Challenges of Teaching English in Tertiary Education in the Arab World

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Introduction

A critical look at the current state of English language teaching (ELT) in the Arab world shows that because the teaching of English starts in the first grade or even earlier in most countries, one would expect that by the time learners reached university, they would have no problem pursuing their studies through the medium of English. However, expectations are one thing, and reality is another. On the ground, there are frequent complaints from all stakeholders in the education process (students, parents, teachers, and school administrators) about the low proficiency levels attained by learners as they exit high school. University English language proficiency tests, such as TOEFL, IELTS, AUB-EN, and SAT, show that only about 20-25 percent of applicants to universities get the required scores for joining regular study programs, and the remaining admitted students would have to join an intensive English remedial course before they could take major courses (Shaaban, 2013). The recent trends in the field of education in response to the demands of the globalized job market placed great emphasis on the development of what came to be known as '21st-century learning skills' such as critical thinking and problem solving, intra- and inter-cultural communication, creativity and innovation, digital knowledge, effective oral and written communication, and collaboration and teamwork (Scott, 2015; Suarta et al, 2017). These new educational expectations have added to the burden of language communication educators, a burden that could be made lighter only through restructuring of curricula and teaching practices in order to primarily provide these practitioners with the proper training to help them sharpen and redirect their goals, skills, attitudes, and practices in order to fulfill their mission adequately. More than ever, they need to intensify their efforts to help develop learners' higher order skills required for satisfactory performance in tertiary education such as the communicative linguistic skills of interaction, presentation, and communication; the

critical thinking skills of analysis and synthesis, innovation and creativity, and evaluation; the psycho-social skills of motivation, active and enjoyable engagement, and attitudes; and the learning skills of learning strategies and independent research.

As times are changing for economies, education systems, and communication and media practices in the direction of more openness, cooperation, and interdependence in both developing and developed countries worldwide, the need for English as the global lingua franca has become more critical. Many world leaders, policy-makers, scholars, and average citizens believe that knowledge of English, the undisputed dominant language of international business and commerce, banking, higher education, information and communication technologies, popular culture, and diplomacy, is not only helpful but also essential for education, employment opportunities, and developing informed, global citizens (Crystal, 2003). In fact, proficiency in English has been seen "as a vital element in the skill-set necessary for successful participation in 21st century society" (Seargeant & Erling, 2011: 248).

If we take a closer look at the general outcomes of the English language education process at the tertiary level, we will notice that the level of proficiency in English of graduates of colleges and universities does not speak well for the prevalent English language education practices and policies in place. English in the age of globalization has expanded its power formally through explicit policies or informally through experimental and stable practices all over the world, in both developed and developing countries, not just in its role as English as a foreign language (EFL) but also in its new globally-espoused capacity as English as a medium of instruction (EMI), especially in tertiary education. However, many questions have been raised about the degree of success and effectiveness of these programs in teaching English and subject matter through EMI in third world countries in general, and in the Arab world in particular (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2015; Fareh, 2010; Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002). The challenges to English language teaching and learning have been on the rise in many quarters because the issues related to English affect vital sectors of society and have a considerable impact on the lives and welfare of future generations. Issues of quality of English language education rendered, the impact of EMI on the

perceptions of Arab-speaking learners of the status, utility, relevance, and use of their native tongue, and the effect English has on the construction and development of learners' individual and social identity are among such challenges.

The purpose of this study is to explore issues and challenges in English language education at the tertiary level in the Arab world, but the nature of the topic will take us to a discussion of some relevant examples and issues in pre-university English language education as the English language learning (ELL) process is a continuous one that starts in early childhood and continues through the university and the workplace, and beyond. Furthermore, since countries of the Arab world share a mother tongue and face similar challenges, we will bring some of the similar policies, practices, and learning-related issues into focus, but we will give specific examples from specific countries when needed to illustrate the nature of the challenges.

