgöz 1999).

Internationalization is an articulated goal for CU, as evidenced from the following statement:

Çukurova University values the importance of internationalization and aims to enhance its international profile to include European and non-EU countries. To reach this target, our Erasmus and International Student Office put great efforts on choosing potential partner universities that have a common vision and mission in line with our internationalization strategy (<http://international.cu.edu.tr/en/policy.asp>).

To pursue these objectives, the Internationalization Division of the International Office was established to foster international cooperation and exchanges. The office serves to facilitate internationalization at the University by establishing partnerships with various institutions, arranging study abroad periods for the students, receiving international exchange students and organizing the mobility of university staff. The exchange programs offered by the university include the Erasmus Exchange program, and the two recently introduced Farabi and Mevlana Exchange programs. The Farabi Exchange program aims at the exchange of students and academic staff in Turkey to continue their education at an institute of higher education other than their own for a period of one or two semesters. The Mevlana Exchange program aims at making provision for the exchange of students, at undergraduate and graduate levels, between a Turkish institute of higher education and a higher education institution in any country outside of the EU.

The university gives high priority to internationalization and sees itself as uniquely positioned to develop ties with other nations in scholarly cooperation. CU has already achieved numerous landmarks in internationalization: it has 351 partnership agreements with institutions in 23 European countries, mainly in Germany, Poland and Italy. In addition, The University is involved in partnerships with universities of non-European countries including Africa, Far East and America in order to increase its rank amongst the world universities and attract more students, in alignment with the university vision towards internationalization.

The university has been awarded with a diploma supplement by the European commission, which is crucial for the visibility of certificates of CU graduates. It is expected that this diploma supplement will be recognized by EU countries and attract more incoming students. In addition, as part of its efforts to accelerate the process of internationalization, CU is engaged in increasing its networks/partnerships with approximately 50 neighboring countries involved in the Bologna process.

5 Concluding Remarks

Basing an investigation on Turkey as a single country case study, this chapter investigated LPP and the practice of MOI in the context of major education reforms in primary, secondary and higher education in Turkey. In investigating the LPP issues and the MOI put forward in this article, the *six-point language-in-education planning framework* developed by Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, 2003) was used as a framework.

It can be concluded that the pressures to conform to a wider international education agenda have necessitated adjustments in Turkish foreign language education. Through a planned LPP and MOI, Turkey has striven to respond systemically to the challenges brought about by globalization and internationalization through the kind of reform initiatives implemented at macro and micro policy levels. Although education reforms are embedded in Turkish national, political and economical

dynamics, the extent and direction of these reforms informed education policies, shaping to fit the unique Turkish context into which they are introduced. The role and influences of the external/international as well as the national/indigenous organizations including the government, YOK, MEB and the universities at macro level and teachers at micro level has played a significant role in facilitating the implementation process of these reforms in the Turkish context, despite the existence of a disconnect between policy and practice.

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English Education Policy in Tunisia, Issues of Language Policy in Post-revolution Tunisia

Samira Boukadi and Salah Troudi

Abstract Since 1994, various policies and guidelines, pertaining to modifying the language policy in Tunisia have been disseminated. All of these policies highlighted the importance of English as a global language. Despite all these policies and guidelines, the English language is still experiencing problems within schools and society alike. These problems prevent the language from developing and functioning accurately in the country. The actual requirements of English language learning are still not integrated into the general considerations of the political agenda.

Keywords Language policy • Teaching English as a foreign language • Linguistic situation • Language planning

1 Preamble

Language policy (LP) is a persistently controversial issue in several countries around the world for various reasons. Tunisian society, for instance, is homogeneous; it consists of ninety nine per cent Arab people who speak the same language, Arabic (L1), but with different accents. French (L2) was officially declared the second language after the independence from French colonization in 1956. Ever since, the French language has had a strong influence on education. Describing the linguistic situation in Tunisia, Daoud (2001a, b, c) said that it was complex and dynamic adding “particularly since independence from France in 1956, Tunisians have had different experiences with the languages used in the social and work environment, the educational system, government, and the media” (Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 2).

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Nowadays, English, which has for a long time been considered a foreign language (FL), is gaining ground over Arabic (L1) and French (L2) in schools with the globalization movement and the expansion of technology. Harabi (2010) stated that “the growth of business and increased occupational mobility is resulting in a need for English as a common medium of communication” (Harabi 2010, p. 2).

Additionally, language has always been associated with culture and identity. Language is rooted in culture and culture is reflected and passed on by language from one generation to the next (Emmitt and Pollock 1997). Learning a new language involves the learning of a new culture (Allwright and Bailey 1991). The debate over LP in Tunisia has never been settled. Various changes have occurred over the past few years in the educational field, such as Arabisation of scientific subjects or deciding on stages for introducing the English language. Daoud (2001a, b, c) said that “Such experiences have produced discontinuities with respect to language and literacy and helped to shape different attitudes towards these languages. Language policy and planning in Tunisia have been both instrumental in shaping such experiences and attitudes and subject to their influence” (Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 2). Languages of instruction at schools were and still are under scrutiny. Issues, such as, should sciences be taught in Arabic or in French, and when should the English language be introduced in schools are being discussed these days.

There seems to be a strong controversy between calls for globalization, openness, and modernity, which enhances the western languages, French and English, as languages of science and technology, on the one hand, and Arabisation, which emphasizes the Arabic language in order to preserve the traditional culture and identity on the other. According to Wenger (1998) the discourses of globalization are mostly in English and the media plays its role in making them available throughout the world, and having no access to English may mean not only difficulty of access, but also total impossibility of participation. Whereas, according to Daoud, Arabisation, “has been considered an essential means to remove the vestiges of colonialism which still permeate the governmental and educational systems as well as the cultural and social environment” (Daoud 1991, p. 2).

However, the question in the Tunisian context is deeper than favouring L2 or marginalizing L1. To date, French is mainly an instructional medium for scientific subjects at schools and universities alike, whereas English is seen as a language of research for advanced studies. Therefore, the issue is not merely a linguistic dualism; rather it is a multidimensional controversy, as it deals with three rival languages – Arabic, French, and English – rather than two. Hence, a balance between Arabic, French, and English should be reached with special attention to social norms, political frameworks, and future ambitions.

1.1 Language Policy

LP is an issue of critical importance all over the world today. However, it has different perspectives and deals with a variety of language issues depending on local contexts. Troudi (2009) suggested research has to be done before implementing a

new LP, and this is in line with (Ricento 2006; Spolsky 2004; Tollefson and Tsui 2004). In order to discuss LP we need to consider three contexts: political, cultural and global, and we need to explore their importance. Spolsky (2004), for example, argues that LP deals with issues of correctness of a language; bilingualism and multilingualism; language death and efforts to preserve endangered languages; language choice as a human and civil right; and language education policy through looking at language practices, beliefs, and management of social groups. He develops a theory of modern national LP and the major forces controlling it, such as the demands for efficient communication, the pressure for national identity, the attractions or resistance to English as a global language, and the growing concern for human and civil rights as they affect language. Therefore, LP involves various areas such as educational policies, historical factors, identity factors, legal issues, linguistic ideologies, beliefs and how these forces interact in existing practices.

Spolsky (2004) argues that LP is best understood as the relationship between three factors; language practice, ideology, and management: (1) the language practices, which means the way a linguistic variety is habitually selected in a society, (2) the language beliefs and ideology refers to the beliefs about language and its use, (3) the language planning and management, which is a deliberate language manipulation or intervention.

Therefore, LP is particular to each country and largely depends on different situations and contexts. LP in any country can favour or discourage the use of a particular language or set of languages. It can also promote one language at the expense of others. In addition, policies could be designed to protect and promote the national language. LP is then diverse and depends on various factors, which are unique to each country and cannot be generalized.

Therefore, language planning is about the government's policy to determine how languages are used and which language skills need to be enhanced in order to meet national priorities or to establish the rights of individuals. Wright (2004), for instance, describes the three major themes in the field of LP and planning as: (1) how language has been used as an organizing principle and mobilizing force in nation building, (2) what is actually happening, as the processes of globalization bring citizens of these nation states into ever greater contact, (3) how groups whose languages have been eclipsed in nation building (or through unequal competition with the languages of those more politically and economically powerful) are engaged in reviving these languages in what could become a post national era. Ferguson, for example, argued "All language planning activities take place in particular sociolinguistic settings, and the nature and scope of the planning can only be fully understood in relation to the settings" (Ferguson 1977, p. 9). Sociolinguistic setting should include standards that affect language practices and beliefs. According to Ruiz (1984) there are also three fundamental orientations from which languages are viewed: (a) language as a problem; (b) language as a right; and (c) language as a resource. While discussing LP in the UAE, Troudi contends "Local decision-makers need to look at the issue of language policy very seriously" taking into consideration the specific linguistic and cultural needs" (Troudi 2009, p. 9).

2 The Linguistic Situation in Tunisia

Tunisia is a North African Arab country, where the population is about 10.5 million as per the latest statistics of 2010. It is a Muslim, developing country. People are ethnically a mixture of Arab and indigenous Berber stock, but succeeding waves of Carthaginians, Romans, Spanish Muslims, Ottoman Turks, and more recently French and Italian settlers have had a profound effect on cultures, social structures, and values.

Tunisia won its independence in 1956 after 75 years as a French protectorate and a colony. It is regarded as a modern Arab nation and is often referred to as a westernized Arab country. Since independence, Tunisia has witnessed significant economic and social development. Because Tunisia does not have a wide range of natural resources, it has focused on human resources and diversifying its economy. However, despite Tunisia's economic and social development, its record on political freedoms is limited. It was for a long time a police state, with little freedom of expression or association, and with serious human rights problems.

After the 2011 revolution, we can point to some political development and social changes. For instance, people no longer feel oppressed, and a feeling of freedom is prevailing in the country. This new trend has encouraged people to look for changes and reforms of old systems across different sectors, which were seen as corrupt and unfair. This wave of reforms involves the educational sector among others.

In order to grasp a better understanding of the current linguistic situation in Tunisia, we need to discuss it from the following different perspectives; historical, socio-cultural, economic, political, and the educational aspect.

2.1 *Historical Perspectives*

Bilingualism in Tunisia started at a remarkably early point in the country's history. The first language spoken by the native people of Tunisia was designated Berber (barbarous) by the Romans and with the Libyc alphabet. Then with the advent of the Phoenician civilization and the creation of the Carthaginian Empire (814–146 BCE), the Punic language was introduced. This was the beginning of bilingualism in society, Libyc-Punic, which then evolved into Libyc-Latin with the Roman domination (146 BC–349 CE). Punic had survived more than six centuries before Latin became the official language. Meanwhile, the Vandals dominated for nearly a century. The Roman society was revived with the Byzantine Empire (533–647 CE). The Greek language was dominant until Arabic was introduced with the spread of Islam in North Africa. Traces of the Greek language are still evident in the Tunisian language to date. Arabic was introduced in 647 in Tunisia, and took 50 years to develop and to become the dominant language. In the eleventh century, it eventually became the official language of Tunisia with its literary diversification and regional dialects. Arabic-Berber bilingualism developed in the period 1050–1052, by that

time Berber the original language started to lose its status in society until it became spoken by less than point 5 % of Tunisians; mainly in the south (Daoud 2001a, b, c; Baccouche 1998; Battenburg 1999).

