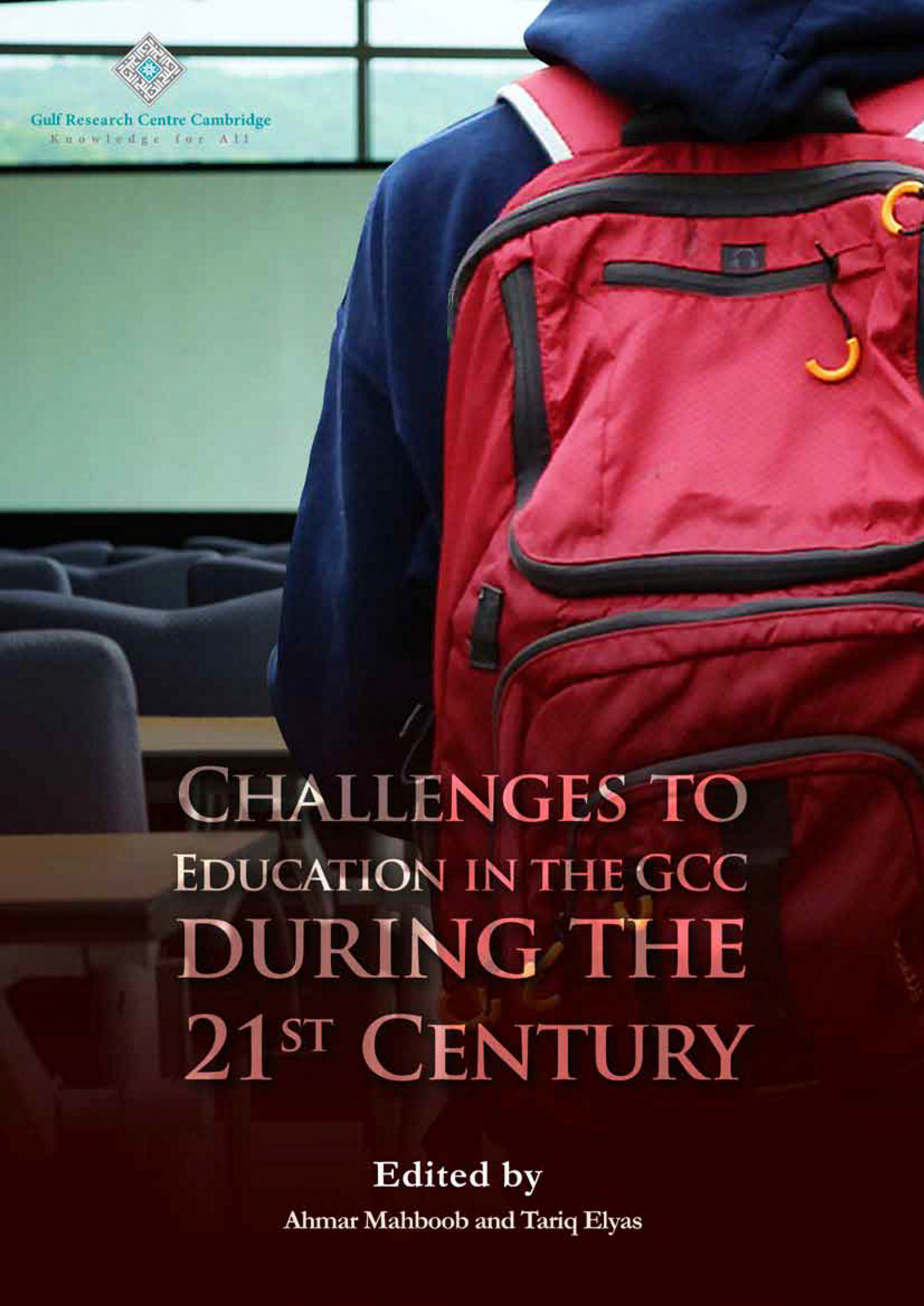


Challenges to Education in the GCC during the 21st Century

Edited by
Ahmar Mahboob and Tariq Elyas

Challenges to Education in the GCC during the 21st Century

Challenges to Education in the GCC during the 21st Century

Edited by

Ahmar Mahboob and Tariq Elyas

Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

Gulf Research Center

E-mail: info@grc.net
Website: www.grc.net

Jeddah

Gulf Research Center
19 Rayat Al-Itehad St.
P.O. Box 2134
Jeddah 21451
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Geneva

Gulf Research Center
Foundation
WMO Building - 2nd Floor
Avenue de la Paix, 7bis
CH-1211 Geneva
Switzerland

Cambridge

Gulf Research Centre
Cambridge
Centre of Islamic Studies
University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA, UK

First published 2017
Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

ISBN: 978-1-909864-16-0

“By publishing this volume, the Gulf Research Center (GRC) seeks to contribute to the enrichment of the reader’s knowledge out of the Center’s strong conviction that ‘knowledge is for all.’”

Dr. Abdulaziz O. Sager
Chairman
Gulf Research Center

About the Gulf Research Center

The Gulf Research Center (GRC) is an independent research institute founded in July 2000 by Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, a Saudi businessman, who realized, in a world of rapid political, social and economic change, the importance of pursuing politically neutral and academically sound research about the Gulf region and disseminating the knowledge obtained as widely as possible. The Center is a non-partisan think-tank, education service provider and consultancy specializing in the Gulf region. The GRC seeks to provide a better understanding of the challenges and prospects of the Gulf region.

Contents

Introduction: Challenges to Education in the GCC during the 21st Century

Ahmar Mahboob and Tariq Elyas

The purpose of this volume is to encourage the examination of applied and theoretical frames of reference that operate in the GCC and to probe the relevant aspects of scale, proportion, and the grounding of education in the Gulf region. In order to achieve these goals, this volume brings together five of the 13 papers presented at the Gulf Research Meeting (GRM) workshop on education in the GCC co-organized by Tariq Elyas, Khadijah Bawazeer and Ahmar Mahboob at the University of Cambridge during July 3-6, 2013. These five papers discuss different elements of policy and curriculum, teachers and teacher identity, students and student identity, and social conditions that affect teaching and learning in the 21st century in the GCC states. Based on the assumption that education must support students in realizing their fullest potential as well as support the economic and development needs of a country, the papers included in this volume examine the conditions of education in the GCC countries. In this chapter, we will introduce the five chapters included in the volume. However, before doing so, we would like to provide a broad introduction to the context in which we organized the workshop where these five papers were first presented.

The first decade of this millennium has seen major shifts in educational practices and policies. In addition to access to interactive technologies and new media, education shifted globally – and especially in the context of the GCC – after

9/11 in ways that are sometimes labeled as "neoliberal terror" (Giroux 2004, 2008; Lipman 2004). While there has been considerable discussion of these issues around the world, most studies do not deeply investigate the Gulf context. Similarly, international research has explored the role of cultural and geopolitical factors in shaping educational policies in the era of globalization of the 21st century (Byram and Risager 1999; Risager 2006; Makoni and Pennycook 2007) but most works, with some exceptions, do not have a Gulf focus (some of these exceptions include: Karmani 2005a, 2005b; Elyas 2008; Elyas and Picard, 2011; Mahboob 2009, 2013; Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). There are also some studies that have explored the theoretical reference of the global cultural flow (Hannerz 1999; Appadurai 2010); however, they show a similar lack of engagement with issues in the Gulf. Thus, while there is considerable research on issues of language, literacy, and education in the 21st century, these issues have not been well researched in the context of the Gulf countries. The papers included in this volume contribute to a much-needed examination of the applied and theoretical frames of references operating in the educational sphere in the GCC.

One relevant and important current issue in education in the Gulf is the teaching of English and its use as the medium of education. Some theorists such as Mohd-Asraf (2005) suggest that conflicting discourses affect and even hinder the teaching of English in Arabic and Islamic countries. On the contrary, others like Abuhamdia (1988) and Dahbi (2004) argue that Arabic "is not weakened by the domination of English and French media for science and development" (Abuhamdia: 34) because Arabic is the language of the Quran which influences the "political policy, practically ensures the primacy of Arabic language in Muslim societies" (Dahbi: 630). However, post 9/11 educational reforms have resulted in more English being taught within the GCC states and an increased influence of the Western curriculum in general (Elyas 2008). The GCC countries face the dilemma of responding to the pressure on governments and educators to promote the message of the GCC as the cradle of Islam, and thus enact its fundamental Islamic identity through the promotion of Arabic language and culture, and responding to political as well as economic pressures to increase the use of English and teach Western culture through the GCC curricula. The papers included in this volume examine such statements as well as the role of cultural and geopolitical factors in shaping educational EFL policies in the GCC. Some of the questions investigated in regard to this include: Do learners use non-Arabic tools and cultural norms as a result of using English language in education? Does education get hindered or enabled by the use of English as a learning medium? In an environment that wavers between

Arabic and generally western, particularly American and English cultures, yet is not either, what kind of lingua-culture do educators and learners create? Do they consequently become what one may call third citizens of the globe? What are the multitudes of language-related meaning potentials and social identities and local lingua culturescapes such conditions create?

Given the small size of this volume, the five chapters are organized alphabetically. In the first chapter, "Investigating FL Attrition among Omani Teachers of English: Implications for Educational Reform in Oman and the Arab Gulf," Al-Mahrooqi and Denman discuss how English language attrition among local EFL teachers in Oman seriously affects these teachers' abilities to impart knowledge about English to their students. They point out that this may hinder learners' skill development in the English language and potentially delay educational reforms in a country that strongly believes in the importance of English language learning to meet national strategic goals. Following an exploratory investigation of this issue among Omani teachers of English (Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana 2012), Al-Mahrooqi and Denman examine factors associated with English language attrition by Omani English teachers employed in government schools across the country. Based on a study of 118 Omani teachers of English from across Oman, the authors explore language areas affected by attrition and suggest strategies that teachers may use to overcome its consequences.

Al-Ruwaihi, in his contribution, "Designed Market-Driven Higher Education Institutions in the 21st Century," points out that one of the biggest challenges facing the GCC countries is the ability to adequately prepare their national workforce to fulfill labor market needs. He argues that the role of public universities should be enhanced to be able to cope with the changes needed in the knowledge economy in terms of both skills and profession. Al-Ruwaihi identifies some of the current obstacles facing public and private tertiary higher education in the GCC and proposes the concept of a corporate university that can be developed in collaboration with industry to respond to some of these challenges.