Current Situation

In this part, we will discuss the current practices and policies in the teaching of English that result in overall unsatisfactory student proficiency in the English language in the Arab region. Fareh (2010) identified the following issues of concern: inadequate preparation of teachers of English; dominance of teacher-centered methods; students' weak preparedness and motivation; rote learning; unsuitable and uninteresting instructional materials; unchallenging assessment practices; and lack of opportunities for practice and exposure to English outside the classroom. Similarly, studies by Bacha (2002), Tahaineh (2010), and Umair (2011) have identified another set of issues: students' inability to understand and organize resources; failure to manage time properly; absence of peer work; lack of accessibility to needed target language and vocabulary; and absence or ineffectiveness of language planning. On their part, Norton & Syed (2003) also highlighted the issue of overreliance on memorization and rote learning and added the issues of dependence on high stakes testing and teachers' lack of knowledge about local socio-cultural context, especially among expatriate teachers who are the majority in the Arab Gulf countries. Likewise, Manasreh (2008) focused on two issues relevant mostly to expatriate teachers: teachers' level of cultural sensitivity and difference in

values between students' and teachers' cultures and traditions. Malallah (2000) identified two additional vital issues: vague goals of ELT and ambivalent attitudes of students, teachers, parents, and schools towards English. Khan (2011) discusses the issues of lack of preparedness for college, linguistically and otherwise; English curricular deficiencies; improper learning environment; outdated teaching methods; and lack of motivation among learners. He concluded that "… the teaching-learning process sometimes seems to be futile when the actual skill development is not up to the mark" (Khan, 2011). Al-Khasawneh (2010) spoke of the following issues facing ELL: weak foundation for English programs (status of English, students' motivation, and teachers' lack of interest); teaching environment (use of mother tongue, few opportunities to practice English, and isolated culture); methods of teaching (medium of instruction, using Arabic in English classes, teachers' low proficiency in English, and lack of writing practice in educational institutions). Shaaban (2013) addresses the disparity between the ideals of the set curriculum objectives and the reality of classroom practice. He presented the following serious challenges to ELL in Lebanon: the dominance of old teaching methods such as grammar-translation and the audio-lingual approach; teachers' ignorance of or lack of understanding of the goals, objectives, and implementation guidelines outlined in the *English Curriculum (*NCERD: 1998)*;* inadequate teacher preparation and professional development programs; ill-prepared textbooks with multiple, disharmonious authors; and assessment practices not in line with curricular standards. Yaacoub (2017), in her study of EMI in 8th grade biology classes in public schools in Lebanon, concluded that the teachers conduct the science classroom mainly in Lebanese Arabic, with emphasis on presenting all technical terms and expressions in English. The reason for the use of a bilingual translanguaging approach in the science classroom is the inability of students to follow the explanation of concepts in English and the feeling that conducting the explanations, clarifications, and discussions in the Lebanese vernacular creates a zone of comfort and security that the foreign language cannot provide.

Persistent Challenges Facing University Learners of English

Studies on the challenges facing Arab learners of English abound. They all emphasize that Arab students perform below expectations at university, mainly because of their weakness in the English language (Fareh, 2010; Rababah, 2001; Ghaith & Diab 2008). This state of affairs continues despite the fact mentioned earlier that the teaching of English has been around in the Arab world for quite some time now and despite the fact that English is taught for 7-12 years, depending on the country. In fact, Arab countries have recently been heavily involved in a variety of initiatives and efforts aimed at improving the learning outcomes of English language education; these include introducing new English language curricula following international standards, starting English instruction as early as Grade I or earlier, having native speakers as part of the faculty in intensive English and communication Skills programs, providing continuous and varied professional development opportunities for teachers, acquiring professional accreditation for English programs, increasing number of weekly contact hours for English classes, developing new textbooks, introducing educational technology and new teaching/learning methods and techniques into the classroom, and adopting a variety of assessment techniques, with emphasis on performance assessment. Despite all these educational modernization attempts and reform initiatives, the teaching of English in the Arab world, including Lebanon, remains problematic and fails to meet society's expectations. The English language education scene still shows **"**inadequate preparation of teachers, lack of motivation on the part of the learners, teacher-centered methods and inadequate assessment techniques ... among the major problems that render EFL programs unable to deliver as expected" (Fareh, 2010:3600).