Arabic did not stand alone for a long time; several other languages of subsequent invaders and neighbours of Tunisia came to prominence. Firstly, the Spanish language had a great effect in Tunisia due to the exodus of Arab-Berber Moors when Spain reclaimed its territory from them from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries. Spanish terms are still found today in names of families, towns, and objects alike mainly in coastal areas. By the end of the fourteenth century, and after a long rivalry between the Christians (mainly Spanish) and Muslims (mainly Turk), the Turks took control of Tunisia for about five centuries. This civilization also left visible traces in the Tunisian language and culture. In the twentieth century, Italian and French took part in the linguistic contest in Tunisia. The Italian and the French communities living in Tunisia at that time exceeded 150,000 settlers. Daoud claims “Italian is particularly evident now in the lexicon of the following sectors: industry and crafts, building, agriculture, marine activity and the arts” (Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 6). He also notes that along with Italian, there was much interference between Arabic and Maltese while trading, which helped boost a pidgin called *Lingua Franca*; with a French matrix and embedded Spanish, Moorish, Italian, Corsican, Maltese, Berber, Arabic and Turkish expressions. According to Bannour (2000), *Lingua Franca* “was widely spoken by merchants and seamen, in particular, and occasionally served as the written code of legal documents (e.g. Commercial contracts) as well as the language of diplomacy” (as quoted in Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 6).

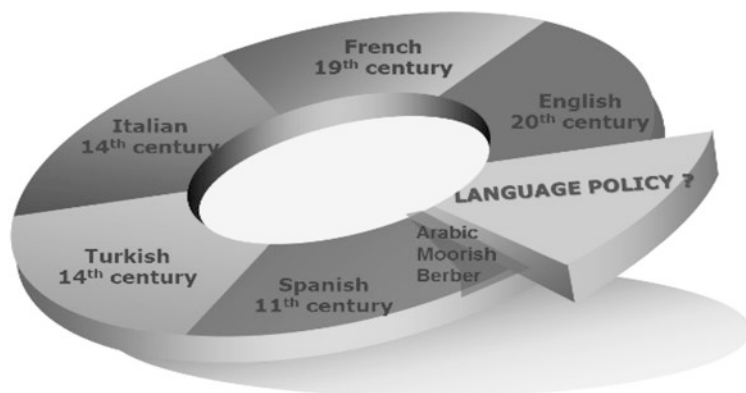
When the French protectorate regime started in 1881, French became the official language for administration and in public schools. By the time Tunisia gained independence in 1956, French was prevailing in the administrative and educational systems. Daoud stated “it is currently difficult for academics and journalists to clearly distinguish its status as a second or foreign language” (Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 8).

Currently, with globalization and the arrival of science and technology, the linguistic situation is of varying complexity. It is enhanced by several foreign languages but mainly English. The below figure summarizes the history of languages in Tunisia (Fig. 1).

2.2 *Socio-cultural Perspectives*

Nowadays, the linguistic situation is varied, people in Tunisia speak and write more than one language. They speak Arabic, which is the native and official language; they also speak French and English. Additionally some people speak languages such as German, Spanish and Italian. This section provides an overview of the different languages in use from socio-cultural perspectives.

Arabic is the mother tongue of the Tunisian people. There are three varieties in Arabic. Firstly, the Classical Arabic (CA), it is associated with Islam and religious texts mainly the holy Quran and the Hadith – the prophet’s sayings -. It is grasped



***Lingua Franca* with a French matrix and embedded Spanish, Moorish, Italian, Corsican, Maltese, Berber, Arabic and Turkish**

Fig. 1 History of languages in Tunisia

fluently by few people who were mostly educated in Quranic schools. Stevens comments “Classical Arabic is esteemed as a symbol of authenticity and Arab unity and for its religious significance. At the same time, it is perceived as the antithesis of modernism and felt to be deficient” (Stevens 1983, p. 101). Secondly, the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is a modernized version of CA, started in the mid-twentieth century in an effort to extend a sense of global culture in the Arab world. Its original purpose in the Maghreb – Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia – in the post-colonial era was to replace French as a medium of expressing modernity and reinforce a sense of nationalism. MSA is taught as a subject in state schools and is used as the medium of instruction in elementary education and most subjects in the secondary sector. Presently, MSA is seen as easier than CA; however, it is a learned language rather than a mother tongue. Lastly, Arabic dialects which are spoken as the mother tongue. The Arabic dialects and accents are not unique to each Arab country but also vary from one region to another within the same country. Therefore, the linguistic situation in Tunisia may be described as diglossic, which refers to the use of various forms of Arabic along a written/ spoken continuum.

Tunisian Arabic is the language of everyday communication, and it is worth noting that an important ratio of the dialectal Arabic vocabulary in Tunisia is borrowed or adapted from French and Italian as stated in (Ennaji 1991). Stevens among others states that “Tunisian Arabic is overtly condemned while covertly serving as the real prestige language of the country” (Stevens 1983, p. 101).

The second language in use is French because the country has long been considered a francophone stronghold. Even after independence in 1956, in spite of the efforts and progress in Arabisation, Tunisia continued to use French as a tool for ‘modernization’ and development in its society. The aims of the French control in Tunisia, for more than 70 years, were not only for political or economic dominance,

but mainly cultural. Colonization, therefore, targeted social identity by marginalizing the Arabic language and constraining its use. The French enhanced differentiation through power structures within which Tunisians had to speak French in order to thrive socially, economically, or politically. French was no more the language of the colonizer; it had become part of everyday communication for a number of people. The colonial administration's language planning had ideological goals; they implemented the language in government, business, and secular education. Arabic speakers were compelled to acquire knowledge of French for political, economic, or social mobility, and the high status that accompanied this mobility thus elevated the perception of French. There were several attempts to Arabize Tunisia, but this goal was not totally achieved. It had to be postponed for pragmatic reasons, which put the demands of modernism before those of authenticity when necessary. Stevens contended that "French is esteemed for its connotations of modernism but perceived as a threat to national unity" (Stevens 1983, p. 101).

In 1988, the national pact highlighted the national character of Arabic. In 1999, a Prime Minister's circular banned foreign languages in all correspondence addressed to Tunisians and in all internal documents of the government. The circular established a tight deadline of, December 2000, for the Arabisation of all software and all administrative forms. This decision was felt unreasonable and the deadline was unattainable. Dictionary work has fallen far behind the timetable due to the lack of training programs to train people to use the new lexicon.

The French government at that time did not appreciate the movement of Arabisation which was a serious threat to French in Tunisia; they criticized the decision of closing down of the TV channel France 2 and banning several French newspapers and magazines. This led to tension between Tunisia and France. And then Arabic/French rivalry continued for years. At the same time English has begun to spread in a few sectors such as education and business.

Nowadays, debates over the status of foreign languages, French and English, are still going on, with this powerful controversy being felt across the country. Some favour emphasizing French for its significant presence in the country and the progress it went through in the last decades. It is also easier to choose French because of the availability of documents, books and materials in French. Therefore, such a decision can save money and time. However, other views reject this position and demand replacing French with the modern "global English". In their performance, researchers are trying to justify these points of view. For example, Salhi (1984) claimed that French has a particular status. It functions as a second language because of historical and cultural reasons, whereas English is the first foreign language. But Battenburg (1997) highlighted the fact that there is considerable support to the growing global interdependence of the world on English and the on-going vanishing of French as a language of world communication and trade. The rivalry between English and French in Tunisia is apparent. For instance, various debates are taking place at a government level looking at the possibility of adopting English instead of French as the medium of instruction. Akkari (2000) seems to agree with this suggesting that "the French themselves have begun to recognize the inadequacy of their language and its loss of international prominence" (as quoted in Daoud 2001a, b, c, p. 44).

English is emerging as another linguistic option, as stated in Hemissi (1985). He said that recent developments in Tunisia regarding English language policy and planning indicate the decline in French linguistic influence. Daoud adds that “Tunisia still suffers from a lack of functional users of English, primarily in the business and communication sectors of the economy” (Daoud, in press, as quoted in Daoud 1996, p. 599). Walters (1998) added that only 2 or 5 % could be counted as proficient users of English in Tunisia.

Finally, as stated earlier, Payne (1983) documented the existence of other foreign languages that are still present in Tunisia today for instance, Italian and Spanish. These languages date back to the colonial periods and early ages. They are spoken today by few people mostly in touristic areas. German is also prevalent in these areas. TV channels and music play a vital role in spreading the different languages and their own cultures. Salhi (1984) also noted that German, Spanish, and Italian were re-introduced as optional foreign languages in schools.

2.3 *Socio-economic Perspectives*

Economic factors are of paramount importance when studying linguistic situations; they are among the variables which affect processes of language change or could also be responsible for its death. The socio-economic background provides clear explanations for the current language status. Tollefson (1991) for example stated that “language is built into the economic and social structure of society” (Tollefson 1991, p. 2).

Language planning depends on the economic situation of the country and language use depends on available opportunities, such as resources or jobs. People need languages not only for communication but also for economic growth. Therefore, language planning relates cultural identity to economic and political development. For instance, people in Tunisia were compelled to achieve good knowledge of French for political, economic, or social mobility. French enjoyed a high level of esteem that was associated with social mobility, which elevated the rise of French in government and the people alike. Nowadays, people have different linguistic needs; they are looking for better command of English. Indeed the number of English language centres is increasing dramatically. This business is flourishing; it targets both children and adults alike. Moreover, people are now looking for proficiency certificates such as IELTS, TOEFL, CELTA and DELTA.

On a national level, various projects that were intended to further develop the English language encountered financial problems and could not be supported, such as the government’s decision to implement English in primary schools. There were difficulties such as budgets for textbooks, teacher training, and hiring of enough teacher trainers to train newly recruited teachers for non-specialist primary levels teachers.

On the international level, according to Battenburg (1997) the amount of money France spends to support and promote French in Tunisia is much higher than the budgets granted by the UK and the US to improve English in Tunisia. He said that in 1996 while the USA and Britain spent 600,000 and 400,000 dollars respectively

on promoting the study of English in Tunisia, France spent 20 million dollars. This implies that France is working on preserving the image of the domination of French in Tunisia.

2.4 Political Perspectives

Tunisia has had its independence for more than five decades; however only three governments have ruled the country so far, with policies not having gone through any major changes or movement towards different perspectives.

After Tunisia's independence in 1956, the first constitutional council acknowledged Arabic as the official language of Tunisia and French as a second language. Its policy was to improve both languages. Educational reform began with the educational reform Law of 1958. Laying out a 10-year plan intended to:

1. Unify the various school systems (kuttab, French, bilingual schools) into a bilingual system administrated and controlled by the ministry of education.
2. Establish a new organizational school structure; a 6-year primary cycle, a 7-year secondary cycle for schools, and then a 3–5 year university course.
3. Nationalize the curriculum and restore the primacy of Arabic as the medium of instruction.
4. Establish education as free at all levels.
5. Increase enrolment of all areas, especially of girls and in rural areas.

