
LEARNING ENGLISH IN SAUDI ARABIA: A SOCIO- CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at investigating the cultural factors which predispose Saudi students towards learning English in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of Saudi teachers and students. The researcher attempts to examine these factors from Islamic social perspectives by raising questions that examine how positive these factors are and how they encourage and motivate students to learn English language. These cultural factors are : Islam, national identity, globalization, westernization, Saudi teenagers' attitudes and beliefs, motivation, travelling, social websites, knowing the purpose of learning, need for communication, native speakers' teachers, and the learning of Arabic language by native speakers of English .The qualitative descriptive research method was used. Two data-gathering tools were used for data collection: a questionnaire and an interview. The total number of the subjects was 226 participants. The analysis of the collected data shows that the most influencing factors upon learning English in Saudi Arabia are traveling abroad to learn English, knowing the purpose of learning English and Saudi teenagers' beliefs and attitudes . The least influencing factors upon learning English in Saudi Arabia are Islam and westernization.*

KEYWORDS: Saudi Arabia, Islamic Culture, Western Culture, English language learning

INTRODUCTION

Culture influences English language learning from different perspectives; one of these perspectives is the social one. Hinkel argues that learning or teaching a second or foreign language in the community without paying attention to the culture is hardly accomplished. Culture plays a major role in the process of learning and teaching .It is well known that Saudi Arabia has never been under the rule of colonization. So, Saudi culture has not been affected by foreign cultures, especially, European ones. Saudi might have been under effect of other foreign cultures except the European ones due to the pilgrims from different cultures who came annually to Makah in order

to perform *Al-Hajj* (pilgrimage) as a pillar of Islam. As English started to be taught in Saudi Arabia, the society did not embrace it immediately and it encountered public refusal. For this reason, in my opinion, there are strong influences of culture on learning English since Saudi culture has not been affected by foreign cultures. There are several factors that affect learning English in Saudi Arabia. One of these factors is culture.

Some Saudi learners of English have a firm belief in learning English by native speakers. A study conducted by Alseweed (2012) concluded that Saudi students consider non-native English speaker teachers more confident, effective and visible in their jobs. Moreover, Saudi students have a predilection for native English speakers when students continue to advanced levels due to teachers' enhanced capability of using teaching methods and of incentivizing students to learn. Nevertheless, Students believe in ability of non-native English speaker teachers to do the same as natives. In his study, Alseweed (2012) states that "*Although students showed marked preference for natives, they actually showed warmer feelings toward non-natives. Students made it clear that they do not behave differently with both types of teachers and they focus on their strengths*" (pp. 49-50). Moreover, Alseweed and Daif-Allah (2012) claim that the majority of people around the world regard native speakers as the perfect EFL teacher. In consequence, non-native speakers are not praised and esteemed gradually and they encounter favoritism in hiring for EFL jobs. On the other hand, native speakers are employed even if they have minimum qualifications in contrast to well qualified non-native speakers. Another factor that may influence learning English in Saudi Arabia is the dominant belief that English can't be learned accurately or properly unless a learner travels to the native countries.

Saudi Arabia and Islamic Culture

To understand the relationship between Islam as religion and Saudi Arabia which represents the original location of the emergence of Islam since the era of Prophet Mohammed –peace be upon him-, Ochsenswald (1981) writes "*In Saudi Arabia from its inception Islam has been the omnipresent and dominant factor in public life*" (p. 274). According to (Division, 2004), Arabian Peninsula, which is the old name for the area, has two main locations that matter all Muslims all over the world. Islam started from Makkah, the first main location, and then Prophet Muhammed –peace be upon him- and Muslims migrate to the second main location, Madinah. The Islam spread to the whole world from Madinah which was the center of Muslim's Caliphate. Hence, Saudi Arabia is the center of Muslims' countries and Islam is still strong and shining in it.

Saudi and National Identity

To understand what Saudi identity is, Ochsenswald (1981) demonstrates that Saudi identity is as much religious as national. Another definition of national identity is provided by Al-Haq and Smadi (1996) which is "nationalism (at KSA level) and nationalism (at Arab level)" (p. 309). In Clarke's view (2009), "*the process of identity formation are intimately related to the discourses and the communities that we work within*" (p. 187). Regarding Saudis identity, "the collective

identity of most Muslim Arabs of the Middle East incorporates three elements: the Islamic, the Arab and in the narrow, local sense, the national (which still consists of traditional factors such as tribe, extended family or geographical region)" (Nevo, 1998, p. 34). Indeed, Lewis (2003) states that Islam is not only a matter of faith and practices; it is also an identity and a loyalty during the Arab's ruling period from the time of Prophet Mohammed- peace be upon him- until the end of Ottoman Caliphate, Islamic soldiers, officials and historians never recognized themselves as Arab, Persian or Turkish; they recognized themselves as Muslims. He also demonstrates that most Muslim countries are still thoroughly Muslim, in a way and in a sense that most Christians are no longer Christians. It started with Christian and ended in Western civilization. In my opinion, today's Saudis prefer to identify themselves as Saudi instead of the three elements mentioned earlier. It shows a remarkable reshape of identity of Saudis themselves.

