

## **Significance of English as a Foreign Language in Arab Culture**

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### **Abstract**

It has been noticed that many Arab students need to understand and know more about the cultural aspect of learning and teaching the English Language which builds the gap between the benefit of foreign Language teaching; input and outputs for assimilate the new language culture. The study aims at investigating the significance of English as a Foreign Language in Arab Culture. The study adopted the descriptive-analytical method. The required data were obtained by the mean of a questionnaire. The sample of the study was sixty (60) EFL Arab Teachers. The responses of the selected samples were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program. The study found that: EFL Arab Teachers tend to assimilate the English culture. EFL Arab Teachers find some life styles that are not found in EFL Arab countries as a result of their contact with English culture. The study recommends preparing parallel programs to encourage Arab students and assimilate positive English culture, to use English culture to reinforce and strengthen the political and cultural relationships between countries, and to improve arts and talents following English culture.

**Keywords:** Arab Culture; Arab Students; English Culture; Importance of English, Foreign Language

أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الثقافة العربية:  
مستخلص الدراسة

لوحظ أن العديد من الطلاب العرب بحاجة إلى فهم أو معرفة المزيد عن الجانب الثقافي لتعلم وتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية مما يبني الفجوة بين الاستفادة من تعليم اللغة الأجنبية في المدخلات والمخرجات لإكتساب ثقافة لغة جديدة. هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الثقافة العربية. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي للحصول على البيانات المطلوبة عن طريق الاستبيان. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ستون (60) معلما من المعلمين العرب المدرسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم تحليل إجابات العينات المختارة باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الإحصائية للعلوم

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الاجتماعية (SPSS) توصلت إلى عدة نتائج أهمها: هنالك اتجاهات للطلاب العرب الي تقليد الثقافة الانجليزية, يجد الطلاب العرب بعض طرق الحياة في الثقافة الانجليزية غير الموجودة في بلادهم نتيجة اتصالهم بالثقافة الإنجليزية. توصي الدراسة بإعداد برامج موازية لتشجيع اتجاهات الطلاب العرب على تقليد الثقافة الانجليزية السمة، والاستفادة من الثقافة الإنجليزية لتعزيز وتقوية العلاقات الثقافية والسياسية بين البلدان، وتحسين الفنون والمواهب من خلال اتباع الثقافة الإنجليزية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الثقافة العربية; الطلاب العرب; الثقافة الإنجليزية; أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية; اللغة الأجنبية

## **Background**

English who speak English in the world as their headmost language are more than 300 million people all over the world and used as a second language by as many, if not more than, it could be said that: (one of three all English users are considered good users of English) Crystal (2003: 69). This denotes and proves the benefit and the importance of the English Language to non-native speakers of the English Language including Arab Students.

## **Statement of the Problem**

It has been noticed that the majority of EFL Arab Teachers do not understand or know about the cultural aspects of learning and teaching English, which builds a gap between the benefits of the foreign language teaching; input and outputs for gaining and acquiring of new language cultural concepts, thus; this lead the researcher make attempts to study in-depth this titles about the importance of English as a foreign language in Arab culture.

## **Significance of the Study**

Many benefits accrue to the individual when he/she learns English language and its culture, so this study is expected to be beneficial for the EFL teachers, students or anyone concerned about the EFL Language, the most important of which are the following: Establishing relations among people, the clear benefit in research writing, and knowing English cultures, especially the positive ones.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The study aims to:

- 1- Present the limits of EFL Arab Teachers feeling to the need for English culture.
- 2- Investigate the reasons behind the hindering of cultural aspects to benefit from English culture for Arab culture.
- 3- Shed light on the factors those affect the overlapping between the English and Arab cultures.

## **Questions of the Study**

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- 1- To what extent do EFL Arab Students benefits from English culture?
- 2- What are the EFL Arab Teachers' points of view on the effect of English culture?
- 3- What are the main factors that affect the overlapping between the English and Arabic cultures?