The political discourse of former President Ben Ali in 1990 as described in (Daoud 2001a, b, c) focused on the following elements;

1. Enhancing functional literacy in Arabic.
2. Improving basic proficiency in foreign languages, mostly French and English.
3. Fostering computer literacy.
4. Promoting learning autonomy.

In the transitory period, the political discourse of the interim President Marzouki included the following proposals on LP:

1. Enhancing translation into Arabic
2. Encouraging digitization of Arabic books
3. Promoting the use of Arabic in science
4. Banning the single-foreign-language system that makes the Maghreb Francophone and the Mashreq Anglophone
5. Teaching different foreign languages to different groups of students

Besides, Ennahda requested to promote Arabic and mainly SA. Ennahda is a moderate Islamist political party in Tunisia, also known as Renaissance Party. On March 1, 2011, after the government of Ben Ali collapsed in the wake of the 2011 Tunisian revolution, Tunisia's interim government granted the group permission to form a political party.

However, Ennahda's commitment to promote SA raised a few issues, for instance, the presumption that the French language might no longer be as important as it used to be in Tunisia. But the political bureau of Ennahda, denied such an undertaking and stated that "Tunisia has a historical relationship with France that we should continue and improve on all levels. We should take into consideration the recent Franco-Tunisian generation." It was stated that "being more open to other countries does not jeopardize our relationship with France but it rather enriches it." It was also stated "the French language is a part of some Tunisians' lives (especially the ones with a dual citizenship), and therefore is important to all Tunisians. It will always be the second language in Tunisia" (Tunisia alive 2010).

Recently, and after the last parliamentary and presidential elections the Ministry of Education declared its aims to raise the level of Education in Tunisia, as published in Tunisia alive. The assumption is that the national educational reform, a major priority for the new government in power, which is under way, will lead to an improvement of the status of TEFL.

2.5 Educational Perspectives

Education in Tunisia is given great prominence by society and the government alike. According to the latest statistics, adult literacy is around 67 % (79 % for men and 55 % for women), and primary school enrolment of 6–15 year-olds reaching 95 % (9th Development Plan, NPD, 1997–2001). The basic education for children between the ages of 6 and 16 has been compulsory since 1991 in different parts of the country. In 2001, 19 point 9 % of the state budget was spent on education in Tunisia. In 2005, the literacy rate was 66 %, and the access to higher education rate was 27 %. Moreover, Tunisia ranked 17th in the world category of "quality of the [higher] educational system" and 21st in the world category of "quality of primary education" in (The Global Competitiveness Report 2008–2009) released by The World Economic Forum. Today 99 % of school age children attend class, the nation therefore having long since attained the objective that United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) has projected for the year 2015.

The learning journey starts with pre-school education for 3–6 year-old children; it is optional and is provided in kindergartens with varying fees depending on the location and the facilities being offered in the venue. However, basic education is compulsory and free for 6–16 year-old children; it is made up of two cycles. The first stage consists of 6 years and is provided in primary schools, while the next stage consists of 3 years and it runs in colleges. This course is certified by a certificate of graduation from basic education to enable graduates to attain secondary education. The latter is also free and is taught in high schools for 4 years, it is sanctioned by the International Baccalaureate diploma for access to higher education. Tunisia has different universities and institutes around the country; higher education is also free of charge in addition to the availability of loans and scholarships.

To complete the big picture of the educational system it is worth mentioning the private school system, which has changed in form and substance in the last few decades.

In the past, private schools used to open doors for unfortunate children who failed in government schools, who were dismissed or did not want to repeat a grade. But today there is a new system of private schools which claims to implement methods and programs similar to those applied in France or in the US, such as Lycée Massignon and the American international School. These schools were originally intended to educate the children of expatriates, but nowadays, they attract more and more Tunisians, currently 60 % of the students are Tunisians as stated in Wikipedia. They particularly come from the upper class of Tunisia; they are attracted by the multicultural courses and the possibility of pursuing higher studies abroad. These schools are implementing different curricula and offer different languages as media of instruction. Additionally, private education is becoming common in the tertiary level. Now that public institutions have less flexible admission criteria, many students found their favourite choice in private universities, which are growing as a lucrative business in Tunisia.

2.5.1 Languages in the Educational System

This section provides a general overview of the different languages used in education, that is to say MSA, French, English, Italian, Spanish, and German. This will be followed by a detailed description of the English language background and development within the educational system.

MSA is the first language (L1), it is taught as a subject in the Tunisian educational system, and is used as the medium of instruction in elementary education from grade 1 to 6, and preparatory education, from grade 7 to 9. Both levels are combined in the basic school system, which consists of 9 years. French is introduced as a FL in the 3rd year of primary level, and then turns to a second language (L2) used in secondary and higher education as a medium of instruction for sciences, technology, and business subjects. English has gone through various stages. Firstly, and for almost 30 years, it used to be introduced as a FL in the first grade of the secondary level, which consists of 4 years. Later on, in 1994, more changes occurred in the educational system, TEFL was started earlier, which was in grade 5 or 6 of the primary school. English is then carried on in higher education institutions, as an English for Special Purposes (ESP) course or English for Academic Purpose (EAP) depending on specialties and faculties (Daoud 1991; Payne 1983; Hemissi 1985; Kennedy 1984). Additionally, more foreign languages are introduced in the final stage of the secondary level, such as Spanish, German, and Italian. Studying a third FL is optional; students may choose one language for 2 years before university, which opens up new opportunities in higher education.

2.5.2 TEFL in Tunisian Education

TEFL has gone through various changes with intentions of improving the status of the English language in Tunisia. Judd (1992) noted that the growing demand for the English language in different sectors in Tunisia, in the past few years, which has led

to major developments in social language planning and in language-in-education policy and planning. Whether these changes have led to developments in TEFL or have merely scratched the surface of the issue is to be explored in this investigation.

Today English is a compulsory subject for all students, it is taught across different levels in schools as follows: 2 h per week in the primary school for grade 6, 3 h weekly for grades 7, 8, and 9 in the preparatory school, and 3 h per week for secondary level student from grade 1 to 4 in public schools but 4 h in model schools – schools for the elite students who get the best scores in national exams. Preparatory and secondary students are scheduled 2 h in class and 1 h in the lab, if there is one.

In 1980, the government launched a new project entitled, the Pioneer Secondary School, which was intended at first to introduce English as the medium of instruction for all subjects in order to prepare highly-qualified graduates to continue their studies in English. The process was very selective; teachers were handpicked and given special training, and new materials were designed. It was a competitive system and had excellent results for years. The project was soon abandoned in 1988 due to financial problems. For example, the Tunisian government could not afford to send all students to Britain or the USA without financial assistance. French, therefore, continued to be the medium of instruction. Salhi (1984) claimed that the Pioneer English School experiment was a significant case study of ELT and LP in Tunisia. This is was a language of instruction policy, though limited to the auspices of a select number of secondary schools, that could not be implemented due to lack of financial and logistical support on one hand and to lack of political will on another.

In the 1990s TEFL went through encouraging changes; new locally-produced textbook series were introduced in 1993 to achieve the goals of the communicative approach. But according to Daoud (1996) this change did not have a sound strategic plan to help teachers in the field do the right move. He said “the official methodology is “eclectic and essentially communicative” (Direction Generale 1993, p. 3); however, the eclecticism exercised by teachers is largely uninformed and based on their own experience as former learners and apprentice teachers” (Daoud 1996, p. 600).

However, Daoud among others believes that “predominant views of language as functional/structural rather than communicative and of language learning as behaviouristic rather than cognitive/affective,” affect the different areas related the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum. For example syllabus, methodology, in-service training, and testing, and that the most pressing issue to address is teacher education as claimed in (Hassini 1994), “the goal being to change teachers’ attitudes about speech and language learning and teaching” (quoted in Daoud 1996, p. 600).

Another important change took place when English was made compulsory for all students and sections of the secondary level in the same decade. Next was the government’s decision to introduce English in the primary level; first as a club, not assessed and no exams, and then as a mandatory subject with a curriculum and assessments. In-service training was then provided to primary teachers through workshops and summer programs, which helped develop teachers’ English skills in implementing the communicative approach in primary level. In addition to collaboration with the British Council to prepare non-specialist primary teachers to teach English. This program helped teachers in the field reach a wider insight on new

educational trends and familiarize themselves with the latest methodologies as used in the UK educational system.

The ministry of education and the British Council signed an agreement in February 2009 to improve the English reform project aiming at producing a new generation of school leavers who will be competent communicators in English, as well as in their first language, Arabic, and second language, French. The push for English is part of a wider policy by this former French colony to change its education system and address a growing problem of youth unemployment by improving vocational training and developing a workforce that will attract investment from Europe and can find work in rich Gulf countries (the Guardian, Friday 6 February, 2009)

2.5.3 Foreign Interventions

In addition to the changes that took place in TEFL in the past decades as discussed above, there are several foreign attempts from interested groups to diversify languages and implement new language policies to cope with global issues in Tunisia.

Judy (1999) for example, while talking about the agenda of the boundary 2 editorial meeting in Tunisia held in spring 1998, said that the most important thing was to collect significant individuals from the sectors of commerce, higher education, and finance who have significant stakes in English-language education in Tunisia in order to establish a sustainable long-range dialogue across sectors. The aim was to identify problems and develop models for realizing viable programs of English-language studies and education.

An international conference was held in Tunis by the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) in collaboration with the World Bank (WB) and the Qatar Foundation for Education with the participation of Arab and foreign experts. The conference was part of the 10-year education development plan in the Arab world that was decided in the 2008 Damascus Arab Summit. The Arab program aims to improve education quality and to further develop education systems in the Arab world. The action plan was to revise education curricula, methods in use, and improve assessment and management systems of educational institutions. It will be implemented by ALECSO, in co-ordination with the Secretariat of the Arab League. The agenda of the conference included a presentation on the Arab program and papers on missions of institutions concerned with the management of the project and the consultative scientific council and on expanding partnership as part of the quality-support program in the education sector in the Arab world.

Additionally, different countries are trying today to expand the English language in Tunisia for political and ideological reasons mainly after the revolution, and the changes in the political agenda. They are offering to help Tunisia either by suggesting new projects or enhancing the existing ones, such as The UK assistance through British Council programs. For instance, an update about the Tunisian-British program to improve ELT in educational institutions was published in the Ministry of Education website. A meeting was held on Wednesday March 23, 2011, in Tunis between Education Minister and a delegation from the British Council led by the

Director of the British Council for the Middle East and North African Region. As reported in the ministry website, the program aims at developing ELT through (1) providing books and implementing new programs, (2) providing training, and (3) focusing on assessment. Members of the British delegation said that “the program will help, thanks to the fruitful cultural cooperation between the United Kingdom and Tunisia, to achieve significant results likely to enhance the position of the English language and its presence in different education cycles in Tunisia” (See [Appendix 1](#)).

The United States (US) is also playing an important role in Tunisian reforms. The US plan is to offer Tunisians, with an emphasis on youth, more English-language training, educational exchanges, and cultural programs; and look for new ways to build security and intelligence cooperation. The political discourse stresses that deeper US cooperation depends on real Tunisian engagement (The Guardian 2009).

On Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011, the Canadian ambassador met with the Education Minister, he pointed out that the Tunisian Revolution is close to achieving its main purpose, namely the consecration of democracy. He claimed that Canada supports this peaceful and democratic transition and pledges itself to make short and long term social and material assistance, and at all levels, to the country’s development. He also confirmed Canada’s commitment to back up the Education Ministry’s efforts, to upgrade the quality of teaching, and to undertake reviews of syllabuses, in accordance with the requirements of the stage (See [Appendix 2](#)).

Moreover, the director of the Foundation of the Mediterranean region, expressed his appreciation for the Tunisian Revolution. He added that “it is a historical stage in its regional Mediterranean environment.” He stressed during his meeting, on Wednesday, March 9, 2011 in Tunis, with Education Minister, the Foundation’s willingness to strengthen co-operation with the Tunisian government in all fields, such as education, culture and science (See [Appendix 3](#)).

2.6 Language Practices

The most recent census, conducted by the Tunisian Ministry of Social Affairs, showed that “ten per cent of the population knew how to read and write English. Among these ten per cent the mastery of the language and degree of proficiency vary from elementary to advanced, culminating with those who hold doctoral degrees in the field of British and American Studies” (Bahloul 2001).

Moore (2007) pointed to two languages; Arabic and French. She thought they are frequently used by people for everyday communication. However, she thought English was used in the same way. She stated “The Tunisians I interviewed intimated that Arabic and French peacefully coexist in Tunisian society” she equally argues that although the languages are used for different purposes, they are both characteristic of post-colonial Tunisian identity. However, Bahloul (2001) contended “Arabic and French are in a deadly race for linguistic supremacy; the two major languages in

Tunisia (Arabic and French) are in a state of flux which is considerably influencing the development of English, so far on the periphery of the language scene.” He also believed that Tunisian students have positive attitude towards English in comparison with French stating “The positive attitude towards English has been addressed at great length in a number of studies” (Bahloul 2001).

Hawkins (2008), based on research carried out in Tunisia, and using examples from academia and the Internet, found out that Tunisians have great abilities to deal with information communication tools through different languages. He argued “what is linguistically important about these examples is not the language used, but the global discourses and language ideologies of which they are a part. Whatever language Tunisians use in these discourses, Arabic, French, or English, they use them in similar ways, so that there is standardization despite linguistic diversity. Frequently, power resides in the mastery of the discourse, rather than mastery of a language.” This indicates that Tunisians have good commands of communication, and are able to learn and use different languages. I believe Hawkins (2008) refers to an important theory, since learning skills and the mastery of discourse are at the origin of learning languages.

2.7 *Language Beliefs and Ideology*

Languages have always been associated with beliefs, ideologies, and how people like to use them. There are two levels of beliefs. (1) Beliefs related to people and how they perceive language and (2) Beliefs carried by the new language to be learned. Additionally, in line with Warschauer et al. (2000) culture is an integral part of language learning, but the approach toward culture is multifaceted, taking into account the diverse cultures of the many people who speak English around the world. Pennycook (1995) points out that English carries a set of ideologies, values, and norms based on the history of its development and use. Bahloul (2001) argued in the past, English in Tunisia was studied “for no particular purpose other than that of being part of an educated person’s intellectual and cultural baggage.” But it has a more important role as a “tool for global outreach which is being reflected all over the country.” He also stated there is a growing appeal for English among younger Tunisians, and this is line with (Payne 1983; Twyford and McCune 1984; Kennedy 1984; Bahloul and Seymour 1991; Daoud 1998; Walters 1998, cited in Bahloul 2001).

Policy makers in some Arabic speaking countries tend to adapt a FL as a means of instruction at schools, for instance French in Tunisia or English in the UAE, but this strategy seems to be criticized by scholars. Troudi (2009), for example, argued that English as a language of instruction policy is not the best solution for development, information management, and economic growth. Contrary to the common belief among some policy planners, Troudi (2009) argued “This situation is more evident in the Arab world, where there is a dire need to bridge the digital divide and to bring effective reforms to current teaching pedagogies” (Troudi 2009, p. 11). He

agreed with Abbott who contends “in many countries, the teaching and use of English at primary school level is less a cultural invasion than an unnecessary invitation” (Abbott 1992, p. 175). Moore (2007) stated “Language, after all, facilitates sharing ideas and building a sense of community” (Moore 2007, p. 12).

There are different approaches of dealing with issues of culture in teaching. However, these approaches depend on teachers, learners, and the purpose of learning English. In this research, one aim is to explore the ideology and beliefs behind the use of English in Tunisia, and to find out if English language is perceived as a vehicle of communication or a means of invasion.

The future of English teaching has been directly linked to the changing global economy, which in part is influenced by the recent revolution in telecommunications (Warschauer et al. 2000; Crystal 1997). Bahloul (2001) advocates English is further enrichment of the Tunisian linguistic marketplace and Tunisians have good reasons to believe that English will be enhanced in Tunisia. This in line with what Walters (1998) calls the *seeping spread* of English in Tunisia. However, Bahloul (2001) expressed his fear from the resentment of English intrusion among *Arab nationalists* and the *Islamic fundamentalists*, just as they deeply resented the French reign.

A persistent question at this point needs an answer. Are social and political discourses today similar or different from those belonging to the pre-revolutionary period, and could attitudes and beliefs have changed from what was reported before 2011. The research reviewed so far are very important and informative. However, the recent situation should be investigated more while exploring Tunisia today; these elements will be considered in the interview questions.

2.8 Language Planning and Management

Planning and implementing LP is mostly the government’s job; policy makers are responsible for language manipulation and planning. Decisions about implementing LP reflect social, political, diplomatic, and economic factors and they have tremendous effects on societies. Troudi (2009), for example, discussed the importance of making decisions about language at school. Fasold (1984) argued “one of the most crucial language planning decisions that a country can make is the determination of a language to serve as a medium of instruction in schools” (1984, p. 292 as quoted in Troudi 2009).

Moore (2007) while investigating the language situation in Tunisia claimed “language policy in Tunisia may hold greater power in the social, rather than formal political, realm.” Earlier, Battenburg (1997) claimed English and French are competing in Tunisia and, “Tunisian officials as well as representatives of the American, British and French government are often reluctant to admit that such a contest is

occurring” (Battenburg 1997, p. 282). However, the rivalry between French and English can be seen in the educational institutions and programs in Tunisia where language planning relies mostly on external funds. Bahloul (2001) suggested shifting to English in education, arguing “If a technology transfer scheme is a top priority on the political agenda of this country, then betting on the French language for that matter will be a total fiasco, and ultimately a reported failure. English as an international language seems at present and in the Tunisian context a safer bet and an entry visa to that global village.” Daoud (1996) added “the growing demand for English as the means of access to modern science and technology and to economic development has led to interesting changes in the linguistic orientation of many developing countries, particularly those that inherited a language other than English from their former colonial power,” he contends that Tunisia as a former French colony, is *the case in point* “where such changes concern both English language policy decisions and implementation strategies, mainly in the educational system” (Daoud 1996, p. 598).

Additionally, Daoud (1996) claimed “the ever-growing demand for English has, in the past few years, led to major developments in language planning or, more precisely, language-in-education policy and planning (Judd 1992), which raises questions about the wisdom of the national educational policy on English, how it is implemented, and how it affects the ELT profession in Tunisia” (Daoud 1996, p. 599).

Fitouri (1983) argued that the LP situation in Tunisia needed to be adjusted. He believes that studies in the field have clearly highlighted learning difficulties due to bilingual education. He stated “in a situation like this, however, common sense calls for a measure of boldness in the revision of the present educational and linguistic policy... it is quite clear that contact with the world through learning foreign languages and cultures can be achieved quite well in an atmosphere different from the atmosphere of conflict inherited from the colonial era and in a context of trans-cultural education” (Fitouri 1983, p. 300).

Khatibi (1993) proposes a strategy to decide what the priorities are in terms of language learning and language use in a North African situation, he suggests “Arabic should remain the official language in North Africa; ... English as the first FL language because of its global status.” Whereas, Labbassi (2008) claimed “some non-Anglophone communities use English to resist the injustices they endure inside their countries, contribute to universal knowledge and correct a stereotypical image of their culture in the West.” These ‘responsible’ uses of English depart from the imperialistic, hegemonic view of English depicted by some Critical Linguists (Canagarajah 1999; Pennycook 1995; Phillipson 1992; Holliday 1994).

So far, it is obvious that various scholars requested a change in the LP; however, we need to consider the opposite view too. Phillipson (1992), for example, believes that the spread of English can also be one of many factors contributing to the tragic loss of native languages around the world.

3 Conclusion

Tunisia has and is still developing new policies across different political and cultural sectors. The progress is highly esteemed at national and international level. However, much more changes and research need to be achieved in order to reach satisfactory standards at all levels.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tunisian – British Programme

Tunisian-British programme to develop English language teaching in educational institutions (www.edunet.tn)



The Tunisian-British programme to develop English language teaching in educational institutions was the focal point of the meeting, held on Wednesday March 23, 2011, in Tunis, between Education Minister Taieb Baccouche and a delegation from the British Council led by Mr. Jim Butler, Director of the British Council for the Middle East and North African Region.

The meeting centred on ways to speed up implementation of this programme whose achievement is to stretch over 10 years and manage the programme in a way that guarantees the hoped-for results by allowing pupils to have command of oral and written English and open broad prospects for them in Tunisia and abroad.

The programme to develop English language teaching revolves around three major axes: the first provides for promotion of books and programmes, the second is related to training and pedagogical methods, while the third focuses on assessment.

Members of the British delegation said that the programme will help, thanks to the fruitful cultural co-operation between the United Kingdom and Tunisia, to achieve significant results likely to enhance the position of the English language and its presence in different education cycles in Tunisia.

Appendix 2: Tunisian – Canadian Project



Education Minister receives Canada's ambassador in Tunis (www.edunet.tn)

Canada's ambassador in Tunis Ariel Delouya underlined that the Tunisian Revolution is a unique revolution of its kind in its regional and international environments, commending the Tunisian people's profound national and civil awareness.

During his meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2011, with Education Minister Taieb Baccouche, the Canadian ambassador pointed out that the Tunisian Revolution is close to achieving its main objective, namely the consecration of democracy.

He underlined that Canada supports this peaceful and democratic transition and pledges itself to bring short- and long-term moral and material assistance, and at all levels, to the country's development.

He also placed emphasis on Canada's will to back up the Education Ministry's efforts to promote the quality of education and engage revision and reform of syllabuses, in accordance with the requirements of the stage.

For his part, Mr Taieb Baccouche specified that the Revolution opened up for the Tunisian people broader prospects of hope and changed the country's historical process, on the path of the edification of the future within a context of freedom and dignity. He pointed out that the interim government sees to it to protect the principles of the Revolution, in the first place of which the achievement of justice and guaranteeing development for all.

Appendix 3: Foundation Cooperation

"Friedrich Naumann" Foundation willing to strengthen co- operation with Tunisia (www.edunet.tn)

Director of the "Friedrich Naumann" Foundation for the Mediterranean region Ronald Meinardus expressed admiration for the Tunisian Revolution which he described as "a historical stage in its regional Mediterranean environment" and also at the international level.

He stressed during his meeting, on Wednesday, March 9, 2011 in Tunis, with Education Minister Taieb Baccouche, the Foundation's readiness to strengthen co-operation with the Tunisian government in all fields, such as education, culture and science.