This situation is not unique to the Arab world. Goss (1999) identified low level of motivation by students, inadequate professional preparation of teachers, and large classes among challenges facing the English language teaching/learning process in Japanese schools. Cheng (2004) found similar results in his study of teaching English in China; more specifically, he identified the low level of English language proficiency and inadequate and ineffective pedagogical preparation of EFL teachers, the teaching context where the language is confined to the classroom, large classes, and the absence or weakness of professional development programs as the main reasons for the low standards of English in China.

In the section below, the challenges identified in the research as well as other possible challenges facing Arab learners and contributing to their low English language proficiency will be explored.

1. Instructional Materials

The use of linguistically and developmentally appropriate instructional materials is a prerequisite for teaching English as a foreign language around the world, and especially in the Arab world where the textbook remains essential in the eyes of all stakeholders. In other words, whether educational institutions adopt, adapt, or create instructional materials, the textbook remains the cornerstone of the teaching/learning process. Consequently, textbooks and other instructional materials, including technology-based materials, need to be relevant to students' lives and their language and content background, goals, and abilities. They should also be in line with students' interests and concerns, neither difficult nor easy (using comprehensible input, and culturally sensitive texts), and engaging in their topics, textual content, and practice activities. In my work as an English language consultant for higher education in Lebanon, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, over the last three decades, I have noticed that the main criteria for selecting textbooks are availability and the prestige of the publishing house. Very little attention is paid to the proficiency level of the students and their linguistic and communicative needs and goals; the relevance of the instructional materials to the everyday life, interests, and academic needs of the students; the ability of teachers to deliver the materials; and the alignment of these textbooks with the curriculum. Most books in use are ESL books, meant for teaching in an English-speaking environment, slightly adapted to make them look suitable for EFL contexts. In this respect, Kandil (2002) noted that "… students are not adequately prepared, from a linguistic point of view, to pursue their university education. The core of the problem lies in the commercial, pre-packaged language teaching curricula that are usually imported for the students and are not based on their needs."

In the digital age where students have access to a plethora of materials, both teachers and students could work together, go through what is available, and choose the most relevant and suitable for their learning purposes and for their project work.

2. Cultural Considerations

Using the learners' native language as the medium of instruction is vital not only for their motivation and the development of their cognitive skills but also for the development of their feelings of belongingness and for their national and sociocultural identity (Benson & Kosonen, 2013; Hanks, 1997). Importing foreign textbooks from 'inner circle' countries may sound like a good idea' especially that these textbooks are usually prepared by highly qualified and experienced professionals. However, the themes and values may be of little relevance or interest to the Arab learners, which renders their adoption of little value and meager returns at best. For example, in one language-medium university in the Gulf, the textbook used in one of the classes had a unit on cultural holidays, the authors included Christmas and Easter and Yum Kippur and Hanukah but nothing on Islamic holidays such as Eid Al-Fitr or id Al-Adha. Such practices show that the authors were deliberately pushing western values or that they were inadvertently exhibiting lack of cultural sensitivity.

At another university in the Gulf, a unit on sports showed girls and boys in shorts and swimming suits. This highly offended learners and their families and forced the university to throw away all the books and replace them with books used in Arab universities and written by Arab and non-Arab authors.

One last illustration concerns textbooks at a third Gulf university where one of the units was about rules for handicapped basketball and another unit was about directions illustrated through a text about reading maps and underground/subway schedules. The irony of the matter is the teacher felt that he has to teach all units in the book in a part of the country where learners had not been familiar with regular basketball rules of the game. Similarly, in a country with no underground, it is difficult for learners to relate to the purpose or content of the text.