## **Hypotheses of the Study**

- 1- EFL Arab Students considerably benefit from English culture.
- 2- EFL Arab Teachers consider English culture as an essential beneficial factor to EFL Arab Students.
- 3- The effect of the mother tongue is the main factor that affects the overlapping between the English and Arabic cultures.

## **Limits of the Study**

The study is confined to the subject of "Significance of English as a foreign Language in Arabic Culture" during the period (2022).

## **Literature Review**

### ***Definitions***

Arab culture is the culture of the Arabs, from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea. Language, literature, gastronomy, art, architecture, music, spirituality, philosophy, mysticism (etc.) are all part of the cultural origins of the Arabs ( Doris., Behrens-Abouseif, (1999)

The Arab world spreads across 22 countries which consist of over 200 million people. Arab is a term used to be only for people of the Arabian Peninsula who are Semitic but now, with the expansion of Arab caliphates in the past, it's used to describe the people whose mother tongue is Arabic. Arab now is a cultural term, not a racial term, and Arabic people come from various ethnic and religious backgrounds.

### ***The Spread of English Language in the Arab Speaking Countries***

The English language is used all over the world expendable as an international language; this is due to the recent technology and the political control of America, and many English speaking countries in the world. Many Hollywood movies and pop culture have a huge effect on the extension of the English language throughout the world. Middle Eastern countries, especially Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Iraq have been heavily influenced by the English Language in the last few years. Since Islam has allowed people to learn other nations' languages for security aims, the English language has been taking place within Arab countries. The need to study and to know other languages has increased since the second Gulf war in 2003. (Yacoub, 2010)

### ***Issues in Bilingual Education***

Bilingualism or multilingualism is very common in societies. Bilingualism or multilingualism is those who speak or use two or more languages in their everyday lives. Romaine (1995:55) mentions that:

"Learning to speak more than one language often involves putting together material from two languages. This is part of the normal process of growing up bilingually and acquiring competence in more than one language"

The ability to use more than one language perfectly depends on many factors including not only mastering grammatical or lexical aspects of language but also the sociolinguistic aspect of language which link between culture and language and the people who use it.

### ***Cultural Identity, Globalization, and the Self***

The topic of identity – and culture is more researched within various scientific areas; anthropology, psychology and sociology among others. The approach to identity is built basically on the works of Stuart Hall (e.g. 1992, 2002,2003) has dealt with the changes of cultural identities from many different views, including the impact of cultural diaspora and globalization. As a concept, cultural identity is one of many interpretations, and not without contradiction. For example, Hall (2003: 233) theorizes

"two ways of reflecting on 'cultural identity: first, identity understood as collective, shared history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity that is considered to be fixed or stable; and second, identity understood as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory – an identity marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences."

The above clarification of cultural identities looks changeable according to the views looked at.

### ***Arab Cultural Identity and Globalization***

Social connection is of higher importance in Arab countries and cultures. Family unity considers is one of the most important aspects of Arab society. While self-reliance, individuality, and responsibility are taught by Arabic parents to their children, "Not like the individualism that can be seen within North America (every individual for himself only, individual rights, families living on their own, far away from their relatives, and so on), Arab groups support the importance of the group more than individualism. According to Arab culture, the needs of the group are of higher importance than the needs of individualism. (Esherick, 2006: 68) .

### ***Cultural Awareness***

To facilitate learning, teachers need to "accommodate EFL teachers' background knowledge and skills" Danielson, (2015: 41). "By the time children begin their formal education at the age of five or six, they have already internalized many of the basic values and beliefs of their native culture" (Saville-Troike, 1978). This is the often hidden element of culture that is so important to successful bilingual education. All EFL Arab Teachers bring to the classroom out-of-school knowledge that influences school-based learning.

### ***The Claims of Multiculturalism***

Multiculturalism is like "identity politics," "the politics of difference," and "the politics of recognition," all of which share a commitment to revaluing disrespected identities and changing dominant patterns of representation and communication that marginalize certain groups (Gutmann 2003). (Song 2008) sees Language and religion are at the heart of many claims for cultural accommodation by immigrants.