For his part, the minister said that the Tunisian government is open to all initiatives to support the Tunisian Revolution and the democratic process in the country.

He expressed the will to make every effort to ensure the transition to the consolidation of people's sovereignty through the election of a Constituent Assembly which will draft a new Constitution and will lead to democratic elections in accordance with international standards.

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National Pride and the New School Model: English Language Education in Abu Dhabi, UAE

Fiona S. Baker

Abstract This chapter provides a brief history of the English Language in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and policies surrounding the status and position of English and Bilingual – Arabic and English – Education. While Dubai and the Northern Emirates are briefly mentioned, the focus is on the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and its New School Model (NSM) approach to education. The factors that have driven and had an impact on policy making in the UAE and NSM are discussed. The history and role of agencies and individuals in its initiatives, some of the challenges and potential that are part and parcel of its policy on bilingual education reform, are described. In the conclusion, there is a brief analysis of crucial issues surrounding bilingual education for realistic goal setting for children of Abu Dhabi Emirate in becoming bilingual.

Keywords New school model • Partial immersion model • Bilingual education reform • Realistic goals

1 Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a young country in the Arabian Gulf which was established in 1971 when the Trucial Sheikdoms of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah and Fujairah became a federation. The country rapidly developed from an assembly of tribes in the 1960s with a population that sometimes suffered from drought, poverty and hunger, to become an oil-rich nation and the sixth wealthiest country in the world. Today, it has a vibrant economy and plays a prominent role in the Middle East (IMF World Economic Outlook Report 2013). Such economic success has necessitated more highly qualified graduates to drive its development which was the impetus to place education at the top of the government agenda in the 1990s. However, in 1999, Al-Sulayti reported that Emirati school leavers were barely attaining functional literacy, were lacking in the reasoning

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and problem solving skills required in a modern economy, and had limited ability to take full advantage of technology. In 2002, to mark the 39th anniversary of the UAE's independence, the President, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, reported that the largest portion of federal budget set aside for education had occurred in 2001, accompanied by education programs and plans for the development of education. Despite this investment, in a major policy speech to the nation, in April 2007, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, reported that teaching methods and curricula were obsolete, the education system as a whole was weak, and ministers of education and higher education should work to find innovative and comprehensive solutions. On the one hand, the UAE government believed that a lack of English language was limiting employment opportunities for the country's youth (Library of Congress Federal Research Division, July 2007). On the other hand, with the UAE's global economic growth and use of the English language, preserving the nation's cultural heritage had become a concern. On UAE National Day 2008, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi, is reported as saying how crucial it is to preserve the nation's identity, stating that Emiratis have a "legitimate right" to live in a country in which they are "the mainstream, the pioneers and owners, of the common language and integrating identity." In 2013, for the first time in the Middle East, the Emirate of Dubai won its bid for Expo 2020 under the theme '*Connecting Minds, Creating the Future.*' Expo 2020 will be a place where the international community will share innovations and discuss issues of international importance, including the global economy, sustainable development and quality of life.

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief history of the English language in the UAE, and to describe the position of English language and Bilingual Education. While Dubai and the Northern Emirates are mentioned, the focus of the chapter is on Abu Dhabi Emirate and its New School Model (NSM) approach to education. The chapter will discuss the factors that have driven policy making in the UAE and the NSM in Abu Dhabi Emirate. It will also discuss the role of agencies and individuals in its initiatives and touch on the challenges and potential that are part and parcel of its policy on bilingual education reform. The chapter concludes with interplaying issues that should be taken into account in setting realistic goals for the children of Abu Dhabi Emirate as they become bilingual and take strides toward meeting the nation's future goals.

2 English Language in the Nation

Nowadays, the number of languages spoken in the UAE is approximately one hundred. These languages are spoken by two hundred nationalities and one hundred and fifty ethnic groups. The official and national language spoken in the UAE is Arabic with English as the nation's second language. In addition, Malayalam is spoken widely in the Malayali community – the largest Indian community in the UAE. Hind-Urdu and Tagalog are also widely spoken, reflecting the multiculturalism of the

UAE. The English language arrived in the UAE in the 1800s. In 1820, Britain concluded a general treaty of peace with the principal sheikhs of the Pirate Coast (along the southern coast of the Arabian Gulf) and Bahrain. Its purpose was to end piracy and plundering so as to establish a commitment to desist from the slave trade. From this period until independence in 1971, the individual coastal sheikhdoms were under British protection which meant that Britain assumed responsibility for their defense and external relations while the sheikhdoms followed a traditional form of Arab monarchy. This meant that the ruler had virtually absolute power over his subjects. In 1952, Britain recommended that the rulers of the seven sheikhdoms establish the Trucial Council to encourage the adoption of common policies in administrative matters. It led to a federation of states under the leadership of the late H.H. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (may God have mercy upon him).

In 1898, the American colonizers arrived and with the widespread introduction of public education, English was systematically taught in dedicated English language classes that used an Anglo-American canon of literature. Dr. Fred Atkinson, the first civilian General Superintendent of Education, justified the inclusion of English as a subject on the curriculum in Annual School Reports for 1901–1903 by declaring that a civilized citizenry was not prone to rebellion and that the English language was key to its development. Prior to this, only the social elite in Abu Dhabi had access to English-medium education through private fee-paying schools at home or abroad, usually through full immersion in English with Arabic taught only as a subject on the curriculum. It was not until October 2000, when The UAE Ministry of Education and Youth issued a policy document outlining a strategy to overhaul education that the position of English in schools appeared in UAE government policy.

2.1 Education Vision 2020 Examines the Nation's Challenges

In The UAE's Ministry of Education and Youth's Vision 2020, it defines a "high quality education" as one that "produces a generation equipped with basic skills in work, production, communication and citizenship [and which prepares] professionals with creative thinking and continuing self-learning skills [who are] able to adapt to changes and deal confidently and efficiently in the future" (UAE Ministry of Education & Youth 2000, p. 9). The document discusses the controversy over language of instruction, although there is no reference to a language medium policy. The absence of a clear and thoroughly deliberated language policy appears to have been characteristic of other Arab states as well, especially those of the Gulf region (Gallagher 2011). The only statement made is that "the learning of languages" is a crucial factor in modern education (UAE Ministry of Education & Youth 2000, p. 24). Such a vague statement is made, even though Arab education specialists are aware that low levels of achievement and literacy rates in most Arab countries may be directly related to the complexities of the standard Arabic language – MSA used in formal schooling and non-formal education (Arab Human Development Report

2003). MSA is developed from Classical Arabic and is the written form of the language drawn up by educated people and intellectuals. The spoken dialect of colloquial Arabic is grammatically less complex and has a less voluminous vocabulary than MSA.

2.2 The Arab Human Development Report (2003)

Despite the presence of significant human capital in the region, the Arab Human Development Report (2003) concludes that constraints hamper the acquisition, diffusion, and production of knowledge in Arab societies, whereas human capital could offer a substantial base for an Arab knowledge renaissance. The report underlines the importance of knowledge to Arab countries as a powerful driver of economic growth through higher productivity. The closing section presents a strategic vision for creating knowledge societies in the Arab world based on five pillars: guaranteeing key freedoms; disseminating quality education; embedding science; shifting toward knowledge based production; and developing an enlightened Arab knowledge model. The Report states that in Arab civilization, the pursuit of knowledge is prompted by religion, culture, history, and the human will to achieve success. Obstructions to this quest are the defective structures created by human beings – social, economic, and above all, political.

The Report discusses the Arabic language as being connected to two basic matters that are closely associated with both the existence and future of Arabs. The first connection is with the “sacred” and the second is with “identity”. The Arabic language is the distinctive feature that distinguishes Arab identity. It is the language of the Qur’an and was the rallying point for the intellectual, spiritual, literary and social activities encapsulated in an entire human civilization. Reportedly, nowadays the Arabic language faces severe challenges. The Arabization of the sciences and other disciplines has not proceeded according to expectations and there are also limitations to translation efforts in the sciences and humanities. Linguistic theory is also not proceeding at the anticipated rate; there is isolation from modern philosophical schools and methodologies, and a lack of awareness of the role language plays in modern society. The Arabic language is further complicated by the duality of standard and colloquial Arabic accompanied by a scarcity of advanced Arabic software that limit publications in Arabic (The Arab Human Development Report 2003).

2.3 Arabic and English Languages in Education

The UAE Vision for the year 2020 has highlighted the role of Arabic as central to the Islamic faith. However, schools, colleges and universities have continued to increase the profile of English as a medium of education. In 1996, Ayari documented the challenges Arab children experience in spelling, word recognition in isolated

context-free environments, and in becoming a bilingual reader in Arabic and English. This has been a matter of concern for several decades in the Arab world, especially in compromising the Arabic language. There has been a mushrooming of private Arabic speaking schools which are promising to provide an education that combines Arab heritage, norms and values in Islam, with a “world class education” in English. The position concerning English acquisition, is a progressive politico-pragmatic one that embraces a “discourse of opportunity” (Tollefson and Tsui 2004). Schools which were offering bilingual education, have become an attractive alternative to monolingual Arabic education and have continued to grow in number. Emirati parents have seen opportunities for their children in bilingual schools with English taking root in science, business, and new key professional domains in the Arab world.

2.4 Slow Response to the Language Debate

Arabic has a long and distinguished history of being the only official language of the Arab world and Classical Arabic is strongly identified with religion as the language of the Qur’an which is held to provide miraculous evidence of the truth of Islam (Crystal 1987). In Dubai, the National Strategic Plan for 2016, emphasizes the need to enhance Arabic language and local culture in society (in Randall and Samimi 2010). However, the Arab Human Development Report (2003) states that “fear of cultural and linguistic suicide must not result in stagnation or worse, in the continued deterioration of quality of education in the Arab world” (p.3). The Arabic language means that learners are exposed to Arabic cultural heritage and appropriate content for an Arab and Islamic education. Like other Gulf nations, the UAE has only recently acted on the Arabic – English language debate despite knowledge that English will meet the demands of its globalizing economy. Many Emiratis – males in particular – have studied English language abroad, or have graduated in the medium of English. Higher education in the nation is also taught in English by Western-educated faculty. Although English is generally regarded positively, the aftermath of 9/11 has provoked renewed interest in ideological issues associated with English language teaching and use in the Islamic context. The local press often discusses solutions to promote and protect culture and heritage.

In 2010, *the Khaleej Times* reported that over 90 % of students graduating from government high schools require English language skills development in higher education. Universities and colleges have required that candidates complete a Foundation English program and some (for example, Zayed University – a university with campuses in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai) have also necessitated prerequisite courses in Arabic and Information Technology before being admitted to a program at degree level. However, with the modernization of the education system, *the National* newspaper, February 4, 2014, reported that the Foundation year at federal universities and colleges, which aims to improve English-language skills

and increase International English Language Testing scores (IELTS) before undergraduate entry, will be discontinued by 2018.