In their paper, "English as an International Language Pedagogy: A Sustainable Alternative for Teaching English in the GCC Region," Selvi and Yazan explore issues that relate to localized and nativized uses, users, functions, and contexts of English in the GCC region. They argue that the language dynamics in the GCC necessitates a reconceptualized pedagogical response. After critically discussing a range of relevant issues, Selvi and Yazan make a call for adopting an "English as an International Language (EIL)" perspective to teaching English in the GCC. The

authors expound several reasons why EIL stands out as a viable response to the need for ELT in the GCC region.

In their paper, "The Dilemma of English and Its Roles in the United Arab Emirates and the Gulf," Troudi and Al Hafidh focus on issues of language policy in the Gulf. The authors point out that policy-making in education and issues of language of instruction in particular are complex challenges because of their multifarious nature. The authors state that because of the social composition and economic realities of countries like Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the UAE, the stakeholders involved in education represent a variety of agendas, approaches, and even educational priorities. In this chapter, Troudi and Al Hafidh discuss how Western educational companies, schools, and universities bring in a global dimension with their economic and cultural agendas, while local voices are striving to reach a state of equilibrium between global forces and local knowledge. Focussing on the UAE, the authors claim that the situation is made even more complex because it is not clear whether language policy is a top-down affair or a bottom-up one (Tollefson 2002; Spolsky 2004; Shohamy 2006). The authors point out that the policy of English as medium of instruction (EMI) and its effects, such as alienation from one's own mother tongue during the years of formal education remain under-researched in the Gulf.

In the final paper in this volume, Tuzlukova and Al-Busaidi provide an overview of current educational practices, institutional and individual experiences of the English foundation programs in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, using the example of the Sultanate of Oman. In their paper, "Current Status and Future Development of the English Foundation Programs in the GCC States: Example of the Sultanate of Oman," Tuzlukova and Al-Busaidi inquire into the role of foundation programs in providing students with worthwhile learning experiences while introducing them to new sources of knowledge and information, improving their language and study skills, and adjusting their learning to their future academic studies. The authors contend that enabling students' active involvement in learning and their development as autonomous learners is one of the most important and challenging tasks in the context of the English foundation program.

To sum up, this volume emphasizes the purposes of education and the various factors involved in education, with a focus on (English) language teaching/learning in the GCC. By examining issues of broad interest, the papers in this volume help us develop a better understanding of educational challenges in the GCC countries and contribute to the discussion on issues that can shape the GCC in the twenty first century.

Bibliography

Abuhamdia, Zakaria. 1988. *Speech Diversity and Language Unity: Arabic as an Integrating Factor: The Politics of Arab Integration.* London: Croom Helm.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., and T. Sultana. 2012. "Language Attrition among Omani EFL Teachers: Teachers' Perceptions." In *Issues in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Arab World,* 33-46, edited by A. Mahmoud, and R. Al-Mahrooqi. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University's Academic Publication Board.

Appadurai, Arjun. 2010. "How Histories Make Geographies." Transcultural Studies (1): 4-13.

Byram, Micheal, and Karen Risager. 1999. *Language Teachers, Politics and Cultures.* Briston, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Dahbi, Mohammed. 2004. "English and Arabic after 9/11." *The Modern Language Journal* 88 (4): 628 -631.

Elyas, Tariq. 2008. "The Attitude and the Impact of the American English as a Global Language within the Saudi Education System." *Novitas-Royal* 2 (1): 28-48.

Elyas, Tariq, and Michelle Picard. 2013. "Critiquing of Higher Education Policy in Saudi Arabia: Towards a New Neoliberalism." *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues* 6 (1): 31-41.

Giroux, Henry. 2004. *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

—. 2008. "The Militarization of US Higher Education after 9/11." *Theory Culture & Society* 25 (5): 56-82.

Hannerz, Ulf. 1999. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places.* London: Routledge.

Karmani, Suhail. 2005a. "Petro-linguistics: The Emerging Nexus between Oil, English, and Islam." *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 4 (2): 87-102.

—. 2005b. "English, 'Terror', and Islam." *Applied Linguistics* 26 (2): 262-267.

Lipman, Pauline. 2004. *High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform.* New York: Routledge

Mahboob, Ahmar. 2013. "Middle Eastern Englishes: A Focus on Saudi Arabia." In *Middle East Handbook of Applied Linguistics,* edited by E. Akbari and Christine Coombe. Dubai: TESOL Arabia Publications.

—. 2009. "English as an Islamic Language." *World Englishes* 28(2): 175-189.

Mahboob, Ahmar and Elyas, Tariq. 2014. "English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." *World Englishes* 33(1): 128-142.

Makoni, Sinfree and Alastair Pennycook, eds. 2007. *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages.* Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Mohd-Asraf, Ratnawati. 2005. "English and Islam: A Clash of Civilization?" *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 4 (2): 103-118.

Risager, Karen. 2006. *Language and Culture: Global Flows and Local Complexity.* Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Shohamy, Elana Goldberg. 2006. *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches.* London and New York: Routledge.

Spolsky, Bernad. 2004. *Language Policy: Key Topics in Sociolinguistics.* Cambridge: Cambridge.

Tollefson, J. W., (ed.) 2002. *Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

1

Investigating FL Attrition among Omani Teachers of English: Implications for Educational Reform in Oman and the Arab Gulf

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi and Christopher Denman

The importance of English as the modern world's international language is well-documented (Crystal 2003; Graddol 1997; Sinno 2008; Zhughoul 2003). It has become the medium through which the sciences, information technology, technical advancement, communication, international relations, politics, and a host of other fields are mediated (Altbach 2010; Bisong 1995; Crystal 1992; Graddol 2006; Phillipson 1992). And its importance, according to authors such as Crystal (2002) and Graddol (2006), is predicted to continue through at least the next few decades. Governments around the world have acknowledged the importance of English by teaching it in their schools as a first, second, or foreign language – a situation that has resulted in English replacing other languages as a medium of instruction in colleges and universities (Marsh 2006).

In the Arab Gulf, English is not only important as a mediator of science and technology and as a language of communication with the rest of the world, it is also regarded as a platform from which modernizing Gulf countries can propel themselves to the front ranks of international developments (Ahmed 2010). Moreover, as the Gulf countries have, without exception, continued to depend on foreign workers for development and modernization (Al-Naqeeb 2012), English has become an essential national requirement (Charise 2007). Hence, in most

Arab Gulf countries, government and private schools teach the language from the first grade. Indeed, many private schools in the region introduce English from kindergarten. However, though Gulf governments have invested heavily in teaching English to their school children, this level of investment has often not produced the expected gains (Al-Issa 2011; Al-Mahrooqi 2012a; Al-Mahrooqi & Asante 2010). A significant reason for this, according to Moody (2009, 2012), is that English programs in the Arab Gulf tend to ignore the sociolinguistic context and, as such, fail to take account of some of the regional singularities regarding the different linguistic and cultural groups between which communication in the English language is expected to occur.

This is a situation that is also evident in the Sultanate of Oman, the second largest Arab Gulf state after Saudi Arabia. In particular, despite years of continuous reform and experiments with different educational models and teaching methodologies beginning with the advent of the country's "modern era" in 1970, the results of English language teaching continue to remain unsatisfactory with a majority of school graduates requiring Foundation English when entering higher education. Investigations into the reasons for such a low level of proficiency suggest that school English teachers' inadequate mastery of the English language, combined with their teacher-centered methods, are among the most significant factors (Al-Mahrooqi 2012a). An investigation by Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012) revealed that many of these Omani English teachers reported experiencing high levels of English language attrition after graduation. According to these authors, respondents identified the following factors as impacting upon their level of language loss: non-English speaking environments, limited opportunities for language skills practice, a lack of motivation and interest in English, and having to teach lower grades.

While Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana's (2012) research offered a number of potentially significant findings, its exploratory nature means that these results are in need of further investigation. Moreover, building upon Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana's investigation was deemed important as language instruction cannot be effective if teachers lose proficiency in the language they teach. In particular, without a high level of proficiency in the language which teachers are employed to instruct, all reforms designed and implemented to increase student language performance are unlikely to have any significant impact whatsoever.

Therefore, to further investigate the issue of language attrition among Omani school English language instructors, the present study employed a five-section Likert response key questionnaire based on Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana's (2012) investigation. Data was gathered from 118 Omani in-service English language

teachers in different school districts in six directorates in the Sultanate of Oman. The central aim of the research was to investigate, from the perspectives of Omani English teachers, the degree of English attrition suffered, the skill areas that are most affected by attrition, and the underlying loss-causing factors.

The Omani Educational System: School Level

Oman has General Education and Basic Education schools, both of which run in parallel. The former appeared with the beginning of Oman's modern education system in 1970, which itself came about as a result of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos' ascent to the throne. While General Education has been described by Oman's Ministry of Education (2006) as a "unified system" that covers grades 1-12, it is now being phased out in favor of a program called Basic Education. Until 1990, in General Education schools, English was taught from grade four and English language teachers were mostly foreigners – many of who were poorly qualified – and their Omani counterparts were diploma holders with only two years of coursework and training after middle or high school. Instruction within Omani schools was teacher-centered and based on rote learning. At that stage, educational access was emphasized more than quality and, hence, by the mid-1990s, the General Education system, including English instruction, was felt by a number of stakeholders to be inadequate. For example, Oman's participation in UNESCO/ UNICEF studies that sought to monitor learning achievement revealed Omani learners to have "lower than expected student achievement levels" (Ministry of Education 2006, p. 97). Inadequacies were also highlighted by the 1990 UN Jomtien Conference and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, which both raised the question of quality in Oman's education system (Bruns, Mingat, & Rakotomalala 2003). Internal pressure came from views expressed in the Vision for Oman's Economy – Oman 2020 (Ministry of Education 1999), which stressed the role that education must play in the sultanate's economy for the 21st century. Omani government policies and directives indicate a desire to participate fully in the global economy, but, faced by impending natural resource exhaustion, Oman needs a creative national workforce to realize this vision and thus sustain both its economic and social development.

To assist reform initiatives, international bodies such as the Educational Consultancy Service, in cooperation with Oman's Ministry of Education, recommended the introduction of Basic Education. Basic Education consists of two cycles: Cycle One for grades 1-4 and Cycle Two for grades 5-10. Along with

these curriculum reforms, the assessment system was also evaluated for potential reform by the Scottish Qualifications Authority in 1996 and 1998. In addition to the reforms resulting from the recommendations put forth by this authority, during 1998 the British Agency for Schools Inspection (OFSTED) advised the Omani government on how schools themselves should be assessed. Moreover, the year 2001 saw the submission of two more reports regarding educational reform. One, from the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), recommended a new structure for Post-Basic grades (grades 11 and12), and the other, from Oman's Ministry of Education, mandated the implementation of a career guidance service in all government schools (Ministry of Education 2006).