### ***Justification for Multiculturalism***

A justification for multiculturalism comes from within liberalism. Cultures provide contexts of choice, which provide and make meaningful the social scripts and narratives from which people fashion their lives (Appiah 2005). Second, culture is instrumentally valuable for individual self-respect. (Scheffler 2010) denotes:

"Luck egalitarians argue that individuals should be held responsible for inequalities resulting from their own choices, but not for inequalities deriving from chosen circumstances"

It is clear that and based on, or holding, the belief that everyone is equal and should have the same rights and opportunities.

## Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive analytic method. The population of this study is EFL Arab Teachers (Sudanese and Iraqi) from Secondary Schools. The sample of the study has been selected was (60). The study used a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data, it composes of nine statements, each statement has three options, they are respectively (agree, neutral, and disagree). The study used (SPSS) for analyzing the data collected.

### Sampling

The sample of the study is EFL Arab Teachers (Sudanese and Iraqi) from Secondary Schools. 60 EFL Arab Teachers were selected.

### Population and sample of the study

Population of the study will be EFL teachers both Sudanese and Iraqi Arab teachers

### Tools of the Research

In this research, the data collection will be gathered through a questionnaire as a tool for collecting data needed for the study.

### Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

The study used the statistical package for social sciences to analyse the collected data. The researcher used Pearson's correlation and obtained as follows:

### Reliability

The study used the SPSS programme for the statistical analytical operation as follows

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N(\sum XY) - (\sum X \sum Y)}{\sqrt{[N(\sum X^2) - (\sum X)^2][N(\sum Y^2) - (\sum Y)^2]}}$$

According to statistics the validity of the questionnaire was calculated from the square root of reliability (0.73).

$$\begin{aligned} \sqrt{\text{Val}} &= \text{reliability} \\ N &= 33 \quad \sum x \quad y = 14445 \\ \sum x \quad \sum y &= 472310 \\ \sum x^2 &= 16348 \\ \sum y^2 &= 12835 \\ (\sum x)^2 &= 532900 \\ (\sum y)^2 &= 418609 \end{aligned}$$

## Data Analysis and Discussion

This part is intended to present an analysis and discussion of data that has been collected by the means of a questionnaire it is also intended to test the research hypothesis against the results that have been reached. Statement (1): EFL Arab Teachers tend to imitate the Western culture

**Table (4.1)**

| S1    |         |           |         |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|
|       |         | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Neutral | 4         | 6.7     |
|       | Agree   | 56        | 93.3    |
|       | Total   | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.1) shows that teachers who agree were 93.3% and 6.7% neutral, so the majority of the teachers who agree are 93.3 % .Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (2) :EFL Arab Teachers find some life ways that are not found in EFL Arab countries

**Table (4.2)**

| S2    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 3         | 5.0     |
|       | Neutral  | 17        | 28.3    |
|       | Agree    | 40        | 66.7    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.2) reveals that among teachers who agree were 66.7% ,28.3% neutral and 5.0 % disagree. So the majority of teachers who agree are 66.7% . Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (3): Imitation of Western culture has positive side and benefits

**Table (4.3)**

| S3    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 15        | 25.0    |
|       | Neutral  | 15        | 25.0    |
|       | Agree    | 30        | 50.0    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.3) shows that teachers who agree were 50.0 % , 25.0% neutral and 25.5 % disagree. So the teachers who agree are 50.0% . Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (4) :Western culture adds effects on our beliefs and religious

**Table (4.4)**

| S4    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 6         | 10.0    |
|       | Neutral  | 9         | 15.0    |
|       | Agree    | 45        | 75.0    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |



Table (4.4) reveals that teachers who agree were 75.0%, 15.5% neutral and 10.0% disagree. So the majority of teachers who agree are 75.0% . Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (5): Learning English culture improves EFL Arab Teachers' performances.