The issues of cultural alienation and imposition of foreign values through English language classes has been dealt with in the literature by researchers like Karmani (2005) and Mohd-Asraf (2005) who discussed the "attitudinal resistance of Muslims towards English" and concluded by calling on native English teachers and textbook writers "… to take into account the socio-cultural aspects of learning English when teaching Muslim students" (Mohd-Asraf, 2005:103). Likewise, Zughoul (2003) called for avoiding the inclusion of content that portrays western institutions, values, or lifestyles as ideals to be emulated. He recommended that foreign culture be used in the context of comparison and contrast between native and target culture to illustrate cultural differences and to promote tolerance of other cultures.

Another culture-related issue was raised by researchers who felt that the rise of English as a global language and as EMI has contributed to the decline of Arabic language, one of the main elements of Arab and Islamic culture, a situation that prompted heightened concern among Gulf Arabs (Charise, 2007; Hopkyns, 2015; Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018). Guttenplan (2012), in his discussion of the low proficiency in Arabic of Qatar Education City students, pointed out that the State of Qatar, in reaction to this situation and in an attempt to protect the Arabic language and Islamic Arab culture, has shifted its language of instruction in schools and universities back to Arabic after over 10 years of using EMI; likewise, "Saudi Arabia has prohibited the use of English to answer telephone calls in hotels, private companies and government offices" (Guttenplan, 2012).

3. Targeted Linguistic Skills

Most textbooks and other instructional materials used in intensive English programs at Arab universities cater to basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and do not develop the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) that students need most to pursue their education through the medium of English (Cummins, 2008). In order for students to reach the level of CALP, they have to resort to the use of college English books used by native speakers; however, most EFL college students have difficulty coping with such books.

Intensive English programs and English communication skills programs (Freshman and Sophomore writing courses) in the Arab World in general pay legitimate academic goals and concerns like "critical thinking," "academic writing," and "autonomous learning" lip service only. In reality, what one finds on the ground is the continued domination of memorization and modeling. These skills could be enhanced through the adoption of teaching and learning innovative practices such as cooperative/collaborative learning, active and problem-based learning, especially group investigation and problem solving activities, as is done in many such programs in inner circle countries (Shaaban, 2014; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2005).

Learners benefit most when their college English classes, whether they are in an intensive course or in regular writing courses, tend to be engaging and enjoyable. Few years back (1987-1995), the American University of Beirut established the Hariri Foundation Special English Training Program (HF-SET), an intensive English program that prepared students from all parts of Lebanon to improve their proficiency in English to a level that would allow them to pursue their studies at American and Canadian universities or at English-medium universities in Lebanon. The program design involved setting objectives and learning outcomes that took into consideration the nature of Lebanese learners and the Lebanese learning context. It also took into account all the new trends in teaching ESL/EFL with emphasis on the following: cooperative learning as a framework of classroom interaction, communicative teaching and learning methods and activities, specially prepared thematic content-based instructional materials, continuous professional development activities, project work, and performance evaluation. Students in the program managed after one or two semesters to attain the needed score on the TOEFL that allowed them to join the universities they had been accepted at and to do well in their studies. The point is that careful planning and continuous follow-up would help learners achieve the desired learning outcomes in their intensive and college English courses (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1994) while curricula and materials imported from the inner circle would run into a variety of problems, especially when it comes to the cultural and societal relevance, interest level, and linguistic complexity of the materials used.

4. Teachers' Qualifications

A study conducted by Hadid (2000) to survey the perceptions of secondary students of the relative effectiveness in teaching English of native English speaking teachers (NEST) and non-native English speaking teachers (NNEST) showed that nationality of the teachers and whether they are native speakers or not did not seem to matter much to the learners. The majority of respondents, however, showed clear preference for native speakers, not for their native accents but rather for their professionalism (result of proper teaching certification and training) and the relaxed atmosphere they managed to create in their classes (Hadid, 2000). They also recognized that some of NNESTs have done as good a job if not better than NESTs.