Education and languages in Saudi Arabia

The official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic. It is spoken by most people . For the expatriates, they usually use their languages to communicate with one another and use broken Arabic to interact with Arabs. Regarding the use of English, a quick look through the Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will offer an explanation of the reason of learning English in Saudi Arabia in particular. "*Article 50 of the Educational Policy in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia states that students should learn at least one foreign language so that they may interact with people of other cultures for the purpose of contributing to the message of Islam and serving humanity*" (Al-Seghayer, 2012). But a pointed question might be addressed that for what reason English was selected from all other foreign languages to be taught in Saudi schools. The answer is in the power of English itself. One of possible reason is that English is an international language. According to Al-Seghayer (2012), It is a priority in Saudi schools for learners to be capable of communicating with users of international languages . Other possible causes are claimed by Karmani and Pennycook (2005) in two ways . One way is that "*colonial powers had far more control over the curriculum than do the neocolonial powers of the present*" (p. 159). The other one is that the role of English has changed from a localized class dialect to a global class dialect. He actually admits that such a big question of why English becomes the perceived means for ideological change.

English in Saudi Arabia

Because of the necessity of English as globalization has advanced, Rugh (2002) acknowledges that Saudi Ministry of Education started to teach English in the fourth stage of the elementary school instead of the first intermediate school. According to Al-Seghayer (2012), "*Saudis' attitudes toward English are highly positive*". Al-Seghayer's point is that Saudis believe that English is essential for the country's development and it is used in many fields in the country. Al-Seghayer reports this according to the "results of a number of empirical studies conducted in the past two decades on the attitude of Saudi people toward English language in general and learning it in particular". He emphasizes the importance of English in Saudi Arabia particularly. Its importance is reflected in using it in communication to attain the jobs chances, gaining knowledge,

understanding others' cultures, studying overseas and travelling for pleasure. He reaffirms that English "remains instrumentally motivated as opposed to being used for integrative purposes" such as science and economy. Karmani (2005a) concludes his research confirming the role that English plays in the Arabian gulf region. At the same time that Mahboob (2009) explored that *"the nature of the English language as it is used in one country far from being a colonizing language, the English language in Pakistan represents Islamic values..."* (p. 188), I also believe that the English language in Saudi Arabia represents Islamic values. What I believe about Saudi Arabia is also believed by Mahboob (2009). He believes that "in some societies and cultures, English is indeed carrying the weight of Islamic experiences, cultures and ideologies" (p. 188). Regarding learning English in Saudi Arabia, "Saudi students do learn English but in many cases they do not have the strategies to operationalise and use what they have learnt" (Niblock & Malik, 2007, p. 166).

English and Oil

According to Niblock and Malik (2007), *"the turning point in the economy [of Saudi Arabia] came with the beginning of oil exports in 1948. Oil had been discovered in 1938, but the initiation of oil production and export was held back by the Second World War"* (p. 36). To describe the effect of Oil on Saudi Arabia, Lewis (2003) believes that since oil has been discovered in Saudi Arabia and since Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, has been modernized, many changes and notable influx of foreigners, primarily American, affecting every aspect of Arabian life. Niblock and Malik (2007) observe that *"once oil exports began in 1948, and significant resources became available to the regime, the potential of the state to move beyond the activities of a minimal state grew. The development of the economy now became financially feasible"* (p. 32). Ochsenswald (1981) has confirmed the changes occurred in Saudi Arabia and he related them to the development of oil extraction on a large scale in the 1950s and that changes indicated the importance of the new ideas and factors. Furthermore, Karamani (2005a) finds three connections between Islam, oil and spread of English in the Arabian gulf region:

the profound triumphant symbolism of an incredibly powerful language like English in the heartland of the Islamic world, where, of course, as much as two thirds of the world's proven oil reserves are located. Second is the strategic socio-political significance of English as part of a broader protracted struggle to pacify the political force of "Islam" in order to gain greater access to the region's vital energy reserves. And third is the deliberate use of the emotive force of 9/11 as a means of intensifying and expanding the teaching of English under the dubious pretext of "fighting the global menace of Islamic radicalism."

Here Karamani reaffirmed that *"the socio-economic and socio-political effects of the OPEC move were indeed staggering. Almost every aspect of everyday life in the Arabian Gulf region underwent a phenomenal transformation"* (p. 89). It has been noticed that English began to spread while major

oil producers were capable of continual supplying of oil from Arabian Gulf area. The aspects of diffusion of English were clearly obvious in "almost every major public and private institution in the region" (Karmani, 2005a, p. 93). Furthermore, *"Saudi Arabia's exploitation of its oil resources transformed the country into a nation synonymous with great wealth. Wealth brought with it enormous material and social change—so much change that Saudi Arabia became an exaggerated paradigm of possibilities for development in the Third World"* (Division, 2004, p. 25).