After weighing input from all these reports, and within the framework of international best practice, Oman's Ministry of Education decided to take the following actions:

1. Emphasize Arabic, English, mathematics and science, and introduce IT and life skills courses
2. Introduce continuous assessment and test higher order thinking skills instead of memorized information
3. Use learner-centered teaching methodologies
4. Cater to individual learner differences
5. Upgrade teacher qualifications
6. Build new schools with improved facilities
7. Devise school and teacher evaluation and assessment systems

The Basic Education system was consequently introduced during the 1998/1999 academic year in 17 schools to implement the proposed reforms. It sought to create learning resource centers and use co-education with classes of male and female students in Cycle One. The Ministry of Education decided to phase in the system gradually, with English teaching in Basic Education being a particular point of emphasis as students learn the language from grade one and receive 659 more hours of instruction than was available in General Education English. The Post-Basic Education system, which concerns grades 11-12 or Cycle Three, was introduced during academic year 2007-2008.

As these reforms were being implemented across the country, the Ministry of Education cooperated with the UK's University of Leeds to upgrade Omani English teachers' qualifications from diplomas to BAs in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Begun in 1998, the program ended in 2008 qualifying

some 1,060 teachers. Most English teaching jobs, especially in Cycle One, are now occupied by Omanis. Moreover, since 1990, Sultan Qaboos University – the country's only public university – has played a major part in supplying schools with Omani English teachers, even though some reservations have been voiced about the preparedness of these graduates in terms of their familiarity with learner-centered methodologies and language proficiency (Al-Issa 2007).

Furthermore, despite the Ministry of Education's best efforts, the Basic Education reform is yet to produce the anticipated results. School students' levels of English achievement remain below average. In fact, in academic year 2003-2004, the Canadian company Canedcom International tested 7,700 grade 4 students in Arabic, English, mathematics, and science, and revealed that Omani Basic Education students were generally one year behind international standards across these subjects. Added to these concerns, the Ministry of Education (2006) claimed that, when held in comparison to international standards, "there were approximately three times as many students in Oman with difficulties in reading" (pp. 112-113).

The Basic Education system's failure to equip students with adequate English proficiency and communication skills has been documented by a number of researchers, including Al-Busaidi (1995), Moates (2006), Al-Mahrooqi (2012a), Al-Issa (2011), and Moody (2009, 2012). In a study conducted by Al-Mahrooqi (2012a), Sultan Qaboos University students identified factors influencing Omani learners' poor performance in English language in government schools as including inadequately qualified teachers who are unenthusiastic about their professions and whose English proficiency is low. Focusing explicitly on this second factor, Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012) reported low levels of English language proficiency among Omani English language teachers – a result the researchers attribute, at least in part, to English language attrition among these teachers since graduating and entering the government school system. In fact, Omani in-service teachers in Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana's research claimed that their English language fluency had decreased since graduation due to a variety of factors, including the non-English speaking environment of Omani government schools and their own desire to use Arabic over English beyond the classroom walls. In this way, these English language teachers were not dissimilar from Al-Hazemi's (2000) non-teaching Arab participants who also used the English language exclusively for work purposes and experienced high rates of English attrition. Since inadequacy resulting from such attrition, at least as far as Omani English language teachers are concerned, has a number of serious pedagogic consequences, this issue was deemed worthy of closer attention.

The Study

The current study employed a questionnaire informed by Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana's (2012) findings and developed and validated by a panel of researchers acquainted with issues of applied linguistics in the Omani context. It featured five main sections. The first section elicited participants' background information including gender, level of academic qualification, length of teaching experience in years, and number of years that had lapsed since obtainment of last qualification in English. The second section asked participants to indicate whether, in their opinion, their English had improved, remained the same, or deteriorated since graduating and assuming a teaching role in the Omani education system. The third section asked participants to indicate the level of language loss they had experienced in a number of skill areas, including vocabulary and reading, speaking, listening, and grammar and mechanics. The fourth section focused on reasons for language loss, and the fifth sought to establish how often participants engaged in activities involving the use of English beyond the classroom and school. Response keys for each questionnaire section are highlighted in the results below.

The participants were 118 Omani in-service teachers – 33 males (28 percent) and 85 females (72 percent). They were drawn from six directorates in the Sultanate of Oman: Muscat, Al-Dhahira, Al-Batinah, Al-Sharqiya, Al-Dakhiliya and Dhofar. Sixty-five had graduated from Sultan Qaboos University and the rest received their teaching qualifications from the following tertiary institutions: Nizwa College of Applied Sciences (Oman), Rustaq College (Oman), Pune University (India), Minia University (Egypt), Ajman University (UAE), Ibri College of Applied Sciences (Oman), Leeds University (UK), Nizwa University (Oman), Sohar University (Oman), Abu Dhabi University (UAE), and Aleppo University (Syria). Years of teaching experience ranged from 1 to 32. Four of the participants – one male and three females – had master level qualifications. Twenty-nine males and 69 females held bachelor degrees, while three males and one female had teaching diplomas as their highest level qualification. The remaining participants did not indicate their teaching experience.

Participation in the study was voluntary. Around 300 copies of the questionnaire were distributed by research assistants in schools that had been randomly selected from a list of all schools in the six directorates mentioned previously. After the two-week period assigned for completing and returning the questionnaires to the research assistants, 118 were returned fully completed (questionnaires with incomplete data were discarded), which represents a return rate of around 40 percent. Given the exploratory nature of the research, descriptive statistics, including the means for

individual questionnaire items and the overall means for questionnaire categories, were calculated.

Results

The results presented here are based on descriptive statistics obtained from four of the five questionnaire sections of language improvement/deterioration, areas of language loss, reasons for language loss, and frequency of engagement in English-medium activities. Details from the first section of the questionnaire, demographic details, have been outlined earlier. Depending on the nature of the theme and response key in each of these sections, frequency counts, percentages, and means have been reported.

The second questionnaire section concerned participants' levels of English language attrition since graduating and entering the Omani education system as teachers. Participants were asked to respond to the question "Has your English improved or deteriorated since your graduation?" by indicating one of seven response categories. These categories, based on Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012), are: improved (no deterioration at all), improved with very little deterioration, improved a little with some deterioration, neither improved nor deteriorated, deteriorated a little, deteriorated, and deteriorated a great deal.

Only five participants, or 4 percent of the sample, reported that their English language skills had improved with no deterioration whatsoever since graduating. Another 71 participants stated that their English had either improved with a little deterioration (n = 42, 35 percent) or had improved with some deterioration (n = 29, 24 percent). While only two participants (1.6 percent) stated that their English had neither improved nor deteriorated, 40 participants (33.9 percent) believed that their English language skills had, in fact, deteriorated since graduation. Of these, 30 teachers (25.4 percent) stated that their English had deteriorated a little, nine (7.6 percent) maintained that it had deteriorated somewhat, while only one participant, or 0.8 percent of the sample, claimed that their English skills had deteriorated a great deal.

Overall, therefore, around 64.4 percent of participants believed that their English language abilities had continued to improve since graduation, even if this improvement was either only by a little or involved some degree of deterioration. However, around 33.9 percent of participants did, nonetheless, maintain that their English language proficiency had actually decreased since leaving their universities or teaching colleges, which is a result that shares a number of parallels with Al-

Mahrooqi and Sultana's (2012) finding that a significant number of Omani English language teachers stop developing English language skills to a recognizable degree, but without deterioration, after graduation.

The third questionnaire section examined skill areas of participants' English language abilities that were most affected by loss. Table 1 examined five potential skill areas of language loss, which are reading and vocabulary, speaking skills, writing skills, listening skills, and grammar and mechanics. Twenty-two items were utilized to explore participants' beliefs about language loss or maintenance across these five skill areas. Responses to each item were indicated on a four-point scale, with responses including: not affected at all, affected a little, affected, and affected by loss very much. These responses were assigned values ranging from 1 to 4 respectively, with an overall mean in a skill area closer to 1 indicating no English language attrition, and an overall mean closer to 4 suggesting a great deal of language loss. Following authors such as Harder, Gouldthorp and Goodwin (2014) and Rahman, Ming, Abd Aziz and Abdul Razak (2008), response means were interpreted in the following way: values of 1.00-1.50 and 1.51-2.50 indicate no language loss and little attrition, respectively, and values of 2.51-3.50 and 3.51-4.00 indicate skill areas affected and affected very much by language attrition. The value of 2.50 was, based on this interpretation, established as the middle point between more language loss and less language loss.

Results indicate that participants had experienced language loss in each of the five skill areas investigated, with overall means for each skill area all being above the 2.50 mid-point offered above. The skill area of reading and vocabulary reported the greatest degree of loss, with an overall mean of 2.76 (see Table 1a). Within this skill area, knowledge of vocabulary recorded the highest mean of 3.24, while awareness of collocations received a mean of 2.69. Item 21, which relates to the ability to read and understand a variety of texts, was deemed by participants to have only been affected a little. This item received a mean of 2.36.

Table 1a: Participant language loss: Reading and vocabulary

Language loss skill area	Skills affected by loss	Item Mean	Skill Area Mean
Reading and vocabulary	**Item 1**: Vocabulary	3.24	2.76
	Item 15: Ability to know which words go together (collocations)	2.69	
	Item 21: Ability to read a variety of texts with understanding	2.36	

Writing skills also recorded a relatively high overall mean of 2.70, again suggesting that participants had experienced significant deterioration in their English writing skills since graduation (see Table 1b). In response to items relating to this skill area, participants stated that they found it difficult to write without making mistakes (M = 2.72) and that, perhaps subsequently, their ability to write confidently had also been affected (M = 2.68).

Table 1b: Participant language loss: Writing

Language loss skill area	Skills affected by loss	Item Mean	Skill Area Mean
Writing skills	**Item 12**	2.72	2.70
	Item 20: Ability to write confidently	2.68	

Despite anecdotal evidence that Omani students are stronger in speaking skills than in any of the other core language competencies, participants deemed their speaking skills to have deteriorated somewhat since becoming professional English language teachers with an overall mean of 2.60 (see Table 1c). Responses to items from this area suggest that participants had experienced language loss across a number of specific speaking skills including: fluency (M = 2.74), pronunciation (M = 2.70), the ability to converse about different topics (M = 2.64), and the ability to engage in social discourse (M = 2.63). In fact, of the eight items in this skill area, only two – item 22 which regarded participants' abilities to confidently engage in casual conversation (M = 2.44) and item 16 about the ability to pronounce words correctly – received means below 2.50.