One of the main issues that has faced English language education in the Arab world in the past has been that of professional development which was either completely absent or rare because of a faulty assumption by school administrators that teachers who have the proper degrees in English do not need further training and the parallel assumption by teachers that their being chosen for professional development is an indication that the school thinks of them as not qualified enough. Our experience as teacher trainers in Lebanon showed that although attitudes towards professional development have changed drastically in the last two decades, professional development is still very minimal because of claims by schools and teachers of lack of time and lack of funds. Even when opportunities for development are provided gratis by outside institutions, many schools don't join if the training goes beyond one day. Until such a time where schools and English programs recognize the true importance of continuous training whether through in-house activities or through joining seminars, workshops, and conferences, the effectiveness of teachers to carry out their duties efficiently will remain short of expectations.

5. Access to Quality Education

Although everyone in the Arab World sees the need for English language education, one major socially based practical issue remains problematic for most Arab societies, that of the disparity in access to quality education between learners from low socioeconomic

backgrounds and learners from socioeconomically affluent families. Quality English language education remains the sole property of the elitist, socio-economically able families who can afford to send their children to elitist private and missionary schools while the socioeconomically disadvantaged families have to be content with sending their children to public schools, where the whole educational atmosphere leaves a lot to be desired. This means that there is a problem of fairness in that children from low socio-economic background do not have access to good language education and remain at a disadvantage. Over the years, this disparity would grow, and people would feel that English turns into a source of inequality in developing societies. Governments should ensure that students in public school have access to quality English language education on par with students in private schools to avoid having inequality in access turn into future conflicts. In Lebanon, for example, the socioeconomic gap between the elite and the common people was so wide that in 1975 a civil war started that lasted for 15 years.

6. First Vs. Foreign Language as Medium of Instruction

The decision on medium of instruction involves a choice between using the mother tongue/national language or an international language, most often English, as the language of instruction in certain subject matter areas such as mathematics, sciences, and technology in K-12 and in scientific, quantitative, and professional specializations at university level. Scholars in various educational contexts have suggested that in learning contexts, "when ... communication takes place in a language known to the student, the chances of achieving understanding are high compared to when it takes place in a language with which the student is not familiar" (Ejieh, 2004:73). Furthermore, learners studying in a foreign language are more likely to face both academic and linguistic difficulties (Cummins 2000; Thomas 2009; Van Rinsveld et al. 2016).

In the Arab world, the issue of choice of medium of instruction has generated tensions and conflicts in many Arab societies (BouJaoude and Sayah, 2000). One such example is the situation in Qatar where the government introduced in 2003 the educational reform initiative *English for a New Era*, but it reversed course in 2012 and reverted to Arabic as the medium of instruction (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018) under pressure from students

and their parents and in light of learners' poor results on standardized tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Arab states have come to realize that abandoning the use of Arabic as a language of instruction in favor of a foreign language has added to existing problems instead of solving them, especially in schools where quality education in the foreign language is not accessible to learners. This accessibility extends beyond mere exposure to English to include exposure to effective methods of teaching and the use of technology and media in education. One of the main problems in many Arab universities, especially in the public sector, is the tendency to place students in English classes by their class (freshman, sophomore, etc…) rather than by their ability and language proficiency. Ennaji (1997:19) believe that diversity of levels within the same class whereby "beginners and advanced students are … put in the same class … should be avoided and instead homogenous groups are a prerequisite for any effective teaching" as the result could be lack of motivation on the part of the learners.