English as an International Language

English is the language of science and business. This gives a clear image that English is an international language. McKay (2003) states that English is considered an international language because many speakers are acquainted with it in their second or third language. Moreover, Kilickaya (2009) thinks that English is considered Lingua Franca (see figure 1). According to Karmani & Pennycook (2005), *"the power of English lies not in its first language speakers but in the vast numbers using it as a second language"* (p. 162). Mahboob (2009) argues that *"English is a powerful language worldwide, and that this power implies that English plays a key role in education around the world, including in Muslim countries"* (p. 188). But for what reason English is an international language? Crystal (2003) says that English is an international language because of *"its people, especially their political and military power... But international language dominance is not solely the result of military might. ..., but it takes an economically powerful one to maintain and expand it"* (p. 9).

Westernization and Learning English

A definition of westernization has been provided by Al-Haq and Smadi (1996) that it is *"imitating the West and adopting its values, views and ways of life"* (p. 309). Moreover, Al-Haq and Smadi (1996) have clearly stated the relation between westernization and learning English in a way that *"Saudi university students agree that learning English is [neither] an indication of Westernization nor entails an imitation and admiration of Western cultural values, although they"* regard the use of English as a way for enhancing one's cultural experience.... (p. 313). In addition, "Saudi Arabia has not been the victim of Western political imperialism nor the target of Christian missionary efforts; instead, it has been a fiercely independent state, although in a firm and mutually rewarding alliance with first Britain and then the United States" (Ochsenwald, 1981, p. 274). Moreover, Ochsenwald (1981) refutes that "Saudi students abroad necessarily become more secular minded than their cohorts in Saudi schools". A study conducted by Elyas (2008, p.45) concluded that students do not consider English a manifestation of an imperialistic purpose of Westernization of their Arabic identity. The effect of American culture upon the culture of the young Arab is observable, particularly after the Second Gulf War and the defeat of Iraq when English language was spread (Zughoul, 2003, p. 123). One explanation of the reason that may causes the look at English as a language that westernizes Muslims is what Karmani and Pennycook (2005) states that "schools in the U.S. follow a fundamentalist Christian curriculum". He suggests studying various languages and a bit of comparative religion and then the world might start to look a little bit safer.

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Communication and Learning English

In his study, Alshahrani (2012) states that "English is the medium of instruction in scientific and medical programs in Saudi Arabian academic institutions. It is also the language of communication in many professions such as medicine, the petroleum sector and aviation. Therefore, English has become a major component of the educational system in Saudi Arabia" (Alshahrani & Al-Shehri, 2012, p. 22). Alshahrani & Al-Shehri (2012) are surely right about English as being the medium of instruction in academic institutions because the medium of instruction in King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (KFUPM) along with King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) is solely English. According to (Al-Seghayer, 2012; Al-Shami, 1983), most Saudi Universities use English as a medium of instruction in most university departments in areas such as science, medicine, engineering, allied health, and other technical subjects. I agree that all Saudi universities are leading to fully apply teaching all subjects in English. For example, King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, requires that all students in their foundation year have to pass four levels in English beside other subjects ("King Abdulaziz University," 2013). I think students experience intensive English courses in order to be capable to study University's courses in English. To assure the connection between communication and learning English, it is often said that "the Arab world needs English to communicate with the world" (Zughoul, 2003, p. 139).

Globalization and Learning English

To have a clear idea about what globalization means, Zughoul himself writes "Globalization is simply seen as "a system designed to impose the American economic model on the whole world for the sole benefit of the USA and some other rich countries" (Zughoul, 2003, p. 109). Globalization is viewed as "deeply historical, uneven and even localizing process" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 17). Another definition of globalization has been provided by Giddens (2000) that it is sharing immediate communications, knowledge and culture around the world concurrently. I have always believed that globalization includes also cross-border social, cultural, political, and technological exchanges between nations and in particular, between people. Since learning English is considered among the education process, Aldridge & Christensen (2008) have agreed on the influence of globalization on education. Elyas (2008) believes that increasing globalization consolidates the need for English. In addition, globalization helps in spreading English in a way that "The use of English as a means and as a tool for globalization has contributed to wider spread of the language that is perceived as a threat to cultural identity in different parts of the world" (Zughoul, 2003, p. 127).

Islam and Learning English

Islam is not just a religion, and certainly not just a fundamentalist political movement. It is a civilization, and a way of life that varies from one Muslim country to another but is animated by a common spirit far more humane than most Westerners realize (Mazrui (1997). Connecting Islam to learning languages, language is viewed as a means of communication between Allah and his creation, and members of the same species. Allah says in the Noble Quran:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَلَمِينَ ٢٢

"And among His Signs is the Creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Verily, in that are indeed signs for men of sound knowledge" [Surah Ar-Rum 30:22] (Lallmamode & Adam, 2009)

To put it in another way, Allah created people with different languages and indeed they will use these languages to communicate. English is actually among these languages that were created by Allah, Almighty.