Table 1c: Participant language loss: Speaking skills

Language loss skill area	Skills affected by loss	Item Mean	Skill Area Mean
Speaking skills	**Item 2** : Pronunciation of words	2.70	2.60
	Item 4 : Fluency in speaking	2.74	
	Item 5 : Casual conversational skills	2.60	
	Item 16 : Ability to pronounce words correctly	2.47	
	Item 17 : Ability to converse (speak) fluently about different topics	2.64	
	Item 18 : Ability to engage in social discourse such as congratulating, sympathizing, apologizing, greeting, requesting, and offering	2.63	
	Item 19 : Ability to speak confidently	2.55	
	Item 22 : Ability to engage confidently in casual conversation.	2.44	

The final two skill areas of potential language loss were those of grammar and mechanics and listening skills. These recorded overall means of 2.53 and 2.52, respectively, which indicates that participants believed their English skills in these areas to only be slightly negatively affected since graduating. Of the eight items that inquired about the deterioration of knowledge about English language grammar, only three received responses above the 2.50 mid-point (see Table 1d). These items are related to loss of English skills with using complex sentence structures (M = 2.82), spelling words correctly (M = 2.72), and using correct verb tenses (M = 2.53). Added to these, item 8, which inquires about the potential loss of participants' knowledge of grammar, recorded a mean of exactly 2.50. Another four items from this skill area reported means below 2.50. These included items inquiring about a loss of knowledge of word formation (M = 2.31), using the definite or indefinite article (M = 2.39), the ability to use grammar (M = 2.48), and the accurate use of prepositions (M = 2.49). These results indicate that spelling and using complex sentences are the skills most affected by English language attrition in terms of grammar for participants, although other skills, such as use of prepositions and articles, are of far less concern.

Table 1d: Participant language loss: Grammar and mechanics

Language loss skill area	Skills affected by loss	Item Mean	Skill Area Mean
Grammar and mechanics	**Item 3** : Word formation (e.g. forming correct nouns, adjectives, and adverbs from verbs)	2.31	2.53
	Item 6 : Grammar use	2.48	
	Item 7 : Use of complex sentence structures	2.82	
	Item 8 : Grammar rules	2.50	
	Item 9 : Use of correct verb tenses	2.53	
	Item 10 : Use of definite or indefinite articles (a, an, the)	2.39	
	Item 11 : Accurate use of prepositions	2.49	
	Item 13 : Ability to spell words correctly	2.72	

Listening skills were only assessed in this part of the questionnaire through the use of a single item which regarded participants' abilities to comprehend everything that they listened to in English. The mean for this item was 2.53, which indicates that this is a skill of only minor potential language loss for respondents.

The fourth section of the questionnaire examined the reasons for language loss in the skill areas specified. Seven potential reasons for language attrition were examined through the use of 30 items incorporating a 5-point Likert response scale. Responses ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree with a middle option of neutral. Item means closer to 1 thus represent strong disagreement with the item or area, while responses closer to 5 indicate strong levels of agreement. The value of 3.00 indicates neutrality in relation to the item or area.

Overall means for each of the seven areas are as follows:

1. Inadequate professional development activities (M = 4.05)
2. Inadequate speaking (M = 3.53)
3. Nature of work and school environment (M = 3.53)
4. Contextual restrictions (M = 3.50)
5. Inadequate time due to family responsibilities (M = 3.46)

6. Inadequate reading and writing in English (M = 3.42)
7. Low teacher motivation (M = 2.87)

As highlighted earlier, all bar one of the areas identified as potential reasons for language loss received means above 3.00 (see Appendix 1A for the item breakdown across each area). Participants agreed that the area that contributed most strongly to their language loss was inadequate provision of professional development opportunities. Participants claimed that this lack of opportunities was due to both the scarcity of workshops and training programs offered by Oman's Ministry of Education (M = 4.10) and the lack of appropriate conferences in the sultanate (M = 4.00).

A lack of speaking opportunities and the nature of the work and school environment both recorded means of 3.50. In relation to the former, respondents agreed that the lack of opportunities to converse in the English language outside of the classroom (M = 4.00) was a cause of language attrition. However, despite this, participants remained neutral about whether a lack of opportunities to speak with native speakers of English was a reason for this.

Participants also agreed that a number of factors related to the work and school environment also resulted in their loss of English language skills. These reasons include their students' lack of motivation to learn English (M = 3.70), a heavy workload that leaves little time to improve their English (M = 3.70), having to use Arabic when teaching English in order to help lower level students understand (M = 3.50), and school restrictions that prevented participants from attending conferences (M = 3.30). In fact, while participants did not disagree with any of the items as potential reasons for language loss, they indicated neutrality (M = 3.00) to only one item in this area: holding an administrative job.

Closely linked to this area is that of contextual restrictions (M = 3.50) and a lack of time due to family responsibilities (M = 3.56). This first reason incorporated 11 factors, all of which received individual item means above 2.50. Participants agreed that, among these, the following reasons were the most significant causes of English language attrition: living in an environment where English is not the native language (M = 4.10), a lack of opportunity to use English in the community (M = 3.90), a lack of public libraries (M = 3.70), and an unwillingness of some people to communicate in English even when they can speak the language (M = 3.60). The two contextual factors that were only marginally seen as influencing English language attrition were being unemployed for a period of time before becoming a teacher (M = 2.60) and a lack of a reliable Internet connection (M = 2.80).

An inadequate amount of time to spend on developing English language skills was identified as the fifth most important reason for English language loss since graduation by participants. This reason was associated with two items. The first of these was having a family that requires participants' attention (M = 3.70). The second item was respondents' lack of time to devote to improving their English skills due to family responsibilities (M = 3.20).

The two reasons for English language attrition that received the least amount of participant agreement are inadequate opportunities for reading and writing in English (M = 3.42) and low teacher motivation (M = 2.87). On items related to the former reason, participants only slightly agreed that they lacked opportunities to read in the English language (M = 3.23), although this level of agreement strengthened slightly when asked about a lack of opportunities to write in English (M = 3.60).

Low teacher motivation was not identified as a significant reason for English language attrition by participants. In fact, the mean for this reason (M = 2.87) was the only one that dipped below 3.00, thus indicating mild levels of disagreement with motivation being a cause of language loss. Three of the four items inquiring about teacher motivation as a reason for language loss received means below this point. These inquired about whether participants' lack of interest in English (M = 2.30), their lack of interest in teaching English (M = 2.50), and their lack of interest in attending conferences (M = 2.70) were potential causes of language loss. The only item regarding participant motivation that recorded a mean above 3.00 was about whether a lack of motivation to improve their English language skills (M = 3.40) could be a cause of English language attrition.

The final section of the questionnaire examined the types of activities that Omani school teachers engaged in to help avoid English language attrition. Participants were asked to describe how often they engaged in seven groups of activities by indicating frequency on a five-point scale. Responses were assigned the following values: 5 = Always; 4 = Often; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never. Means closer to 1 on this questionnaire section indicate that the activity or action is rarely engaged in, while means closer to 5 suggest that the activity is practiced quite often. The middle point of 3 suggests that the activity is sometimes performed. Each of the seven groups of activities was associated with a number of items that focused on specific actions.

The seven activities were rated by participants in terms of frequency of engagement as follows:

1. Using the media and technology to develop English skills (M = 3.16)
2. Reading in English (M = 2.93)
3. Speaking in English (M = 2.71)
4. Engaging in social and professional English-related activities beyond teaching (M = 2.55)
5. Listening in English (M = 2.53)
6. Writing in English (M = 2.47)
7. Professional development (M = 2.12)

In terms of frequency, participants rarely or, at best, only sometimes, engage in all of the activities highlighted in this section of the questionnaire. In fact, the only activity that recorded an overall mean above 3.00, which indicates occasional engagement, was using media and technology to develop English skills (M = 3.16). However, even this figure may be somewhat misleading as, of the four actions associated with this activity, only one – watching movies in English without reading the Arabic subtitles (M = 3.60) – was reported as occurring somewhat frequently, while the remaining items had means of between 2.90 (using computer software to learn English) and 3.30 (listening to the news on television in English). (Appendix 1B contains the full list of item means.)

Of the remaining activities featured in this part of the questionnaire, participants engaged with reading in English (M = 2.93), speaking in English (M = 2.71), listening in English (M = 2.53), and writing in English (M = 2.47) either rarely or sometimes. In terms of individual questionnaire items, respondents reported the most frequent use of reading in English for either using the Internet to find information (M = 4.00) or using the Internet to read for pleasure (M = 3.40). Moreover, participants also indicated that they were prone to read short stories in English (M = 3.30), even if they were less likely to read English-language magazines, newspapers or non-literary books (all items had means of 2.80), or even poetry (M = 2.50) or cookbooks (M = 1.90).

Among the other skill areas of speaking, listening, and writing, almost all questionnaire items had means below 3.00. Moreover, of the four individual items across these areas that reported means above this mark, two were related to speaking. These were speaking English with fellow teachers outside of the classroom (M = 3.10) and using English when shopping or doing business (M = 3.50). Despite using English for shopping, however, participants were unlikely to speak English in the community where they lived (M = 2.20).

In terms of engagement in listening activities, participants reported either only occasionally or rarely listening to songs in the English language (M = 2.70), the radio (M = 2.60), or to English books on tape (M = 2.30). Moreover, respondents stated they rarely wrote in English, with means of 2.30 for those items related to writing to native speakers of English, engaging in creative writing, and keeping a diary or journal in English. Participants were also either rarely or sometimes likely to write research in English, and would either never or only rarely write to English newspapers or magazines (M = 1.60). However, despite these findings, the remaining two items that did record means above 3.00 from the four skills are related to writing. These are for sending text messages in English (M = 3.20) and writing emails in English (M = 3.10).