The choice of medium of instruction in tertiary education has developed from an experimental practice to a full-fledged controversial issue worldwide, and it has become more so with the spread of internationalization of higher education that helped spread the use of EMI in European, Latin American, African and Asian countries. Politicians, decision makers, and education and language planners and experts in these societies often start with the assumption that the native language, for a variety of political, economic, and social development reasons, cannot meet the needs and demands of the young generations in the modern, globalized, information-driven world. As a result of this stand, a prestigious international language, mainly English, is usually adopted as a medium of instruction for scientific and professional subjects (sciences, mathematics, business, medicine, pharmacy, international law, mass communication, and computer science) in schools and universities. In the Arab world, many policymakers usually cite the need for creating knowledge societies and for modernization through the use of technology as the main reasons for adopting EMI. They claim that as translation efforts and the coinage of new terms for new concepts and innovations by Arab language academies are rather slow, the need for the maintenance of a major role for English in education and other

essential domains of language use such as banking, business, and research remains a high priority for Arab institutions of higher education (Maamouri, 1998). Needless to say, the adoption of EMI brings to the surface issues of "cultural preservation and identity, access to education, employment and social mobility, the heightened risk of individuals without access to the English language becoming marginalized within their own societies, and the potential for loss of native languages and cultures" (Al-Mahrooqi and Denman 2015: 2).

Factors to Consider in Setting up ESL/EFL Teaching Programs

Having identified some of the challenges facing English language learning and use in higher education in Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world, this study will attempt to address some of crucial issues identified and to suggest some measures to deal with them more efficiently than is currently taking place. One of the first principles to take into account when planning and designing English language programs is the need to identify in no ambiguous terms the purposes of teaching English in the sociocultural context where the learning is taking place. These purposes, which naturally vary in some ways from one context to another, determine what kind of curriculum and learning program need to be drawn in the attempt to achieve these purposes (Shaaban, 2013; Shaaban & Ghaith, 1997). More specifically, the design should address the following essential issues that experts could add to or modify as the contextual factors dictate:

1. Intercultural oral and written communication needs and the extent of exposure to English and its culture in the specified context (Suarta et al, 2017);
2. The possibility, implications, and potential problems of adopting EMI in specific subject matter areas, especially in scientific, quantitative, and professional fields of study at the university and the possible means of dealing with them (Dearden, 2015; Jenkins, 2018);
3. The needed balance between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 2008); and
4. The preparation of learners for the globalized job market and for the possibility of higher education in the learners' country or abroad.

There is need to stress that the setting of learning outcomes for the teaching of

English should not take the form of copying outside models blindly without taking into consideration local peculiarities and the need to prepare all stakeholders (students, teachers, schools, and parents) for functioning efficiently and cooperatively within the new set perimeters. Blind import of outside, mainly inner circle, countries literally set back the cause of EFL and EMI in the Arab region quite considerably because of poor preparation for the introduction of EMI that engendered issues related to achievement in English as well as in subject matter and the perceived threat English represents to learners' culture and identity (Badry & Willoughby, 2016; Hopkyns, 2015; Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018; Shaaban, 2013).

Another consideration is the need to provide learners with ample opportunities for using English for communication not just in class, but also at the university and the workplace. The amount of exposure to comprehensible English language input in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear, is essential for language learning and language acquisition and could play a decisive role in developing learners' English language proficiency (Krashen, 1988; Krashen, 1981). This exposure should involve both oral and written communication, in informal settings such as everyday communication among learners, teachers, staff, and outsiders, and in formal settings, such as in EFL classes and in scientific, professional, and quantitative subject matter areas.

My personal experience over many years in the English language teaching profession in Lebanon and the Arab Gulf has shown me clearly that learners who had deliberately or accidentally a fair amount of exposure to spoken and written English have managed to reach high levels of proficiency in English. I have met many learners who had reported to me that listening to English music and English songs; watching news channels in English; following movies, series, and sitcoms in English; and using social media to communicate in English with their teachers, classmates, and friends have all helped them reach the fluency and proficiency that they demonstrated in their everyday conversations.

The third factor that should be paid enough attention is the variation in levels of

proficiency in English, especially in oral communication, in the same class, a situation that could prove very intimidating for less proficient and shy learners. The situation is complicated further by the fact that many of these classes tend to be large classes where discipline becomes an additional issue teachers have to deal with. The ideal situation is to have students distributed into English classes by levels of proficiency as measured by standardized international or home-made tests and to keep numbers low to allow for meaningful classroom interaction. In the absence of that option, higher education large classes could be managed through the use of teamwork activities by using cooperative or collaborative learning as a framework for classroom interaction and for project work (Johnson & Johnson, 1994; Kagan & High, 2002; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2005; Slavin, 1996). In this proposed framework the focus is not on random group work but rather on a systematic approach based on teamwork, division of labor, shared responsibility, and individual accountability.