**Table (4.5)**

| S5    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 15        | 25.0    |
|       | Neutral  | 12        | 20.0    |
|       | Agree    | 33        | 55.0    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.5) shows that teachers who agree were 55.0%, 25.0% disagree and 20.0% are neutral, so the teachers who agree 55.0%, Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (6): the English language adds more to Arab culture in different situations

**Table (4.6)**

| S6    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 9         | 15.0    |
|       | Neutral  | 17        | 28.3    |
|       | Agree    | 34        | 56.7    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.6) reveals that among teachers who agree 56.7%, 28.3% were neutral and 15.0% disagree. So the teachers who agree are 56.7% . Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (7): Having English culture improve the Education system

**Table (4.7)**

| S7    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 3         | 5.0     |
|       | Neutral  | 10        | 16.7    |
|       | Agree    | 47        | 78.3    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

Table (4.7) claims that teachers who agree are 78.3% , 16.7 neutral and 5.0% disagree. So the majority of teachers who agree are 78.3%. Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (8): Arab people take the positive side of the English culture.

**Table (4.8)**

| S8    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 23        | 38.3    |
|       | Neutral  | 14        | 23.3    |
|       | Agree    | 23        | 38.3    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

This table (4.8) shows that teachers are those who take the positive side of the English culture and they were 38.3% while 23.3% neutral and 38.3% disagree. Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

Statement (9): Many Arab people disagree with the attitude which stands against their religion

**Table (4.9)**

| S9    |          |           |         |
|-------|----------|-----------|---------|
|       |          | Frequency | Percent |
| Valid | Disagree | 7         | 11.7    |
|       | Neutral  | 8         | 13.3    |
|       | Agree    | 45        | 75.0    |
|       | Total    | 60        | 100.0   |

This table (4.9) shows that teachers who agree are 75.0%, 13.3% neutral and 11.7% disagree so the majority of teachers who agree are 75.0%. Therefore, the statement is acceptable.

## Testing the Hypotheses

This part compares the hypotheses which relate to statements in the questionnaire to know the results which the researcher was obtaining.

### *Hypotheses (1):*

EFL Arab Teachers see the use of the English language has affected positively students' culture.

According to the statistical results; the majority of teachers in the table (4) (75.0%), table (9) (75.0%) and table (7) (78.3%) agree that EFL Arab Teachers see the use of the English language has a positive influence on students'. So, the results of the study proved the hypothesis.

### *Hypotheses (2):*

EFL Arab Teachers consider English culture as an essential beneficial factor to EFL Arab Students.

This hypothesis is well accepted and proved by tables (1, 9,3) (shows 75%,50% ,93.3%), table (2,6) ( shows 56.7%,66.7%), and table (3) ( shows 50%). EFL Arab Teachers



consider English culture as an essential beneficial factor to EFL Arab Students. So the results proved that this hypothesis is accepted.

### ***Hypotheses (3):***

The effect of the mother tongue is the main factor that affects the overlapping between the English and Arabic cultures.

The majority of teachers in table (6) (shows 56.67%). English language adds more to Arab culture in different situations. So, the results proved that this hypothesis is accepted.

## **Conclusion**

### ***Findings***

- 1- EFL Arab Teachers' teacher trend to imitate the western culture.
- 2- EFL Arab Teachers find some life ways that are not found in EFL Arab countries, as a result of their contact with English culture.
- 3- Taking the positive aspects of the culture does not consider a blind imitation of western culture
- 4- Doing and acting as western countries become a fashion imitated by Arab youth
- 5- Western culture is distinguished by many features that are not found in their own culture
- 6- Western culture adds effects on our beliefs and religions because they have no religious beliefs as Iraqi have, Iraqi are Muslims

### ***Recommendations***

- 1- Preparing a parallel programmes should be made to encourage EFL Arab Teacher's trends to imitate their own culture.
- 2- It's recommended using English culture to reinforce and strengthen the political and cultural relationships between countries.
- 3- The research recommends using English culture followed in the English education system.
- 4- It's recommended improving arts and talents through English culture.
- 5- The developing industrial revelation could be through English culture.
- 6- English culture could be considered the best way for learning the English language.
- 7- It's recommended knowing the positive customs and traditions of English culture.

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