Respondents also reported only rarely or sometimes engaging in social and professional English-related activities (M = 2.55) and in professional development activities in English (M = 2.12). In terms of the former, participants claimed that they sometimes used the English-language teachers' resource center at school (M = 3.10) and also used English to supervise students in extracurricular activities that used the language (M = 2.70), though rarely used English to participate in English-language competitions (M = 2.40) or to join clubs and organizations that use English as the language of communication (M = 2.20). As may be expected from the lack of English-language conferences, seminars, and workshops in Oman reported by participants, respondents claimed that they either only sometimes or rarely attended in-service training courses offered by the Ministry of Education (M = 2.70), while rarely attending training and workshops in private institutions (M = 1.90). Moreover, respondents also stated that they rarely (M = 1.80) attended English courses in private institutions.

Discussion

The current research sought to build upon the understandings of the reasons for Omani English language teachers' low levels of English language proficiency as reported by Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012). In doing so, it focused on a specific area identified in that research – English language attrition among newly-graduated teachers in the country – with the rationale that language instruction will be ineffective if teachers lose proficiency in the language they are employed to instruct. This was considered a pressing concern because, as highlighted previously, educational reforms introduced to improve English outcomes in Oman could be argued to be of doubtful benefit if teachers continue to display limited English proficiency. For these reasons, the current research explored the degree of language

attrition suffered by Omani English school teachers and the skills that are most affected by this loss, the factors that are associated with language attrition, and the actions teachers take, if any, to deal with this issue.

From these findings, it is important to reiterate that a significant number of participants did, in fact, report themselves to have suffered from various levels of language loss since graduating and entering the teaching profession. The areas respondents claimed to have experienced the most language attrition in were reading and vocabulary, writing, speaking, and grammar. In terms of reading and vocabulary, it is interesting to note that, although participants claimed to have suffered the highest level of language loss in this skill area, they nonetheless did not believe a lack of opportunities to read was a cause of this loss. This is an important finding as scholars such as Abbasian and Khajavi (2010), working in the Iranian context, claim that it is non-exposure to the English language that is most strongly associated with vocabulary loss. However, it may be that the relatively unchallenging nature of the reading participants engage with as part of their work lives, perhaps often limited to coursebooks designed for young EFL learners and their associated teachers' editions, are so far below the reading and vocabulary levels developed during tertiary education that engaging with these alone is not enough to prevent high levels of language attrition.

Moreover, participants also claimed that their English writing skills had suffered from language attrition, with it being especially difficult for them to write without making mistakes which had resulted in decreasing levels of confidence with the skill. Unlike the deterioration of reading skills that respondents did not attribute directly to a lack of opportunities to practice, participants here claimed that limited opportunities to write in English may be a reason for their language loss in this skill area, even though they did use English for the often undemanding tasks of sending text messages and composing email. Participants were somewhat neutral about whether limited chances to orally communicate with native speakers of English was a factor contributing to their attrition in this skill area. This may be accounted for by the very large number of expatriates in Oman who use English either as a first or second language or even as a lingua franca to facilitate communication between the country's diverse cultural and linguistic groups (Charise 2007). However, while respondents stated that there are opportunities to use English in various situations in Oman, such as when shopping or doing business, they nonetheless claimed to be reluctant to speak English with other Omanis even when they knew their interlocutors could speak the language. This final point, in particular, is one that has been associated in the literature with a mistrust of the English language due to its

association with Western political and cultural influences in the Arab world (Alkire 2007; Al-Tamimi 2009; Charise 2007; Sinno 2008).

Participants also claimed that, in terms of grammar, spelling and the use of complex sentences suffered the highest degree of loss. This is a finding that shares a number of parallels with Al-Arishi's (1994) study of local Saudi Arabian English language teachers in that country and may be a cause for concern considering that a sound grammatical knowledge could be argued to be absolutely essential for English language instructors. Combined with the language attrition participants claimed to have experienced across most of the core language skills, these findings raise further questions about whether Omani English-language teachers' language loss contributes directly to their learners' limited English proficiency levels as reported by authors such as Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012) and Al-Issa (2007).

In order to attempt to maintain their English language skills, respondents reported that they only participated in a handful of activities such as using the Internet to find information and to read for pleasure, in addition to reading short stories. Using English to find information on the Internet is, of course, somewhat of a global phenomenon; one that is intricately linked to English's dominance of the world's published material both online and off (Graddol 1997). However, using the Internet to read for pleasure is a finding that contradicts Peel's (2004) contention that most Arab Internet users only utilize English for finding information while employing Arabic for leisure. While this is one area where participants did employ English outside of their professional lives, their general reluctance to use the language outside of school walls was somewhat surprising, especially in the claim that, despite their knowledge of English and the fact that the language is the world's lingua franca and dominant language of international travel (Graddol 1997; Sinno 2008), they only rarely spoke English when travelling abroad. This finding, above all, may suggest low levels of confidence with participants' abilities to communicate in English, even if they did claim to use the language while shopping and conducting other business within Oman.

While respondents generally focused on the limited societal role played by English outside of a number of relatively cosmopolitan metropolitan areas within Oman as a main reason for their language loss, restraints associated with specific school cultures that did not support the use of English outside of the classroom and community-related factors were also identified. Added to these, participants also cited a lack of professional development opportunities within Oman as one of the major factors that prevented them from maintaining their English language abilities, even though they indicated a desire to participate in seminars and workshops.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, given that 72 percent of the sample were female in this relatively traditional society, participants claimed that social and family commitments left them with little time to seek opportunities to maintain their English language skills after leaving university. This appears to confirm Al-Hazemi's (2000) findings that his non-teacher Arab participants generally confined their English language use to work and, as a result, tended to suffer from high rates of attrition.

While these findings share a number of similarities with those of Al-Mahrooqi and Sultana (2012), several important limitations need to be acknowledged. Perhaps the most significant of these is the small sample size, with only 118 Omani teachers of English participating in the study. This figure represents a response rate of around 40 percent which means that the influence of self-selection bias may be somewhat strong. In particular, there is a good chance that only those potential participants who felt strongly about the area of language attrition volunteered to take part in the research, which may account for the somewhat high levels of language loss reported here. Moreover, even if the influence of this bias could be argued to be limited, the act of extrapolating findings from a sample of around 120 people to a much larger population is one that can only be performed with a great deal of caution. While it has been explicitly acknowledged that the current research is exploratory in nature, it is still necessary to state that the external validity of these findings must remain rather limited and that a much more extensive investigation of language attrition among Omani school English teachers needs to be performed.

Finally, the research methodology itself also limits the degree to which findings here can be employed to inform decision-making. That is, the current research featured only a self-report questionnaire and analysis of data was limited to descriptive statistics. If causality is to be established and the issue more thoroughly explored, then a more systematic approach needs to be employed – one that could incorporate, in addition to the collection of quantitative data from schools across the country, more qualitative data collection techniques such as classroom observations, teacher journals, interviews and so on, in addition to the use of inferential statistics to explore causal relationships.

Conclusion: Implications of English Language Attrition in Oman and the Arab Gulf

This exploratory research sought to examine English language attrition among Omani school teachers of English across four areas: participants' self-reported levels of English language loss since graduation, loss across different areas of English

language use, reasons for language attrition, and, finally, activities engaged in to maintain language skills.

With the limitations mentioned previously explicitly acknowledged, around 65 percent of participants stated that their English language abilities had continued to improve, either suffering only a little or experiencing some language loss, since graduation. Conversely, about 34 percent of respondents believed that their English language skills had decreased either somewhat or markedly since graduation – a high percentage considering the absolute centrality of English to these participants' professional lives and potential future career development. Moreover, respondents reported having experienced English language attrition in each of the areas examined, with reading and vocabulary, writing skills, speaking skills, and grammar experiencing the greatest degree of loss. The most prominent reasons identified for this attrition were a lack of professional development opportunities, inadequate opportunities to speak English, and factors associated with the teachers' school environment, the community in which they lived and worked, and the demands of family life. Despite the pressure exerted by these reasons, however, participants did not believe themselves to be unmotivated to maintain and/or improve their English. Finally, respondents stated that they either sometimes or often used media and technology to maintain their English language abilities, though they were far less likely to engage in non-computer related activities involving the four skills or to participate in professional development sessions. This latter finding, however, could be accounted for by the fact that participants claimed few workshops or conferences focused on the English language take place within Oman.

These findings have a number of potential implications for education policy in Oman. In particular, since English has emerged as the world's global language, its role in educational reform in both Oman and the greater Arab Gulf region has become more prominent. This has resulted in the inclusion of English in school curricula from grade one onwards within Oman and the majority of other Arab Gulf nations, and its use as a medium of instruction across higher education in the region (Ahmed 2010; Al-Mahrooqi 2012a; Charise 2007). Large percentages of national Gulf budgets are spent on teaching this language, since it is perceived as essential for modernization and growth (Ahmed 2010). This investment, however, has not produced expected results (Al-Mahrooqi 2012a; Al-Mahrooqi, Abrar-ul-Hassan, & Asante 2012; Moody 2009, 2012), and one major reason for this is the quality of the instructors teaching the language in public schools (Al-Mahrooqi 2012a; Al-Mahrooqi & Sultana 2012).

Because teachers are "key agents in all formal educational systems" (Al-Mahrooqi 2012b, p. 190), any lack of skill in the area they teach is detrimental to their ability to impart knowledge and convey appropriate and accurate information. Teachers of English who lack communicative ability, fluency, and accuracy in the language will neither serve as good models for their students nor motivate them to improve as they themselves need improvement. Given the potential seriousness of the situation and its effect on students' language learning, it is important for Arab Gulf countries to provide every possible opportunity for their English teachers to develop and improve after graduation, for, as suggested by this exploratory study, professional development has emerged as an important factor associated with language attrition. This is a finding that Arab Gulf governments and ministries are in a position to address by providing effective and efficient professional development opportunities for their teachers of English.

For these reasons, a comprehensive program of professional development may be beneficial if prepared before the beginning of every academic year. Such a program could be implemented in every region in the country, with teachers being supported to attend by releasing them from teaching responsibilities for the duration of the program. Attractive incentives could also be given to teachers who participate and accomplish the goals and objectives of the sessions they attend. Certificates could be awarded to those who distinguish themselves so that later they can become certified providers of professional development. The Gulf countries, including Oman, could collaborate in forming teams of specialists to travel across the region providing advice on effective professional development. And Gulf nationals themselves would be best equipped to provide this kind of service due to their intimate knowledge of the social and educational context.