Besides, Allah asked Prophet Mohammed particularly and Muslims in general to invite Non-Muslims and call them for Islam. Practically, Muslims cannot call for Islam unless they know languages that Allah created, as it has been mentioned earlier. Allah says in the Noble Quran:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِّ لَهُمْ بِأَلْتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

CALL THOU [all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner [Surah An-Nahl (The Bee) 16:125] (Asad, 1980)

According to Lewis (2003) Islam is defined from different sides; a system of belief and worship on one side and the civilization that grew up and flourished with complete support of Islam. Islam teaches us to learn generally. Learning languages should be learnt when someone needs to learn. It is misconception that Islam prohibits learning languages. Islam promotes learning. The first Chapter of Quran which was sent down to the Prophet Mohammed –peace be upon him- was Chapter Al-Alaq (Ch. 96 Verse: 1). It starts with *أَقْرَأْ* which means *Read*.

Another verse also indicates promoting to learn languages.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other" [Surah Al-Hujurat – (The Private Apartments)- 49:13] (Ali & Pickthall, 1997)

It can be clearly understood that knowing each other certainly requires learning languages.

In addition, Allah promotes us to call to Islam in Quran.

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

"Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching" (Ali & Pickthall, 1997) [Surah An-Nahl (the bee) - 16:125]

I elicit that this calling mentioned in the previous Verse entails learning others' languages.

In addition, Islam considers all languages distantly from the era of Adam, the human who was created by Allah, The Almighty.

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا

"And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things" (Al Baqara (The Heifer)- 16:125) (Asad, 1980)

Our Prophet Mohammed-peace and blessing be upon him- set our master Zayd Ibn Thaabit (one of the prophet's companions) - may Allah be pleased with him- a task which required intelligence, skill and persistence.

"يا زيد تعلم لي كتاب يهود"

"Zayd, learn the writing of the Jews for me" instructed the Prophet -peace and blessing be upon him-

"At your command, Messenger of Allah" replied Zayd who set about learning Hebrew with enthusiasm. He became quite proficient in the language and wrote it for the Prophet when he wanted to communicate with the Jews. Zayd also read and translated from Hebrew when the Jews wrote to the Prophet. Zayd thus came to perform the important function of an interpreter for the Prophet in his dealings with non-Arabic speaking peoples. ("Zayd ibn Thabit," 2002). Karmani (2005b) emphasizes:

The Hadith is frequently cited by contemporary Islamic authorities as a legal basis justifying the learning of English for political reasons alongside its potential importance as a language for disseminating Islamic spiritual knowledge and not least, of course, its strategic role in accessing Western technologies and other realms of contemporary knowledge.

Culture and Learning English

Edward Sapir defines culture as "the socially inherited assemble of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives" (Trivedi, 1978, p. 93). Another definition of culture is "membership in a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and a common system of standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 127).

Kramsch (1998) acknowledges that language is related to culture from different perspectives. First, language expresses cultural reality in a way that people express their facts, ideas and events through words which reflect their attitudes, beliefs and a point of view which are the form of culture. Second, language embodies cultural reality. People use the spoken, written or visual means to create meanings through tones of voice, accent, conversational style, gestures and facial expressions. Finally, language symbolizes cultural reality i.e. culture is the function of language. Speakers show their language as a symbol of their social identity Elyas & Picard (2010) believe that a society influences and is influenced by teaching and learning languages morally and ethically. Also, it has been found that English textbooks don't culturally correspond to Islamic identity. Nevertheless, English shouldn't be taught separately from its culture.

According to Richards and Lockhart (1994), it has been found out that Saudi Arabia's culture and religion has not been noticeably influenced by English. Social context of second language learning affects learner's belief and attitude regarding the language and affects learner's motivation to learn. "There are often cultural differences between the belief systems of learners from different cultural backgrounds" (Richards & Lockhart, p.56).

"The focus on the native-speaker as the ideal speaker of the language, appear to be reifying the native speaker's culture" (Elyas & Picard, 2010, p. 142). English is essential for propagating Islam to non-Muslims... "Learning English does not spoil one's religious commitment"... Islamic teachings do encourage the learning of a foreign language... Islam advises to gain knowledge and certainly language is vital to do that. "Many Quranic Verses and prophetic sayings stress the quest for learning as a duty incumbent upon every Muslim", and Saudis consider learning English the important means of knowledge. Muslim scholars do not ignore the significance of English (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996, p. 313).

Belief, Motivation, Culture and Learning English

Belief could be affected by learning English as well as culture. Beliefs have been identified as "culture of learning" (Bernat & Gvozdenko, 2005, p. 3). "Beliefs of language teachers have been formed by ... society... social characteristics..." (Cook, 2012, p. 80). Moreover, Bernat and Gvozdenko (2005) agree that one of factors that could affect beliefs of learners is cultural background. "Learning English as a part of the culture of its people had the least impact in [on]

students' English language motivation" (Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009, p. 29). According to Alqurashi (2011), easing the process of L2 learning is resulted from motivation to learn L2.