Though this study delved into the issue of professional development earlier, it remains essential for any EFL or EMI program to have a professional development program that goes beyond the majority of currently used programs of providing new faculty members with few days of workshops during the year that have very little hands-on experience and often are presented as lectures, seminars, or demonstration activities. Professional development is a must in Arab universities where the teacher is still considered the center of the teaching/learning process and lecturing is "the most employed tool for information transmission in higher education, ...[where] around 70% of the teaching activities in which instructors engage consists of lecturing to students" (Schmidt et al, 2015). It is important for higher education institutions in the Arab world to realize that even when teachers are academically qualified, experienced, and certified, there is need for professional development refresher courses, workshops, and seminars in which they get exposed to new ideas and actively participate in experimenting with potentially helpful new ideas. English language teachers in the Arab world belong to one of three categories: native or native-like in terms of language proficiency, Arabic-English bilingual teachers, and teachers who are bilingual in English and languages other than

Arabic. Each of these categories has its own language-related issues that need to be addressed for them to be effective teachers in their educational context. These issues could be linguistic, pedagogical, cultural, or dispositional. Professional development ia a must to allow these people to deal successfully with their issues, to work together and function as members of a team with their colleagues, and to stay up-to-date on new trends and solutions for problems faced in their profession.

Conclusion

Despite claims advanced by many educators and linguists in Europe and the Middle East about the "imperialistic" nature of the English language (Edge, 2003; Phillipson, 2005, Karmani. 2005), the English language remains a badly needed, sought after commodity in the Arab World for the purposes of communicating with the rest of the world; for its role as a medium of instruction, especially in secondary and tertiary education (Mustafawi & Shaaban, 2018); for its being the most effective conduit for the acquisition of modern technology, and for its prominent position in the building of knowledge societies. However, if English is adopted without proper, comprehensive reform plans, the effect in the long run could be catastrophic in such areas as student achievement in English as well as in subject matter areas taught in English; personal, cultural, and social identity of students, and the value and prestige of the native language. It is such reasons that have led scholars to the belief that teaching English in the age of globalization "necessitates some changes in approach, perception, methodology and curriculum at large. These changes stress the consolidation of the mother tongue teaching, stressing localizing the content and making it relevant to the learner, keeping the status of English in the Arab World as a foreign language." (Zughoul, 2003)

Until such a time that an active translation movement becomes a reality whereby books and seminal articles are made accessible to the Arab reader in Arabic, Arab learners will continue to rely on English. And as long as English remains the undisputed global language of banking, scientific research, trade and business communication, especially the Internet, there will be a need English. In fact, Arab countries are realizing the importance of English and taking action and drawing policies to improve the standards for teaching English mainly

through starting English language education in schools as early as grade one, and it is not uncommon to find English introduced in pre-school (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1999). In addition, almost the majority of Arab universities offer intensive English programs or a "Foundation Year" dominated by the teaching of English and in English. Furthermore, most higher education institutions in the Arab world have incorporated both English for Academic Purposes (EAP) as well as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into their regular undergraduate and graduate programs. They have also established writing centers and writing across the disciplines programs to ensure enough exposure to English and writing practice in it.

Worldwide, the trend towards adoption of EMI is increasing, and the Arab world is no exception. The future of English as a global language seems secure for the foreseen future, especially its dominance of the university education scene (Deardon, 2015). Despite frequent warnings of the dangers that English presents to local cultures and calls by the United Nations to have children learn in their first language, the dominant impression remains that this the age of English, the global language that provides the new generations with the opportunities to join the global economy and find employment in globalized job market.

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