Because this study, with the limitations highlighted earlier, suggests that teachers may turn towards technology to maintain their English language skills, Arab Gulf governments could seek to support this through the provision of advanced technology in schools to facilitate Internet and computer use. If technology can help teachers maintain their language abilities, then the possibility exists that it could also be useful to help students improve theirs. Electronic language resources could be made available at all schools. In order to fully take advantage of the availability of these resources, it may also be necessary to provide both teachers and high school students with laptops or Ipads of their own so that they can use them at any time without restrictions. For this course of action to be successful, schools need to be equipped with excellent Internet connectivity to enable access to the web's reservoir of sources during the school day.

Of course, before actions such as these are implemented, a far more extensive examination of the issue of Omani English teachers' language attrition needs to be conducted. Further research should seek to engage a much larger sample that is more representative of the English teacher population in the country and use a research design that allows causal relationships to be examined. However, until such studies are conducted, the current exploratory research offers a number of findings which could provide some support in informing decision making about ways to help Omani English teachers avoid language attrition after entering the teaching profession.

References

Abbasian, R., and Y. Khajavi. 2010. "Lexical Attrition of General and Special English Words after Years Of Non-exposure: The Case of Iranian Teachers." *English Language Teaching* 3 (3): 47-53. Retrieved from http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/viewFile/7215/5566.

Ahmed, K. 2010. "English in the Arab Gulf." *Asian Journal of University Education* 6 (1): 1-12.

Al-Arishi, A. Y. 1994. "Language Attrition of Saudi ESL- and EFL-trained Teachers: Articles and Prepositions." *Journal of King Saud University* 6 (2): 1-19.

Al-Busaidi, K. 1995. *English in the Labor Market in Multilingual Oman with Special Reference to Omani Employees.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter, England.

Al-Hazemi, H. 2000. "Lexical Attrition of Some Arabic Speakers of English as a Foreign Language: A Study of Work Loss." *The Internet TESOL Journal* 6 (12). Retrieved from http://iteslj.org/Articles/Al-Hazemi-Attrition/.

Al-Issa, A. 2007. "The Implications of Implementing a 'Flexible' Syllabus for ESL Policy in the Sultanate of Oman." *RELC* 38 (1): 199-215.

—. 2011. "Advancing English Language Teaching Research in Gulf Cooperation Council States' Universities." *The Modern Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3 (2): 60-77.

Al-Mahrooqi, R. 2012a. "English Communication Skills: How Are they Taught at Schools and Universities in Oman?" *English Language Teaching* 5(4): 124-130.

—. 2012b. "Beginning Omani EFL Teachers' Perspectives on the Challenges They Encounter." *Arab World English Journal* 3 (3): 190-203.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., S. Abrar-ul-Hassan, & C. Asante. 2012. "Analyzing the Use of Motivational Strategies by EFL Teachers in Oman." *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research in Oman* 8 (1): 36-76.

Al-Mahrooqi, R. and C. Asante. 2010. "Promoting Autonomy by Fostering a Reading Culture." In *The Omani ELT Symphony: Maintaining Linguistic and Socio-cultural Equilibrium,* 477-494, edited by R. Al-Mahrooqi and V. Tuzlukova. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University Academic Publication Board.

Al-Mahrooqi, R., and T. Sultana. 2012. "Language Attrition among Omani EFL Teachers: Teachers' Perceptions." In *Issues in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Arab World,* 33-46, edited by A. Mahmoud, and R. Al-Mahrooqi. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University's Academic Publication Board.

Al-Naqeeb, K. H. 2012. *Society and State in the Gulf and Arab Peninsula.* New York: Routledge.

Al-Tamimi, A. 2009. "Motivation and Attitudes towards Learning English: A Study of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences and Technology." *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies* 9 (2): 29-55. Retrieved from http://www.ukm.my/ppbl/Gema/pp%2029_55.pdf.

Alkire, S. 2007. "Teaching Literature in the Muslim World: A Bicultural Approach." *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal* 10 (4). Retrieved from http://tesl-ej.org/ej40/a3.pdf .

Altbach, P. 2010. "Notes on the Future of SQU: Comparative Perspectives." In *Towards a Long-term Strategic Plan for Sultan Qaboos University: Proceedings of the International Workshop* (9-10 November 2010), 3-9, edited by Sultan Qaboos University. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University Press.

Bisong, J. 1995. "Language Choice and Cultural Imperialism." *ELT Journal* 49 (2): 129-132.

Bruns, B., A. Mingat, and R. Rakotomalala. 2003. *Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015: A Chance for Every Child.* New York: World Bank Group.

Charise, A. 2007. "'More English, Less Islam?': An Overview of English Language Functions in the Arabian/Persian Gulf." Retrieved from the University of Toronto, Department of English. http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy courses/ eng6365-charise.htm.

Crystal, D. 1992. *An Encyclopedic Dictionary of Language and Languages.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

—. 2002. "English in the New World." *Babylonia* 1, 16-17.

—. 2003. *English as a Global Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Graddol, D. 1997. *The Future of English?* London: British Council.

—. 2006. "English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of 'English as a Foreign Language." London: The British Council. Retrieved from http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-english-next.pdf.

Harder, A., J. Gouldthorp, and J. Goodwin. 2014. "Why Work for Extension? An Examination of Job Satisfaction in a Statewide Employee Retention Study." *Journal of Extension* 52 (3). Retrieved from www.joe.org/joe/2014june/a5.php.

Marsh, D. 2006. "English as Medium of Instruction in the New Global Linguistic Order: Global Characteristics, Local Consequences." UNICOM, Continuing Education Centre, University of Jyvaskyla, Finland.

Ministry of Education. 1999. *EFA: Year 2000 Assessment Report.* Muscat: Ministry of Education. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/countryreports/oman/contents.html#cont.

Ministry of Education. 2006. *From Access to Success: Education for All (EFA) in the Sultanate of Oman* 1970-2005. Muscat: Ministry of Education.

Moates, J. 2006. *Final Report.* Muscat: Ministry of Education.

Moody, J. 2009. "A Neglected Aspect of ELT in the Arabian Gulf: Who is Communication Between?" In *Englishes and Literatures-in-English in a Globalized World: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on English in Southeast Asia,* 99-119, edited by L. J. Zhang, R. Rubdy, and L. Alsagoff. Singapore: National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

Moody, J. 2012. "A Critique of the Concept of EFL in the Arabian Gulf Countries." In *Issues in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Arab World,* 9-32, A. Mahmoud and R. Al-Mahrooqi. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University's Academic Publications Board.

Peel, R. 2004. "The Internet and Language Use: A Case Study in the United Arab Emirates." International Journal of *Multicultural Societies* 6 (1): 146-158.

Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rahman, M. M., T.S. Ming, M. Abd Aziz, and N. Abdul Razak. 2008. "Developing and ESP speaking Course Framework for the Foreign Postgraduates in Science and Technology at National University of Malaysia." *ESP World*

4, 1-57. Retrieved from http://www.esp-world.info/Articles_20/DOC/Course_%20Developing.pdf.

Sinno, Z. S. 2008. "The Impact on Language Learning of Lebanese Students' Attitudes towards English in the Context of Globalization and anti-Americanism." Unpublished doctor of education thesis, University of Leicester. Retrieved from https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/4234/1/2008SirajSinnoZedd.pdf.pdf.

Zughoul, M. R. 2003. "Globalization and EFL/ESL Pedagogy in the Arab World." *Journal of Language and Learning* 1 (2): 106-140.

Appendix 1A: Reasons for language loss

Reason	Items	Item Mean	Area Mean
Inadequate professional development activities	**Item 21**: Scarcity (too few) of workshops or training programs offered by the Ministry of Education	4.10	4.05
	Item 22: Scarcity of conferences in Oman	4.00	
Inadequate speaking in English	**Item 6**: Lack of opportunities to speak the language outside the classroom	4.00	3.53
	Item 16: Lack of opportunities to speak with native speakers	3.00	
Nature of work and school environment	**Item 15**: Students' lack of motivation to learn the language (as this discourages me from attempting to improve)	3.70	3.53
	Item 20: A heavy workload leaves little time for me to improve my English	3.70	
	Item 24: School restrictions that prevent me from attending conferences	3.30	
	Item 25: Teaching lower grades	3.40	
	Item 26: Having to use Arabic when teaching English in the classroom to make weak students understand	3.50	
	Item 29: Holding an administrative job for some time	3.00	
Context restrictions	**Item 7**: Unwillingness of some people to communicate in English even when they can speak the language	3.60	3.50
	Item 8: Living in an environment where English is not the native language	4.10	
	Item 9: Lack of books written in English (at school)	3.30	
	Item 10: Lack of public libraries	3.70	
	Item 11: Lack of bookshops that sell English books	3.30	
	Item 12: Lack of good English books	3.20	
	Item 14: Lack of a reliable Internet connection	2.80	
	Item 17: People discouraging me to speak in English	3.00	
	Item 27: Lack of English teaching institutions in my region	3.30	
	Item 28: Lack of opportunities to use English in my community	3.90	
	Item 30: Being unemployedfor some time before becoming a teacher	2.60	
Inadequate time due to family responsibilities	**Item 18**: Having no time to devote to improving my English due to family responsibilities	3.20	3.46
	Item 19: Having a family that needs my attention	3.70	
Inadequate reading and writing in English	**Item 4**: Inadequate reading in English	3.23	3.42
	Item 5: Inadequate writing in English	3.60	
Low teacher motivation	**Item 1**: Lack of motivation to improve my language	3.40	2.87
	Item 2: Lack of interest in the language	2.30	
	Item 3: Lack of interest in teaching English	2.50	
	Item 23: Lack of interest in attending conferences	2.70	

Appendix 1B: Frequency of engagement in English-medium activities

Academic Activity	Items	Item Mean	Area Mean
Using the Media and Technology to develop English skills	**Item 30**: Watching movies in English (without reading the Arabic subtitles if provided)	3.60	3.16
	Item 31: Listening to the news on television in English	3.30	
	Item 36: Watching English series or sitcoms on TV	3.00	
	Item 37: Using computer software to learn English	2.90	
	Item 38: Playing computer or other games in English	3.00	
Reading in English	**Item 8**: Living in an environment where English is not the native language	3.10	2.93
	Item 9: Reading novels in English	2.80	
	Item 10: Readingshort stories in English	3.30	
	Item 11: Reading poetry in English	2.50	
	Item 12: Reading non-literary books in English	2.80	
	Item 15: Reading an English newspaper	2.80	
	Item 16: Reading English magazines	2.80	
	Item 32: Using the Internet to look for information in English	4.00	
	Item 33: Using the Internet to read for pleasure in English	3.40	
	Item 40: Reading cook books in English	1.90	
	Item 41: Reading manuals in English	2.80	
Speaking in English	**Item 1**: Speaking with native speakers of English	2.40	2.71
	Item 18: Speaking in English with fellow teachers outside the classroom	3.10	
	Item 19: Speaking in English with students outside the classroom	2.80	
	Item 20: Speaking in English with family members at home	2.60	
	Item 21: Speaking in English in the community where I live	2.20	
	Item 22: Using English when shopping or doing business	3.50	
	Item 23: Calling friends in English on the phone	2.50	
Engaging in Social and Professional English - related activities beyond teaching	**Item 26** : Joining clubs and organizations that use English as their language of communication	2.20	2.55
	Item 27 : Supervising students in extracurricular activities that involve speaking in English	2.70	
	Item 34: Participating in competitions that use English	2.40	
	Item 44 : Traveling abroad and speaking English	2.40	
	Item 49 : Using the teachers' resource center at school	3.10	

Continued

Appendix 1B, contd.