METHODOLOGY

In his study, investigating the same issue by applying different research methods is called a mixed method design. The necessity for triangulation came to light from the ethical need to confirm the validity and reliability of the process. In addition, using various methods in a research design would also help to give a complete picture and deal with many different aspects of phenomena.. Two data-gathering tools have been used; a questionnaire and an interview. They are distributed online through *Survey Monkey*. There are 13 questions in the questionnaire (Q) and 8 questions in the interview (I). Due the policy of free using of *Survey Monkey*, the questions are divided into two separate questionnaires. The interview questions are included in them. Both survey and interview questions were asked and answered in Arabic and are translated by the researcher into English. The participants of the first survey were 111, and 86 respondents were in the second one. 29 interviewees participated in answering interview questions. The participants of the two surveys were all Saudi and the survey questions were distributed to unidentified number of high school students, teachers, and an academic.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Q1: *Do you think learning English entails westernization in Saudi Arabia?*

34 participants think that learning English requires westernization in Saudi society. 6 of them were asked in form of interview question "To what extent can learning English westernize Saudi society?" *It is a language and the language is a key of culture. The easiest way to spread culture is by learning its language.* Sapir-Whorf's theory of language and culture claims that "the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves" is extremely useful because it sheds insight on "two important insights. First, language, as code, reflects cultural preoccupations and constraints the people think..." (Kramersch, 1998). "*Learning English forces them to watch English movies which aim for westernization.*" students are encouraged to watch English movies in order to improve their language. On the other hand, one needs to prove if these movies aim for westernization or not. To become aware of effect of watching English movies on Saudis who are learning English, d'Ydewalle & Van de Poel (1999) come into a conclusion that adults acquire more vocabulary with the reversed subtitling mode (with foreign language in the subtitles and the native language in the sound track). Furthermore, he states that "more new words are acquired when they are presented visually than auditorily". Moreover, he concludes that "older children and adults preferred the original foreign movie with subtitles in the native language". At the same time that Cunningham (1923) thinks that " if a person reads a book and then goes to see the picture of that book, he will understand the book better", I also believe that a Saudi learner of English studies English in a class then he returns back home and

should watch an English movie to get a kind of exposure to language. Another participant supports the idea of movies which aim for westernization. "*An English learner embodies the character [of the language's speakers]*". Montgomery (1995) examines how some of the actions performed by words are inherently interpersonal in character. In other words, he believes that the language affects a learner in a way that he embodies the language speaker's character. This is clearly explained in another participant's response :

He learns words or sentences that are concerning deeds and explanations that regard the nature of society of the language itself.

One disadvantages of westernization is that

Students care more about English language and disregard Arabic language. They consider Arabic just a subject to pass. Arabizi or Franco Arabic can be a good example¹

Yaghan (2008) claims that at present, the use of Latin letters to write Arabic in all technological communication devices such as mobile phones has been increased greatly due to the wide use of English in Internet and mobiles applications as well.

Al-Haq and Smadi (1996) found that 50.4 percent of participants do not think that English "threaten Arab unity"

On the other hand, 77 participants do not think that learning English westernizes or Americanizes the Saudi society. The most respondents believe that learning English doesn't encompass westernization. This majority constitutes the positive perspective of culture on learning English in Saudi Arabia. 23 Participants were asked a question after the previous yes/no question in form of interview question. It was "Why do you think that?"

Arabic language will be used in communication.

Whatever English is used in the country, it is necessary to use Arabic during the conversations or writing. That is because Arabic is the native language of Saudis. Moreover, it's the main language of the country and foremost; it is the language of the Holy Quran, which is integral part of Saudis' religion. There is a balance in using both languages in a way that:

When English is needed in communication, it will definitely be used.

Historically, English now is the global language. Crystal (2003) states "English had become the dominant language of global politics and economy, and all the signs were that it would remain so". And he supports that in another place in his book "English will retain its role as the dominant language in world media and communications". One of the participants indicates that:

¹ Students write Arabic using English characters (Yaghan, 2008)

When Westerners were in so-called Dark Ages, they had learned Arabic language to translate Muslims' books and at the same time they hadn't been influenced much by Muslims. Now we do the opposite by learning English to promote our nation.

Q 2 : *Do you think learning English changes Saudi teenagers' behaviors and beliefs?*

In this question, 42 participants think that learning English changes Saudi teenagers' behaviors and beliefs. There was an interview question "How does learning English change Saudi teenagers' behaviors and beliefs?" Some participants answered as following: *If they can communicate with other nations, changes will occur.*

The participant thinks that integrating into English society requires changes in Saudi learners of English's behaviors and beliefs. According to (West, 2010), "much of what we know and how we relate is a result of a Western model of thinking—that is, many of us interpret events and behaviors through a European (American) lens" (p. 42). West's point is that changes have occurred and the point of participant is precise.