The English language has been the focus of government education policy especially in the Emirates of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with some model schools in the Northern Emirates joining Dubai's system of reform. There has also been a growing need for qualified teachers in Arabic medium schools and the development of appropriate Arabic medium resources. This need may also apply to the private sector because on June 22 2016, *the Gulf News* reported that Arabic language remains a 'poorly taught and neglected subject in schools' <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/education/arabic-lessons-leave-pupils-tongue-tied-1.545557>. It has not always been required for teachers to have fully qualified teacher status. Established in 1988, the Higher Colleges of Technology, and almost a decade later – Zayed University – graduated a large number of national females who, irrespective of their first degree and lack of specialized teacher preparation, started to take up employment in schools. In Abu Dhabi, professional development efforts provided by Public Private Partnership (PPP) independent contractors on 3-year contracts with ADEC, were aimed at increasing performance in all areas of educational development, including curriculum design, training, monitoring and evaluation, with the participation of 30 kindergartens and primary schools from the public sector in 2006. The program was designed for government schools to benefit from the experience of the private sector so as to improve the quality of education and student achievement. Today, ADEC teachers are holders of an academic qualification – a Bachelor of Education degree – with preference given to those with a relevant Master's degree and preferably, experience of classroom teaching. To this aim, in 2007, Emirates College for Advanced Education (ECAE) was established in Abu Dhabi. It is an Abu Dhabi government higher education institute affiliated with ADEC, dedicated to teacher preparation, continuing professional development, and education research. The College prepares students to teach English, Science and Mathematics in ADEC Cycle one schools, in the medium of English.

3 The Emirate of Dubai and the Northern Emirates

The developing economy of the UAE has always relied heavily on expatriate labor to support the development which has taken place over the last half century. This is to the extent that in most of the Emirates, expatriates outnumber Emirati citizens. It is especially true of the Emirate of Dubai. English has emerged as a *lingua franca* at all levels of society with accompanying social ramifications (Randall and Samimi 2010 p.43). In the Emirate of Dubai, The Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), the government authority that oversees both private and public education, took over the role from the Dubai Education Council in 2006 under the directive of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai. KHDA's remit was to develop the education sector in Dubai Emirate. In 2010, there were 44 schools designated as

Future Schools. These schools became part of the Madares Al Ghad (MAG) program with a curriculum that places emphasis on the development of bilingual nationals taught by teachers who are prepared to apply contemporary pedagogy in well-resourced schools. 16 secondary schools – grades 10, 11 and 12 (working in cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE); 13 intermediate schools – grades 6, 7, 8 and 9, and 18 elementary schools – grades 1, 2 and 3 for Arabic, English, Science and Mathematics were designated *Future Schools*. In the elementary schools, English, American, European and other native English speaking teachers were integrated into the project as part of the Ministry’s efforts to improve English language proficiency. In 2010, Ms. Shaikha Al Shamsi, Chief Executive for Educational Affairs, announced that the same schools would extend the MAG curriculum into grade 4, explaining that there had been no decrease in the number of lessons taught in Arabic. In 2009, 31 of the schools operating the MAG curriculum were located in the five Northern Emirates: Ajman, Fujairah, Ras Al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al-Quwain. Nowadays, almost all schools in Dubai fall under the KHDA umbrella, which has five entities, namely; the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB); Dubai School Agency; EDAAD, which is a scholarship program for high achieving students to study at top universities in the world; Emirates National Development Program; National Institute for Vocational Education and Tamkeen which empowers people with visual impairments. As public accountability has increased, from the baseline inspections undertaken in 2008–2009 by the DSIB, there has been evidence of significant school improvements in Dubai Emirate.

4 Abu Dhabi Emirate and the Abu Dhabi Education Council

Abu Dhabi’s Economic Vision (2030) aims to “achieve effective economic transformation of the Emirate’s economic base and bring about global integration and enduring benefits to all. Abu Dhabi has a core commitment to build a sustainable and diversified, high value-added economy by 2030” (The Government of Abu Dhabi, p.14). The Economic Vision (2030) was formed to begin a 10-year strategic education reform process in 2005. ADEC took over some of the functions of the UAE Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. It issues licenses for educational institutes, supervises education zones and schools, and establishes and monitors educational standards. In 2006, nine private public school partnerships (PPPs) were formed as a foundation to ADEC’s NSM curriculum in Abu Dhabi Emirate. Technical and Further Education Global (TAFE Global), part of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training, provided a curriculum for the PPP operators and schools in thirty KG – grade 5 schools in Abu Dhabi Emirate – 12 in Al Ain, 12 in Abu Dhabi city, and 6 in the Western Region – Al Gharbiya. From September 2007, two additional operators signed up to provide PPP education for 3 years to 30 new schools for grade 6–9 students. This meant that Arabic had to share its dominance with English in these selected Abu Dhabi PPP schools because the PPP providers: Beaconhouse, CfBT

Education LLC, Cognition, Mosaica, Nord Anglia, Sabis School Improvement Partners (SIP), Specialist Schools and Academy Trust (SSAT), and Taaleem Edison Learning (TEL) were all education service providers with bases in English speaking countries.

ADEC policy states that “the NSM has the aim of providing an effective response to a number of challenges facing the school system; has a focus on improving student learning experiences, and raises the academic outcomes of Abu Dhabi students to become internationally competitive to achieve the Economic Vision 2030 (<http://www.adec.ac.ae>). Since the establishment of ADEC in 2005, the curriculum has evolved to meet standards in consultation with the New South Wales Government, Australia. The curriculum was first tested in the model and PPP schools on a 3-year contractual basis. Private operators from the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada have worked toward helping the PPP schools achieve standardized goals so as to improve student performance and align teaching practices to contemporary international methods (<http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/schools-ppp-future-to-be-revealed-soon>).

The introduction of English speaking educators employed in Abu Dhabi schools was the beginning of ADEC’s NSM. The model introduced English as an additional medium of instruction alongside the existing medium of Arabic with the goal of “developing students who are literate in English”(<http://www.adec.ac.ae/en/Education/KeyInitiatives/CurriculumImprovement/Pages/English-Medium.aspx>). ADEC kindergartens follow a bi-literate, bilingual approach, with an English and Arabic medium teacher as co-teachers in the classroom. The aim of the commitment to bilingualism is to provide equality of access for all children to develop linguistic, cultural and social capital so as to provide for the future educational and socio-economic privileges of Emiratis (Bourdieu 1991). The ADEC school system, a weaker yet important form of additive bilingualism, follows a partial immersion model with English as the medium of instruction for the teaching of English, Science and Mathematics.

Government schools in Abu Dhabi have rapidly witnessed a dramatic rise in the status of English. This has meant that families seeking Arabic-only instruction for their children have had to seek out private fee-paying Arabic-medium schools. ADEC started the development of an education policy agenda that defined the guiding principles, vision, and objectives for the UAE’s education system. The agenda was developed with the participation of key stakeholders. A taskforce of representatives was formed from the three education sectors: P-12 (pre-primary to grade 12), higher education, and technical and professional education, as well as from government and industry. The members of the taskforce were both local and international education policy leaders. The taskforce was divided into three teams (one for each education sector) which began the process of developing the education policy agenda by defining the collective principles, goals, and objectives of the education system, including the pathways between primary, secondary, and tertiary level education. External review has been put into place to further enhance the education policy agenda. Abu Dhabi also prepares Emirati teachers to deliver instruction in English for the content areas of Science, Mathematics and English at a number of

federal universities and colleges, including Emirates College for Advanced Education, a dedicated teacher preparation college and a partner to ADEC.

4.1 Initiatives to Support the Teaching and Learning of English

To achieve its goal, ADEC has embarked on numerous initiatives to support English education while maintaining a focus on Emirati culture and heritage and development of twenty-first century skills; namely, critical thinking, communicating, interacting effectively and problem solving. Abu Dhabi schools have four levels: Kindergarten, Cycle 1 (grades 1–5), Cycle 2 (grades 6–9), and Cycle 3 (grades 10–12). Benchmarked against countries with highly respected early childhood education systems including, Australia, US, UK and Finland, the initial plan was to fully integrate the NSM into the public education system by 2015–2016 (http://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/inside.asp?xfile=/data/educationnation/2013/April/educationnation_April41.xml§ion=nationgeneral). From the years 2010–2011, ADEC began to implement the NSM in state kindergartens and Cycle 1 schools. In March 2013, announcements were made to extend the NSM into Cycle 2 and 3 schools with effect from the 2013/2014 academic year (March 24, 2013, <http://www1.adec.ac.ae/English/Pages/PressItems.aspx?PRId=728>). The NSM curriculum places more emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving skills in place of memorization strategies and didactic approaches to teaching.

4.2 ADEC Levels of Education and the Role of English

Children in KG1 must be 4 years old by October 1 of the year of entry. While school attendance at kindergarten level is voluntary, the number of children attending is increasing in the Abu Dhabi Emirate. In kindergarten, children are taught in a bilingual, bi-literate model of education with English and Arabic co-teachers. In Cycle one schools – grades 1–3 – children are taught in a partial immersion model in both Arabic and English. Content areas of English, Science and Math are taught in English by native English speaking teachers employed from English-speaking nations, or by Emirati teachers who have an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) band 6.5. Social Studies, Music, and Arabic and Islamic Studies are taught in Arabic by Arabic medium teachers.

ADEC has introduced two major benchmarking assessment programs to measure student achievement. Both benchmarking assessments include English language and literacy performance. The first program is called Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) and has been conducted since 2010. PIPS assessment provides teachers with detailed profiles of children's literacy and mathematics skills

in kindergarten and grade 2; Cycle 2 – for children in grades 6–9, and Cycle 3, for grades 10–12, has the overall aim of nurturing learners for the future, and to help them start to become fully rounded members of society. ADEC is committed to developing students who are literate in English to meet the needs of Abu Dhabi's Economic Vision 2030, and prepares students for tertiary education, the workplace and life experience that requires English. To achieve this goal, ADEC has embarked on numerous initiatives to support the teaching and learning of English while maintaining a focus on Emirati culture and heritage and the development of twenty-first century skills. There has been a transition from a textbook-driven to a learning outcomes-based curriculum that meets international standards. It is delivered by teachers adept in student-centered approaches that build on student knowledge, understandings and skills, rather than on a one-size-fits-all approach.

This shift in paradigm has involved an introduction to an ongoing assessment framework, ECART (English Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks), that aligns with Tama'an in Arabic and inquiry-based learning approaches that encourage students to develop lifelong learning skills and foster curiosity. Education advisors have been employed to develop and use international best-practice when teaching English in ADEC schools. Employment of licensed native English-speaking teachers from overseas to teach Cycle 3 English on collaborative projects, designed to support teachers and schools in understanding how to support student Arabic and English language development, has been implemented. Teachers follow the English Continuous Assessment Rich Task (ECART) framework when teaching English in Cycle 2. The framework, which was introduced in the academic year 2013–2014, has eight sections which must be covered during one trimester – organisation, context, research, strategies, reflection and review, e-Learning, integrated strand tasks, final product and presentation. The framework covers trimester themes. Themes are outlined by ADEC for trimesters 1 and 3 in each grade, and in trimester 2, teachers and students, choose their own theme. The framework teaches students how to learn through an inquiry-based process which is an approach to teaching, learning and assessment that reflects authentic, real-life contexts, and allows teachers to meet the learning needs and interests of students. The framework also requires teachers to provide students with ongoing feedback about their learning. ADEC is proceeding with the planning process leading to a re-designed Cycle 3 program for students in grades 10, 11 and 12. The redesigned program aims to support transitions from KG-12 schooling, to tertiary education or employment. ADEC is making use of expertise in a range of fields from federal universities and the public and private sector to design and develop a system of educational opportunities for the young people of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Currently, there is a short-term plan to introduce periods of Arabic, English, Mathematics and Problem-solving, along with the inclusion of native English speaking teachers to provide English instruction to Cycle 3 students.