Listening in English	**Item 28** : Listening to the radio in English	2.60	2.53
	Item 29 : Listening to books on tapes in English	2.30	
	Item 42 : Listening to English songs	2.70	
Writing in English	**Item 2**: Writing to native speakers of English	2.30	2.47
	Item 13: Engaging in creative writing in English	2.30	
	Item 14: Keeping a diary or journal in English	2.30	
	Item 17: Writing to English newspapers or magazines (e.g.letters to the editors, articles, commentaries)	1.60	
	Item 24: Sending text messages in English	3.20	
	Item 25: Writing emails in English	3.10	
	Item 39: Writing research in English	2.40	
Professional Development	**Item 3**: Attending English courses in private institutions	1.80	2.12
	Item 4: Attending training and workshops in private institutions	1.90	
	Item 5: Attending in - service training courses and workshops offered by the Ministry of Education	2.70	

2

Corporate Universities in the GCC: The Necessity for Custom-Designed Market-Driven Higher Education Institutions in the 21st Century

Khalid Mohamed Al-Ruwaihi

The rapid change in the global economy towards adopting knowledge, alongside massive development in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), has resulted in creating a comprehensive change in the composition of modern communities and the fundamental elements that form them. Knowledge has become the essential component of the modern economy, and new structures are being developed that are apt to transform traditional economies into knowledge-based economies. One of the biggest global challenges facing knowledge-based economies is the quality of workforce. In addition to the difficulties facing labor markets, finding qualified human resources, and developing their transitional economies, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are also challenged by the gap between the quality of graduates from higher education institutions and market needs, which is getting wider every day.

Traditionally, higher education institutes in developing countries have faced a number of fundamental challenges within their societies and have not been able to perform their expected role.[1] One example of such a challenge is the quality of

1. One of the most important roles of higher education institutes in developing countries is to prepare the national workforce for the labor market and provide suitable strategies to over-

the graduates and their readiness to join the local labor market in their countries (Gonzalez et al. 2008). Another challenge in a majority of developing countries is the wide gap that exists between universities and industry, which has resulted in a very limited amount of applied research activity (Booz and Company 2011). Consequently, along with the transformation towards knowledge-based economies, higher education institutions are facing ever complicated challenges for which innovative solutions are urgently needed. These are global challenges and not limited to the GCC or developing countries alone. The higher education sector around the world has undergone major changes during the past three decades due to the accelerated pace of global developments. Key changes in the business environment such as globalization, the growing importance of knowledge as a source or a product, and the shift towards services, have all greatly affected this important sector. The GCC responded, in the past decade, by expressing a growing interest in investing in the higher education sector in all its member countries. Since 2001, the higher education sector in the GCC has been fully open for private investments. Many private higher education institutes have been established, all of which are affiliated with international partners through varying models, as will be discussed later.

The utilization of advanced ICT has made creating such institutions even simpler and less expensive. This, of course, has affected the quality of the learning process and produced graduates that are less competent and have low caliber (Economic Development Board 2005) as more online courses are being offered with slide presentations.

In a knowledge-based society, the need for advanced education will become ever more pressing for both individuals and enterprises. Yet, it is also likely that the university as we know it today, or rather the current constellation of diverse institutions that comprise the field of higher education, will change in profound ways to serve the changing world.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss an innovative idea for the creation of Custom-Designed Market-Driven Higher Education Institutions through close collaboration between the traditional university and the industry. Through such collaborations, developing countries, and the GCC countries in particular, will acquire high quality, well trained graduates ready to join specific industries after graduation as an effective workforce.

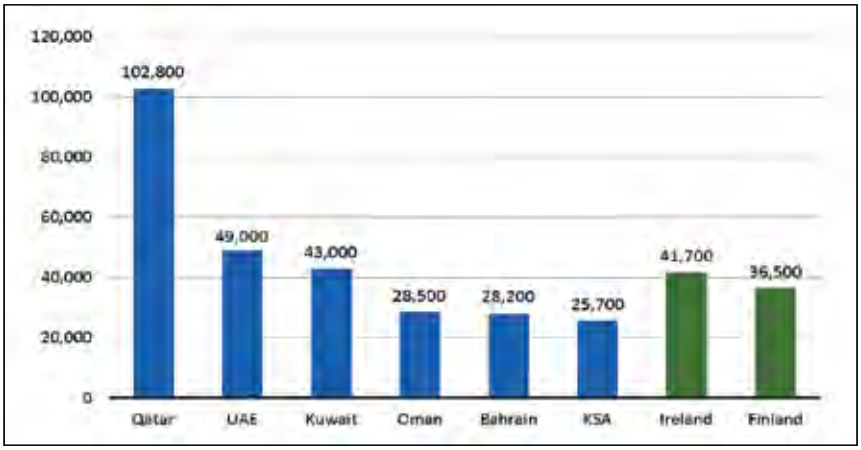
---

come challenges facing workforce developments (Karoly 2010).

GCC Demographics and the Labor Market

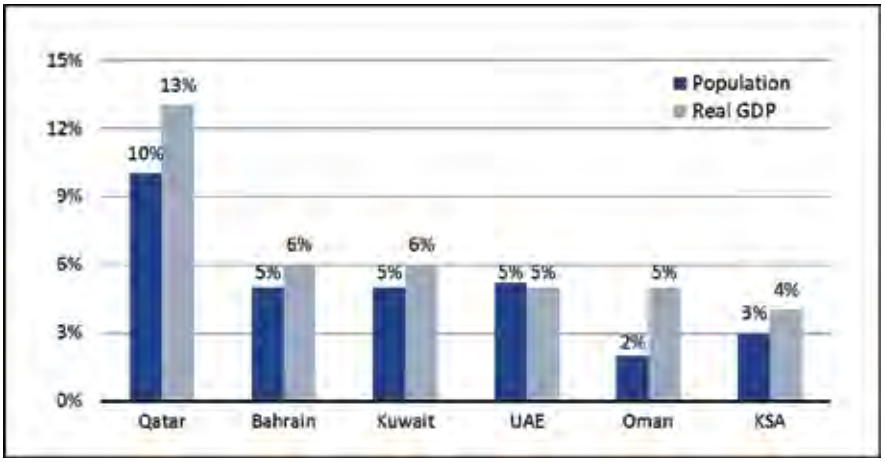
Over the last few decades, the GCC member countries have faced significant demographic challenges which are directly affecting labor market prospects. According to a World Bank classification, all the GCC countries are classified in the upper income group of countries based on their gross national income (GNI) per capita, despite the fact that the GNI per capita for Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain is close to the lower end of the range (World Bank 2012). As shown in Figure 2.1, the GDP per capita for the GCC countries is also considered to be high when compared to some of the developed countries.

Figure 2.1: GDP per capita for GCC countries (2012)



Source: CIA World Factbook 2012

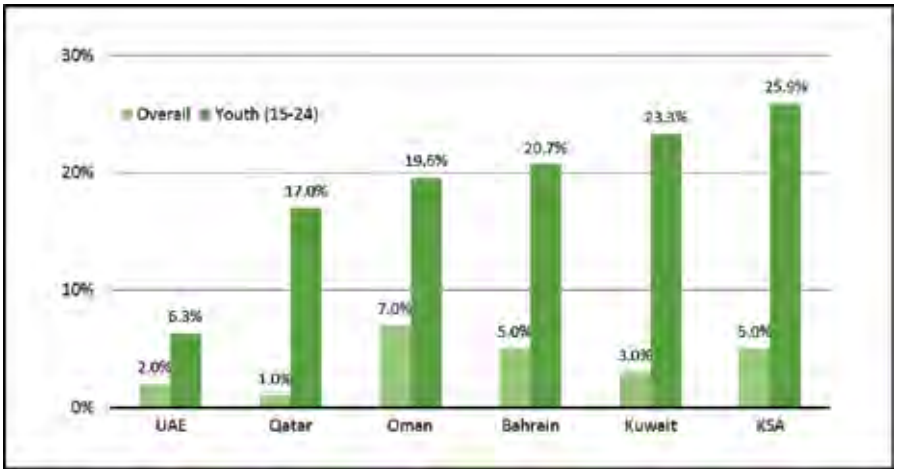
Figure 2.2: Growth rate CAGR, 2000-2011



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database

One of the most important consequences of these demographic transformations has been the change in the age structure and growth of the working-age population (Dhillon and Yousef 2009). The GCC has one of the fastest-growing populations in the world, as depicted in Figure 2.2. The population is expected to increase by one-third by the year 2020 reaching 53 million people (World Bank 2011) and the vast majority of the population will be under 25 years of age (Economist Intelligence Unit 2009). The rapid growth rate and the relatively young age of the population present crucial challenges, such as has been seen in unemployment rates in the GCC, as shown in Figure 2.3. In recent years, unemployment has become a serious socio-economic issue that affects the daily life of millions of nationals and their families.

Figure 2.3: Youth vs. overall unemployment rate



Source: UNDP 2010

As mentioned previously, a knowledge economy requires the harnessing of manpower of skilled workers, a facility that can only be provided through appropriate education and hands-on training. This means that the youth should be prepared through quality tertiary education systems, in order to join the labor market and support future developments. Recent studies, however, have shown that there is an apparent mismatch between the qualifications which the education system produces and the skills which the modern workplace demands (Bashir 2010; Booz and Company 2011; GIC 2012); in other words, the aforementioned discrepancy results in serious skill deficiencies. The skill deficiencies of the GCC youth are also costly in that they strain the GCC economy and increase dependency on foreign labor (Booz and Company 2011).