Since they consider others, it means they compare themselves to them and this is one basis of change's bases.

The participant believes that looking at English people proudly will lead to starting to change one's behavior in order to reach that level of them that a Saudi learner of English draws in his mind. In my opinion, this will not occur if the Saudi learner himself is appreciative of Saudi culture and tradition.

In order to learn something, you should embody the character of that thing.

It is obvious in his response that the Saudi learner of English's behavior and belief changes merely under one circumstance when the learner put the character "in-body," as when an actor gives a complete and compelling representation of a character. For Saudi learners, they are learning English just for learning, not for imitating and following the character precisely.

It's not the language which changes behaviors; it is communicating with Westerns through language.

It seems that the participant suggests that learning the language should be in Saudi Arabia since there will be only little chances are provided to contact with Westerns. Overseas Saudi learners of English may get to changes since they get exposure to language practice with the natives.

You are learning culture and definitely you will change your thought.

As the prominent philosopher Kramersch (1998) puts it, " language embodies cultural reality". The participant believes that learning a language entails learning culture and culture leads to thought's change. *"To the better."*

The participant positively raises an important point and believes that learning English changes Saudi teenagers' behaviors and beliefs advantageously. For example, another participant gives an example of the beneficial change in a way that he becomes punctual and organized. Moreover, a considerable change has been valued by another participant that learning English will lead to receptivity on others' society thoughts and their way of thinking and that may develop one's thinking or worsen it depending on one's upbringing and moral. Furthermore, one participant argues that one benefit is gained by Saudi teenagers who are learning English is that they will be able to be up on the new things which will reflect in his positively. Additionally, two participants acknowledges that the utility of Saudi teenagers who are learning English in their behaviors and beliefs is that it will open a new gate of another culture beside Arabic one and allows them to understand others' cultures. Also, one participant concedes that the usefulness of Saudi teenagers who are learning English for their behaviors and beliefs is that they observe development of English and backwardness of Arabic. One interesting point is raised by a participant who believes that the positive change that may take place when Saudi teenagers learn English is that It may change the belief that learning English is very difficult to learn.

On the other hand, 69 participants do not think that learning English changes Saudi teenagers' behaviors and beliefs. Participants were asked a question after the previous yes/no question in form of interview question. It was "Why do you think that".

One participant believes that: *"It is just a language used to for communication."*

The Saudi learner of English learns English for many purposes. One of these purposes which will not change his behavior and belief is that learning English merely for communication. Also, another participant agrees that: *"Saudi Arabia is conservative so it is hard to see a marked change and if change happens, it will be after long time."*

Hamdan (2005) complains that Saudi society is extremely conservative. Also, She claims that *" progress in Saudi society is rarely smooth or effortless"* (p. 50).One participant provides his experience: *"I know many friends learned English and their behaviors haven't changed."*

Q 3 :Do you think Saudi teenagers have motivation to learn English?

On one hand, majority of participants, 80, think that Saudi teenagers have motivation to learn English. They were asked in form of interview question "Mention some of these motivations." Some motivations are mentioned by two participants or more so I avoided repetition by mentioning one. Most motivation mentioned is : *"getting jobs."*

Other motivation Saudi teenagers have is that: *"It is a global language."*

A Saudi teenager needs to keep up with global development including business .One participant looks at motivation geographically: *"It differs from region to region according to culture. Saudi Western region's people have more openness to change than Saudi Eastern region's people. One*

reason is that people in the West receive millions of visitors either for business or religious purposes annually. Hassan (2006) states:

The western region of Saudi Arabia, also known as Hijaz, is unique in its ethnic diversity that is mainly because of the Hajj, where Muslims from all over the world come to attend this yearly Islamic pilgrimage in Makkah. Saudis who live in this region are of mixed ethnic origin and descendants of Arabs, Indians, Turks, Indonesians, Africans and others. Most of them settled in the western region and eventually became Saudis.

Some participant believes that "*studying abroad* " could be motivation for Saudi teenagers to learn English. Some participants learn English for being perfect in games. One participant believes that motivation is in: "*Traveling abroad and feeling incompetence with my wife.* "

The participant looks at motivation from a social perspective. The Saudi teenager may feel incompetence when his wife is proficient in English and he is not that one. I believe that it is less powerful motivation because feeling of incompetence appears clearly in financial side. One participant believes that motivation is in, "*Psychological motivation such as liking the language.* " Here, psychology plays a role in motivating Saudi teenagers to learn English. A participant says motivation is showing the interest toward the language and liking it.