Since 2008, the External Measurement of Student Achievement (EMSA) standardized testing program has been a key feature of assessment in Grades 3–12. EMSA assessments measure student achievement in Arabic, English, Mathematics and Science, at the end of the third semester. Performance in EMSA contributes

10 % of the end of year grade. While Mathematics and Science are taught in English, Arabic language, History, and Islamic Studies are taught by native Arabic speakers (ADEC 2010). ADEC's initiatives involve a transition from a textbook-driven to a learning outcomes-based curriculum that meets international standards, and the introduction of student-centered approaches that build on student knowledge, understandings and skills, rather than follows a one-size-fits-all approach. There is also an introduction to an ongoing assessment framework, ECART (English Continuous Assessment Rich Tasks).

On July 3 2008, the *National* newspaper announced that a mandatory Arabic exam would be introduced into government schools for all grade 10 students other than expatriates in private schools. Arabic language is compulsory in all schools, but examinations in the language have not been required. Students take a Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) entry test that measures student English proficiency to attend higher education. CEPA requires that students have a good grasp of English grammar, as well as the reading and writing skills necessary for university study through the medium of English. By supporting teachers to more effectively embed the development of these skills into their daily teaching from Grade 10, students should have a solid foundation to meet CEPA requirements by the time they reach Grade 12.

In 2011, ADEC introduced a new Arabic language curriculum for all Cycle 1 schools (Kindergarten to Grade 4). The *Khaleej Times* (6 October, 2011) reported Dr. Karima Mazroui, Director of ADEC's Arabic Curriculum Division as saying, "We have introduced a completely new approach and standards in learning Arabic through engaging activities that encourage active participation and meaningful communication among school students." To achieve ADEC's Arabic language curriculum goals, from 2011 onwards, Arabic medium teachers have been engaged in professional development. ADEC has also employed education advisors to support English teachers in their use of international best practices in language teaching. In 2013, ADEC also started to employ licensed native English-speaking teachers from overseas to teach English in Cycle 3 (grade 6–9) classrooms.

4.3 Underachievement in English at Tertiary Level

The Abu Dhabi government school reform has largely been driven by leaders in the tertiary sector where the medium of education is predominantly English. Previous curricular and pedagogic interventions had not shown any appreciable improvements in the English language competence of school leavers and providing Foundation English programs at tertiary level had become unsustainably expensive. Traditionally, tertiary education has employed faculty from overseas to provide Foundation or Preparatory level English programs and instruction in English. High failure levels in English are problematic. In 2006, test takers from the UAE earned the lowest overall scores of twenty countries, according to statistics from the International English Language Testing System consortium. However, with the

investment in the NSM at school level, the UAE has announced its goal to phase out tertiary sector foundation programs by 2018.

The UAE also participates in international large-scale student assessments such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international assessment of student attainment in Mathematics, Reading and Science established in 2000. Since 2000, the [OECD has attempted to evaluate the knowledge and skills of 15-year olds across the world](#) through its PISA test. More than 510,000 students in 65 economies took part in the 2014 assessment process, which covered Mathematics, Reading and Science, with the main focus on Mathematics. The reading assessment seeks to measure a student's ability to understand, use, and reflect on written texts. Assessments involve the application of cognitive and metacognitive skills to reading texts accompanied by a self-assessment of reading enjoyment. In 2010, the PISA test results ranked the emirate of Dubai, 42nd among 65 education zones around the world in reading literacy. In 2011, Abu Dhabi and Dubai were benchmarking participants with scores of 476 and 424 respectively. The UAE and other Gulf countries performed poorly, especially in comparison to richer nations such as, Japan and [Finland](#). By identifying the characteristics of higher performing education systems, PISA has given policy makers in the UAE data to identify effective policies that can be adapted to the local context to inform future progress of language and literacy.

4.4 Transition into the New School Model Curriculum

In a matter of months, for educators, parents and children in Abu Dhabi, English as the medium of instruction became compulsory as ADEC transitioned into the NSM. As Gallagher (2011) states, "such an explicit articulation of policy is unusually forthright....particularly so, in this globally sensitive region (p.62). In comparison, the introduction to English in Malaysia, also as the medium of instruction for English, Science and Mathematics, which occurred on 6 May 2002, was gradually phased in. The then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announced that the government was willing to re-introduce English-medium education 'if the people [wanted] it'. On 11 May 2002, the Education Minister Musa Mohamad confirmed that a bilingual system would be set up with English used for teaching Science and Mathematics. Then, on 21 July 2002, Musa Mohamad announced details of the implementation of the new system in national schools. Similarly, in the case of the Emirate of Dubai, the school reform was also phased in gradually with a percentage of schools becoming *Future Schools* with others gradually joining the reform. In comparison, all government schools within ADEC's NSM Cycles were destined to rapidly take on the partial immersion model. Formerly, distinct roles of English (internationalism, modernity, business, secularism) and Arabic (tradition, emotion, religion, culture, localism) started to blur their boundaries. Dualism remains, in some sense reaffirmed by the curricular allocation of the "hard" school subjects of

Science and Mathematics to the medium of English, and the allocation of such “soft” subjects as Social Studies, Music and Islamic Studies to the medium of Arabic. Unlike the prototypical Canadian school immersion model, where bilingual education is an elective choice made by middle-class parents, and unlike the selective approach in Hong Kong where only the academically strong are pre-selected according to examination results for bilingual education (Lin and Man 2009), all families whose children attend ADEC schools in Abu Dhabi today did not have a choice in partial immersion. For families who are not proficient in English, there are challenges to supporting their children in the medium of English at home (Blaik Hourani et al. 2012). This is true not only for English language development, but also in the content areas of Mathematics and Science which are taught in English.

A study by the author and her colleagues on constraints and limitations to parental involvement conducted in 2012, found that the language barrier sometimes created a problem in communication and understanding of curriculum and pedagogy. As one parent said, “[We] can’t communicate because the teachers don’t speak Arabic, and the parents don’t speak English. Sometimes we can’t follow up at home because the worksheets are in English. It is too rapid [a] change” (Blaik Hourani et al. 2012, p.144). Yet, ADEC’s Policy, 2012–2013, P-12; Standard 2, states that “educators will respect and cooperate with parents and the community in their daily work to advance student learning.” In reality though, due to communication gaps in the bilingual environment, the implementation of ADEC’s policy can be challenging for parents and teachers, adding to communication gaps.

4.5 Preparation, Development, and Retention of Teachers of English

Among ADEC’s priorities have been challenges pertaining to teacher development, recruitment, language facility and retention. A number of initiatives have been started to ameliorate the challenges. PPP providers have delivered professional development workshops to teachers in schools and in 2015, Emirates College for Advanced Education, inaugurated its Continuing Education Centre (CEC) as a subsidiary of the College to support the nation in the professional development of school administrators and teachers. On June 24 2012, the *Gulf News* reported a salary increase for government teachers “in recognition of the critical role played by teachers in a nation’s development.” The press celebrated teachers, acknowledging them to be “the building blocks for the development and progress of any modern state” (<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/government/salary-increase-for-government-teachers-1.1040083>).

The fourth annual education conference held at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in September 2013, had the theme ‘*Future of Education in the UAE: Innovation and Knowledge Production*’. The conference recognized the challenges facing youth in the UAE and Arab World and focused on the necessity to adopt exemplary contemporary methods of education. The focus was on developing

a knowledge economy through the medium of English. It highlighted that language facility had not only been a challenge for learners but also for teachers because many teachers had not been educated nor prepared. At the secondary and tertiary levels teachers did not possess the academic degree(s) required to teach the course(s) assigned. Nowadays, however, criteria for employment are more rigorous with ADEC requiring an Emirati entering the teaching profession today to have an IELTS band of 6.5 to teach in a Cycle 1 school; 6.0 for a position in kindergarten as an English medium teacher, and 5.5 for an Arabic medium teaching position. In the ADEC system, native English speaking kindergarten and Cycle 1 school teachers are qualified to teach integrated English, Mathematics and Science. They are employed to model pedagogical and content learning goals in the NSM as well as to provide models of the teaching of English. Research is conclusive on how crucial quality of teaching is for language learning and for learner achievement. Lambelet and Berthele (2015) state that more research is needed to improve age-appropriate teaching techniques so as to boost motivation levels and metalinguistic awareness of foreign language learners of all ages.

Abu Dhabi shares the challenge of teacher capacity building with the rest of the world. Globally, there is an exodus of competent teachers to take up higher paying positions in other fields. Issues of social standing have also played a role in teacher attrition, accompanied by teachers being overwhelmed by the actualities of the job, especially concerning classroom management and behavior (Ingersoll and Smith 2003). A survey conducted in 2011 however, on teacher job satisfaction in Abu Dhabi schools, reports 77.7 % on a satisfaction index in government schools. It also found greater satisfaction among males than females with highly qualified teachers being less satisfied than those with lower qualifications (UAE Interact, 16/08/2011). The role of women in Emirati society has grown in line with the country's development with some Emirati women putting personal development, a thriving career, and independence before marriage (Olarte-Ulherr October 31, 2013). The UAE has working women in all sectors. The government supports women with many women in government ministries and at executive levels in the public sector. Emirati women enjoy privileges including free education, housing and preferential access to public sector jobs. Career possibilities are generally very bright. There are five female cabinet ministers in the UAE government and women are at the forefront of several key government agencies, including the team that helped the city of Dubai secure the 2020 Expo and the Dubai Media Office, which is responsible for communications in the Emirate of Dubai. In February 2016, the UAE Vice President and Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, announced the formation of the UAE Gender Balance Council, which according to local press reports, will promote new strategies for female empowerment. More women value independence and self-reliance and choose to delay marriage to continue their education and establish their careers. Men have developed greater acceptance of the idea, although many prefer that Emirati women work in female oriented professions such as teaching. Despite a nationwide Emiratisation drive in education, most posi-

tions in schools are taken up by women. On January 1 2015, The *National* newspaper reported that ADEC employed 1485 Emirati school staff in 2014, but only 6.8 per cent of them were male. Of 28,078 teachers working for the Ministry of Education in 2013–2014, only 5.8 per cent, or 1654, of them were Emirati men. The Federal National Council statistics show a very small number of Emirati men working in the nation's primary schools, a factor that risks jeopardizing pupils' national identity and culture at an early age.

As more colleges and universities partner with ADEC, entry level and exit criteria for Education undergraduate degree programs are being reshaped by ADEC. Employment at ADEC requires an in-depth interview with accompanying IELTS band to enter the workforce. Teachers in the system may have lost interest in trying out new teaching approaches and strategies because workloads have been heavy, prohibiting time to adequately read and prepare. However, with ADEC teacher performance standards and mandated professional development that occurs after schools hours, level of teacher commitment is improving. As the *National* newspaper (May 2, 2016) reported, the UAE-wide teacher licensing scheme will begin in 2017. It will be fully implemented by the year 2021 in line with the requirements of the UAE National Agenda and will be a unified system to ensure minimum entry requirements are met for all nationalities.