On the other hand, 31 participants think that Saudi teenagers don't have motivation to learn English. Participants were asked a question after the previous yes/no question in a form of an interview question. It was "*What are the methods that can enhance motivation of Saudi learners to learn English in Saudi Arabia?*" A participant provides a reason of lacking motivation while other furnishes with the methods of enhancing motivation. One participant assumes that the reason is : "*Wrong impression about its difficulty.* " In my opinion, the erroneous impression is created due to friends who had previous misleading impression about English. For methods of enhancing motivation, a participant suggests: "*having few numbers of students in class, developing language labs and using smart apps* ".

These factors, however , could hardly be applied in the Saudi schools nowadays. There are large numbers of students in classes, language labs are almost nonexistent and using smart apps are not allowed in schools .

Q 4 : Do you think studying in or traveling to English native countries play an important role in learning English?

101 participants think that studying in or traveling to English native countries play an important role in learning English. They were asked in form of interview question "Why do you think that". Majority of responses concentrate on *practicing* as a result of traveling.

One participant believes that : "*Speaking is the most important skill especially with native speakers.* "

Definitely, studying in or traveling to English native countries will provide a golden opportunity to practice speaking due to getting exposure to natives. That would not happen without mixing with native speakers that helps greatly in improving the language. Another participant looks at travelling and studying abroad from sensation perspective: *“Most senses are use. He speaks, listens, and watches [at the same time]”*. Another participant looks positively at travelling and studying abroad : *“ Adaption to English society will force the learner to learn. ”*.

A Saudi learner will find himself unable to communicate with people there unless he speaks their language. In this case, he will try and practice until he acquires the language regarding speaking and listening skill.

10 participants think that studying in or traveling to English native countries don't play an important role in learning English. Participants were asked a question after the previous yes/no question in form of interview question. It was "Why do you think that?" A participant believes that: *“ It is not important although it has an effect. Many people learned without traveling abroad. But traveling is better due to practicing. ”*

Q 5 : Do you think social networks such as Face book and Twitter help in learning English?

Majority of participants,78, think that social networks such as Face book and Twitter help in learning English. 33 participants think that social networks such as Face book and Twitter don't help in learning English. So, social networks greatly affect learning English in Saudi Arabia.

Q 6: Do you think Saudi students know the purpose of learning English?

59 participants think that Saudi students know the purpose of learning English.

52 participants think that Saudi students don't know the purpose of learning English.

Q 7 : Do you think knowing the purpose of learning English will affect the process of learning English?

101 participants think that knowing the purpose of learning English will affect the process of learning English. According to Andrew Weiler (Weiler), one of the biggest obstacles to learning is the lack of a clear goal. He insists on the importance of having a goal of learning a language. 10 participants think that knowing the purpose of learning English will not affect the process of learning English.

Q 8 : Do you think Islam prohibits a Muslim from learning languages?

All 111 participants agree that Islam doesn't forbid Muslims from learning foreign languages. Participants are asked a question after the previous yes/no question in form of interview question. "How does Islam encourage learning languages?"

Some participant use well-known saying [They think it is Hadith but Muslims scholars are doubt about that] *"He whoever learns other people's languages will be secured from their cunning"* (translation is excerpt from: Elyas & Picard, 2010, p. 141).

Some other participants respond that *the Prophet Mohammed's companions learnt more than one language in order to call to Islam*. One participant believes that : “ *Islam promotes to pursue education and learning languages is included in education. Also, Islam advocates keeping up with age to reap benefits of others without being against Islamic teachings.*”

According to ("What is Islam's view about education, science and technology," n.d.), the Qur'an contains numerous references to knowledge and its importance, such as:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاٰخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيٰتٍ
لِّاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۝ ١٩٠

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day are signs for those of understanding." [3:190]

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِيْنَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ وَالَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۗ

"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" [39:9]

According to a participant, he believes that Islam distinguishes between educated and uneducated person. The more you are educated, the more you are respected in society. Education is available to everyone. Definitely, Shariah (Islamic law) science is the best to be learned, but other sciences are promoted to be learned.

يَرْفَعُ اللهُ الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَوْا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجٰتٍ

"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge by degrees." [58:11]

Also, Prophet Muhammad said,

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"Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge by degrees." [58:11]

Also, Prophet Muhammad said, "طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم"

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim." [Narrated by Ibn Majah]

"من سلك طريقا يلتمس فيه علما سهل الله له به طريقا إلى الجنة"

He also said, "For one who treads a path to knowledge, Allah will make easy the path to Paradise." [Narrated by Muslim].

Also, according to (IslamAwareness, n.d.), Allah says

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

"O Lord, increase us in knowledge" [20:114]

Another participant states that: “ *There is no verse in Quran forbidding learning languages.*”

I believe that is enough evidence to assure that Islam promotes learning languages. Also, a participant believes that Islam encourage learning languages in a way that: “ *Islam cares about what benefits Muslims and learning English benefits Muslims to promote Islam nation. I believe that learning English is a must.*”. Abu Huraira reported Allah's messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying:

" واحرص على ما ينفعك "

"Cherish that which gives you benefit". (Siddiqui, 2008).

Q 9 :Do you think learning English is important in communicating in Saudi Society?

59 participants think learning English is important in communicating in Saudi Society. They were asked in form of interview question "How useful and how important is English in communicating in Saudi Arabia?"

A participant believes that one of the advantages of communicating in English is

“When people get used to communicating in English, they can communicate in more than one language”

English will be a gate of learning other languages. "According to language contact hypothesis, languages have many things in common because they are constantly influenced by each other". (Eifring & Theil, 2005)

Another participant believes that: “ *English is full of scientific terminologies that can be used in discussions.*”

Most of discussions, particularly the academic ones continue in English. When the discussions are scientific, spontaneously specialized English terms will be used. A participant believes that ; “ *If a person doesn't speak Arabic.*”. English will be the common language used in communication so they can understand one another thoroughly. Another participant gives an example where persons do not speak their native language, usually but English. Generally, a participant believes that : “ *Communication skills are enhanced with learning languages*”. To

demonstrate the importance of English, a participant claims that : “ *Many orders of society tend to speak English.* ”.

In my opinion, this support of using English for communicating in societies could be reasoned that it is a global language .

On the other hand, 52 participants think that learning English is not important in communicating in Saudi Society. They were asked in form of interview question "Why do you think that?" Most of them pay attention to ignorance of speaking English. A participant believes that ; “ *Saudi society is educated enough to use Arabic in communication.* ”.

The official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic. English is used there as a foreign language not as a second language. Majority foreigners who come for working end in speaking Arabic understandably. Conversely, another participant believes that English is important to communicate with foreigners. One participant endeavors to have the two thoughts He believes that English is not used in communicating in Saudi Arabia with the exception of Pilgrimage time.

One participant believes that : “ *Few Saudis speak English and even those who speak English would rather speak Arabic in their conversations* ”. Another participant believes that Arabic must be used because : “ *We need to preserve our culture.* ”

Q 10 : Do you think English should be taught by native speakers in Saudi educational institutions?

40 participants think learning English should be taught by native speakers in Saudi educational institutions. 46 participants think learning English should not be taught by native speakers in Saudi educational institutions. I believe that English doesn't need to be taught by natives because what makes natives different from non-natives is the accent or the pronunciation. It could be acquired by listening much to natives speak in many different resources such as media.

Q 11 : Do you think the following statement "Saudis must learn English but English natives don't have to learn Arabic" affects learning English in Saudi Arabia?

37 participants think the statement affects learning English in Saudi Arabia. 49 participants think the statement does not affect learning English in Saudi Arabia. I believe that one participant above has tackled this issue, He says: "when Westerners were in so- called Dark Ages, they had learned Arabic language to translate Muslims' books and at the same time they hadn't been influenced much by Muslims. Now we do the opposite by learning English to promote our nation"

Q 12 : Do you think learning English should be learned voluntarily?

29 participants think learning English should be learned voluntarily . 57 participants think learning English should not be learned voluntarily. Majority participants agree that English is an obligation in learning. I agree that English is a global language it is used in medicine and is required in many jobs. I claim that one day may come to have English-illiterate.

Q13: Do you think globalization plays an important role in learning English in Saudi Arabia?

53 participants think globalization plays an important role in learning English in Saudi Arabia. 33 participants do not think that. In my opinion, English as a global language evokes the importance of English and the essence of learning English.

CONCLUSION

As the results show the most significant factors that influence learning English in Saudi Arabia are : **traveling abroad to learn English, knowing the purpose of learning English and Saudi teenagers' beliefs and attitudes** . Factors which have no significant impact are: **Islam and westernization**. Islam doesn't retard learning languages. Instead, it promotes and encourages learners to learn languages for the sake of spreading Islam and communicating with other people and nations. Westernization doesn't affect learning English in Saudi Arabia if the person is old enough. About half of the participants think that learning English affect teenagers' beliefs and attitudes, and half of the participants do not think so . This is the only factor that has almost equality in responses which shows a great attention paid by Saudi society to beliefs and attitudes. Regarding knowing the purpose of learning English, I believe that intensive concentrating on it in teaching will affect learning English positively. That's because 91 % of Saudi learners of English, according to the results, think that the purpose of learning English should be very obvious to students. Spending three classes or more on that will not a waste of time; instead it will improve the learning process and expedite it as well. It is comprehended that 47 % of students entirely lack knowing the purpose of learning English. It seems from that they provide a solution of their weakness in language by asking indirectly to provide them with the purpose so their motivation to learn English will increase. Regarding change occurring in Saudis' attitudes and belief; I believe that everything has its positive and negative sides and change which is taking place because of learning English will be definitely positive. Moreover, learning English will lead to receptivity on others' society thoughts and their way of thinking and that may develop one's thinking or worsen it depending on one's upbringing and morals. Furthermore, one benefit that is gained by Saudi teenagers learning English is that they will be able to be up to date on the new discoveries and inventions. It can be concluded that Saudi teenagers have motivation to learn English.

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