There are several factors that may inhibit teacher implementation of educational reforms, including content, standards, assessment, instruction, and grading. Teachers may consider themselves inadequately supported to address issues such as class size, classroom management (especially in boys' schools) and resourcing. ADEC states that it will make every effort to ensure teachers can provide high-quality instruction; it recommends that class sizes for each Cycle not exceed: 20 students in kindergarten; 25 students in Cycle 1 and 30 in Cycle 3. In reality, enrollment requires class sizes larger than the guidelines recommended in policy so schools can seek approval for larger enrollment from their Regional Office (p.25). Not all schools are equally well resourced with some teachers in ADEC kindergartens purchasing their own hands-on materials. According to ADEC guidelines, Heads of Faculty will participate in ongoing professional development as provided by, and/or required by ADEC which provides site-based professional development aligned with the School Improvement Plan and other identified school-based needs. Teachers participate in ongoing professional development as required by ADEC (p.27).

Research suggests that the development of literacy in two languages ensures not only socio-affective and linguistic advantages, but also cognitive gains. Research on early bilinguals (Bialystok 2001; Bialystok et al. 2005) has shown that bilingualism is associated with more effective controlled processing in children and adults as bilinguals because of the constant management of two competing languages that enhance executive functioning, a higher level of metalinguistic awareness, communicative sensitivity and field independence (Bialystok et al. 2004). Learning the writing system of another language is in many ways distinct from learning the new language itself, especially when the scripts differ, as in Arabic and English (Cook

and Bassetti 2005). As Freeman (2007) states, “the cumulative evidence from research conducted over the last three decades at sites around the world demonstrates that cognitive, social, personal, and economic benefits accrue to the individual who has an opportunity to develop their bilingual repertoire” (p.9). It is this consensus that underpins UNESCO’s (2003) declaration that it “supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education” (p.32).

Bilingualism in the Arab world has received little attention (Al-Khatib 2006). Mastery however, of three registers of the first language places a tremendous first language learning burden (Abu-Libdeh 1996) on Emirati school children. Arabic is an example of a true diglossic situation where three varieties of the language are used within the same speech community. Gallagher (2011) discusses the linguistic complexity of MSA for Arabic-speaking learners and likens the learning MSA to learning a second language. In addition to the complexities of Arabic, English uses an entirely different script and it does not possess full one-to-one symbol-sound correspondence. To use Cook and Bassetti’s term (2005, p.7), it is “phonologically opaque.” Both consonant and vowel sounds are written in English, not just the consonant sounds as is the case in Arabic; and it is oriented left to right on the page – the opposite of Arabic. These and other linguistically distant features pose an additional load in an already challenging linguistic context for children, and may limit bi-literacy success. At the same time however, there are arguments in favor of higher cognitive challenges for school learners for as long as the challenges are scaffolded by effective teaching and curricula (Gibbons 2009).

4.6 The Partial Immersion Model

Of the many models of bilingual immersion education, the model of second language immersion ADEC has adopted, is an additive, side-by-side partial immersion model. ADEC adopted the partial immersion model because Social Studies and Islamic Studies are taught in Arabic. Malaysia adopted a similar approach to partial English immersion in primary school in 2003, teaching Mathematics and Science through English (Swee Heng and Tan 2006), while in Brunei two further subjects, History and Geography, are also taught through the medium of English (Lin and Man 2009) but significantly in both cases, English-medium teaching is not introduced until later in elementary school. Johnson and Swain (1997) identify bilingual teachers as one of eight core features of prototypical immersion programs, where the teacher has “the language proficiency necessary to maintain the L2 as a medium of instruction and to support and motivate the use of the L2 by the students” (“L2” refers to the additional language and “L1” to the learner’s first language) (p.8). However, this is not the case in the UAE as the English speaking teacher, unless a newly qualified Emirati, may be a native speaker of Arabic.

4.7 Foreign Expertise and Local Capacity Building

ADEC's curriculum development initiatives were spearheaded by English speaking foreign consultants and specialists. Yet, the importation of short term consultants is neither sustainable nor desirable in the long term so ADEC has employed Emirati nationals as decision-makers – many of whom hold a doctoral degree. By decreasing its reliance on external expertise and providing better education and training for nationals and home grown experts, concerns about loss of national identity have started to subside. Currently, key positions at ADEC are filled by prominent Emirati Nationals. At the time of writing, Dr. Mughair Al Kjhaili is Director General of ADEC. Mr. Mohammed Salem Al Dhaheri, is ADEC's Executive Director of School Operations; Engineer Hamad Al Dhaheri is Executive Director at ADEC's Private Schools and Quality Assurance Sector and Mr. Salem Al Katheeri is Director of the Al Ain Region. Dr. Karima Matar Al Mazrouei, Director of Curriculum at ADEC, who spoke at the 6th Languages Forum (ADEC, April 2013) explained that the campaign aims to improve classroom practices and the performance of reading while focusing on reading independently. Dr. Al Mazrouei is a proponent of teaching that draws from a variety of resources to incorporate reflective dimensions to enable teachers to independently develop instructional materials. Teachers are evaluated by school principals and heads of faculty on four performance standards: The profession, the curriculum, the classroom and the community and are rated at five different levels: Pre-Foundation; Foundation; Emerging; Established and Accomplished.

5 Recommendations and Conclusions

Improved English language proficiency for future generations of Emirati school leavers will occur through the NSM partial immersion model. Despite concerns regarding the loss of Arabic and a discussion of the disadvantages associated with studying in the medium of English (Al Maatooq 2008; Al Anati and Barhoumeh 2007), comparative research studies have shown that Arabic proficiency is unlikely to be negatively impacted as “students in bilingual programs who speak a dominant societal language usually develop the same levels of proficiency in all aspects of the first language (L1) as comparable students in programs where the L1 is the exclusive medium of instruction” (Genesee 2004, p. 552). Further, according to Cummins (2000), children educated through a partial immersion model, do not experience adverse consequences in the development of academic skills in the majority language. What is crucial however, is that expectations for bilingualism should be realistically benchmarked over years of the NSM's development. For children experiencing difficulty, appropriate support should be provided. Research shows

that 5–7 years are needed to achieve grade level norms in academic subjects taught in English (Cummins 1984). A recent longitudinal study showed that young children had strong accents after 4 years of enrollment in English-medium schools (Tsukada et al. 2005), implying that native accent is not always attained.

Interplaying in the success of the NSM are overall societal and cultural attitudes to schooling and the quality of the school system itself. The introduction of non-Arabic speaking teachers into the school system has not been without its challenges. As Guest (2002) and Littlewood (2000) have pointed out, sociocultural contexts such as membership and identity should be considered during the reform process. It is argued that as methodologies are exported across contexts, careful monitoring is needed to prevent failure due to the mismatch between teacher methodology and expectations, and those of parents (Hu 2002; Nunan 2003). Challenges occur when school reforms do not conform to the process of learning, when knowledge is co-constructed between two or more people, with language as the most critical tool for cultural transmission (Vygotsky 1986). Furthermore, for cognitive change to occur, Vygotsky (1986) theorized the need for dialectical (cognitive) constructivism, which emphasizes interactions between persons and the environment. In instances where English is the predominant means of instruction and communication for curricular and pedagogical change, social interactions and cognitive change processes create tensions in home-school communications as cultural and language tools are compromised or even abstracted from interactions. Wertsch's (1991) approach to mediated interaction stresses the importance inherent in the cultural, historical and institutional context that affects mental functioning. A critical aspect of the approach is the cultural means that shape both social and individual processes. For parental involvement to happen comfortably and effectively, dialoguing is essential to parents working with teachers to develop common expectations and support student learning. The language gap between the community in Abu Dhabi and the English medium of the school, has meant that translators have been employed to bridge the language gap, although language barriers have caused a limit to communication during the reform. Since conditions are not yet fully developed in Abu Dhabi schools for seamless communication from home to school, children's achievement may be uneven (Gallagher 2011). Initially, literacy development will be impacted by a bilingual model of education Cummins (2000) found that significant positive relationships exist between the development of academic skills in the first and second languages. His common underlying proficiency hypothesis (Cummins 1979, 2000) posits that development in one language automatically enhances development in another. According to Gallagher (2011), what is not clear is the extent of such transfer in the case of languages that are linguistically dissimilar, as is the case of Arabic and English. Bialystok et al. (2005) found that similarity in scripts eases the acquisition of bi-literacy, yet there has been insufficient research conducted to gauge the ideal time to commence the teaching of literacy in languages with divergent scripts (Garcia and Baetens Beardsmore 2009).

In ADEC's bilingual model, teachers and parents need to be aware that children's progress in Arabic may be relatively slower (demonstrating a lag) initially, by around 3 to 4 years (Baker 2006). ADEC should consider qualifying bilingual classroom assistants to work with groups and individual children at risk of not achieving grade level expectations owing to bilingual linguistic demands (Baker 2014). Introduced in 2011, ADEC's Arabic curriculum is crucial as significant improvements in first language literacy will not happen unless there is a mechanism in place to improve Arabic language curricula, pedagogy and teaching materials. In addition, there is likely to be a "silent period" while young learners develop comprehension in English, so for kindergarten children, language production may well take some time to emerge, necessitating highly qualified, patient and supportive teachers (Krashen and Terrell 1983).

What is certain is that as ADEC continues to implement its NSM curriculum, it will be important to carefully monitor and evaluate all aspects of the approach. In 2006, the Grade 8 curriculum outcomes were unrealistic as in: "identify the point of view in texts and justify their interpretations; write well-structured texts in English for different purposes and audiences, and dealing with more complex topics; evaluate the organizational patterns and techniques used in challenging spoken texts" (ADEC 2006, p. 21). ADEC's on-going curriculum review however, has the aim of raising the bar as students learn and develop by incorporating research and state-of-the-art technologies. Immersion schooling has been successful internationally (Johnstone 2001). However, while ADEC has lengthened the school day, bilingual education takes a lot more time than monolingual education to reap rewards (Perez 2004). A partial immersion model will lead to bilingual competence, but even in a full immersion bilingual model of education, school use of an additional language is insufficient in itself for full bilingual development to occur (Garcia and Baetens Beardsmore 2009). It is crucial for both languages to be supported in the community, if the UAE's goals for a bilingual and bi-literate population are to be met (Gallagher 2011). Currently, Emirati children, in the main, speak Arabic outside school, and parental knowledge of English, societal limitations, and language sentiment in the community may mean there is inadequate support for children's bilingualism to fully develop. Children who have educated English speaking parents may experience an advantage because their parents can offer support in English (Blaik-Hourani et al. 2012). It is crucial that the NSM should be aware of the tensions and dissonances created, paying close attention to the issues embedded in its application for the first generation of bilingual learners and for the nation as a whole. On-going research should be carried out to identify and alleviate areas of tension and challenge, with a realistic time frame set for its NSM to deliver its full potential in meeting the nation's bilingual goals.

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