The major challenge facing the GCC now and in the future is finding proper jobs for the millions of people who are looking for employment in their local labor markets. The seriousness of the problem is expected to increase as time passes. Another challenge is that having large numbers of unemployed youth can have political repercussions impacting the legitimacy of governments and the stability of communities, as was recently witnessed in Tunisia under the umbrella of the Arab Spring (Schuman 2011; Abu-Nasr 2012). Therefore, a successful education system at present is one that can produce employable graduates as required by the labor market.

Higher Education in the GCC Countries

There is sufficient evidence in the literature to prove that the quality of higher education is not only an essential ingredient for general human development but also a major contributor to a county's economic growth (Barro and Sala-i-Martin 2003; DiGregorio and Shane 2003; Schwartzman 2012). Recently, many GCC countries have started to reform their education systems by adopting international models, such as those found in Singapore, Ireland, and the USA (Barber et al. 2007; Tolmacheva 2008; Wiseman 2010). Universities in the GCC region first appeared in the late 1950s in Saudi Arabia, followed by Kuwait in the middle of the 1960s, then Bahrain in the late 1960s – the United Arab Emirates (UAE) did not build a university until the late 1970s. Since then, access to higher education has dramatically improved, with a few countries (Saudi Arabia, Oman, and UAE) having segregated sections in universities allowing girls to attend without disrupting cultural traditions and family values. In the UAE, female-only institutions have been established, such as Zayed University, with branches in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi. In Saudi Arabia, Prince Noora University is currently considered to be the largest women's only university in the world, with the students numbering 52,000 in 2012.

As knowledge-based economies emerge, future development in the GCC countries will depend entirely on the ability of their education systems to produce national workforces with the needed knowledge and to successfully integrate them into the labor market. Therefore, the GCC governments need to give much more focused attention to developing the higher education sector. This should be considered a strategic issue and should be tackled like strategic issues related to politics are handled. The past decade has seen GCC governments increase their funding for training and education, as shown in Figure 2.4. Saudi Arabia, for

instance, allocated 25.6 percent of its 2010 annual budget to educational activities, compared to the US and the UK which allocated 17.1 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively.

Public Tertiary Education in the GCC

The public tertiary education sector in the GCC is fully funded by the local governments. In the past, public tertiary education institutes successfully managed to absorb most high-school graduates and enrolled them in academic programs according to the capacity of each university. However, with the increase in the gross enrolment rate of basic education during the past two decades, these institutes are neither able to continue to enroll all local citizens nor capable of offering quality education.

One of the root causes why public institutes are unable to produce employable labor is the wide gap between academic programs and the needs of the industry. This issue is directly linked to curriculum development, which has been of fundamental concern to universities in developed countries. Traditionally, curricula have been designed and structured to achieve specific goals, such as to develop societies, fulfill labor market needs, and produce intellectuals for particular sectors. These were usually done by nationals of the developed country. However, in developing countries like the GCC countries, universities, for a long time, relied on importing teaching materials, especially textbooks and course contents, from well-known universities via various models of affiliation. Unfortunately, this approach has resulted in widening the gap between national universities and the labor market and produced graduates who are unemployable because they do not fit the needs of their local labor markets (EDB 2005).

In order to partially solve the enrollment problems, a number of GCC countries launched initiatives to diversify their public tertiary education by investing in vocational and applied learning institutions. For instance, the government of Bahrain created the Bahrain Polytechnic in 2009, the Qatar Chamber of Commerce & Industry (QCCI) in collaboration with the UK's City and Guilds launched a vocational center in Doha in 2011, and the UAE established the Sharjah Institute of Technology in 2003.

Private Tertiary Education in the GCC

Private higher education institutes are another obstacle facing the development of a quality higher education sector in the GCC. Investment in private higher education in the GCC started in 1995 with the opening of the American University in Dubai

(UAE), originally affiliated with the American Intercontinental University, and followed in 1997, by the opening of the American University of Sharjah which was instructed by the American University.

From a business point of view, the private higher education sector in the GCC is more profitable than many traditional businesses found in the region. Since 2009, the for-profit private higher education market has been growing at an average pace of 13.8 percent annually, with an estimated profit of $ 49.1 billion in 2015 (TresVista 2010). There is an ever increasing enrolment in private higher education institutes, expected to reach 41 percent in 2015 from 28 percent in 2009 (TresVista 2010).

The huge profits from this sector have attracted investors and businesses to the commercialization of tertiary education in the GCC. This tendency has resulted in lowering the overall quality of the education delivered and consequently the standard of graduates from these institutes is low too in the absence of essential educational elements such as the accreditation of academic programs and research activity (Bertelse 2009; Bernasconi 2013). These drawbacks have hindered development of traditional private higher education in the GCC countries which leaves the area in need of massive focus and reform.

The traditional model of university affiliation has been recently replaced by an array of transnational higher education engagements such as international branch campuses, academic partnerships, joint degrees, dual site and mixed mode programs, and single discipline schools (World Bank 2011). Of all the models, the international branching model is considered the most commonly used in the GCC countries. The international branching model involves leading international universities opening a remote campus in another country (ACE 2009; McBurnie and Ziguras 2007). An international branch campus can be owned solely by the mother university or jointly with local partners (Wilkins 2011). This model was used by the Education City of Qatar, created in 1995, with the first branch campus under the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Arts in Qatar opened in 2001. Other international branch campuses continued to open in Qatar including American universities such as Carnegie Mellon, Texas A&M, and Cornell, to name a few. Other universities have opened their branches in the region as well, such as Université Paris Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi (2006), Michigan State University Dubai (2008), and New York University Abu Dhabi (2010).

Although it is still too early to judge the outcomes of this model, there are several critical issues that are related to the actual benefits of establishing remote campuses of foreign universities in cultures that may not live up to the standards of the home institutions (Wilkins 2011). Philip Altbach suggests that this model is

unreliable and that it raises several fundamental questions related to the educational experience of the students at the overseas campus such as whether students receive a similar educational experience to that of being in the home campus, which points to the quality of instruction and whether it is equivalent to that of the home university (Altbach 2011). Moreover, there have been some claims that the key motive for opening international branch campuses is to earn money in the for-profit sector and for some traditional not-for-profit universities, especially in the light of the decline in state funding (Altbach and Knight 2007; McBurnie and Pollock 2000).

Furthermore, international branch campuses could be politicized as there have been proposals to politically utilize the branch campuses as a liberalization force, using higher education in democratizing some of the GCC countries (Davis 2010).

Table 2.1: Categorization of corporate university realizations

Level	*Realization*
Level I	Training
Level II	Training and Managerial Development
Level III	Training and Courses with Academic Credits
Level IV	Training and Courses Leading to Academic Degrees

Corporate Universities

It is a well-accepted fact among scholars and researchers that General Motors (GM) is considered a lead organization in founding what is commonly known as the corporate university. GM has established its corporate university in a two-fold process. First, a new method for training was introduced within the company prior to 1927, and then a high-level training institute labeled corporate university was created in the mid-1950s (Gerbman 2000; Walton 1999; Prince 2001)

Literature defines "Corporate Universities" as educational institutions supplying training courses, whose founding organization is not an educational institute (Eurich 1985; Meister 1998a). Mark Allen defined corporate universities as educational entities that are strategic tools designed to assist their parent organizations in achieving their missions by conducting activities that cultivate individual and organizational learning, knowledge, and wisdom (Allen 2002). Another definition for a corporate university introduced it as a generic name given to educational structures based in private and public, commercial and noncommercial organizations, to help implement the organization's strategies in

human, economic, financial, technological, social and environmental terms through education (Renaud-Coulon 2008).

Nonetheless, despite the many definitions for the concept of a corporate university, there is a common reason cited for the proliferation of corporate universities which is the dissatisfaction with traditional tertiary education provided by academic universities (LaPlante 1996; Meister 1998b; Clair 2003).

Purposes and Functions

In general, corporate universities were created to help develop different strategic goals within organizations, such as enhancing individual skills and driving innovation and quality, in addition to advancing corporate strategies (Areias 2006).

A corporate university can act as an effective enabler for an organization to implement precise professional programs through smooth coordination between different departments and sections within the organization. Many organizations have implemented the concept of a corporate university utilizing their own experience and approaches (Edelstein and Armstrong 1993). For reasons related to the way they are managed and the professional functions performed, many corporate universities are rarely regulated through conventional professional bodies. Moreover, most programs offered by corporate universities are not academically accredited towards earning formal degrees.[2]

Linking Academic Programs with Professional Training

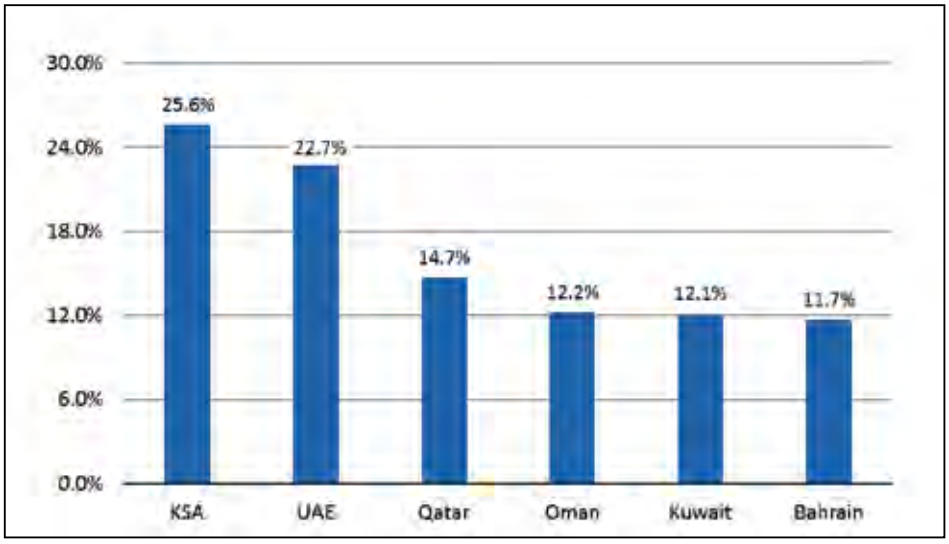
As discussed earlier, the main limitation of traditional tertiary education institutions is their failure to produce candidates who are ready to be employed by the labor market. The primary reason for this has been the lack of understanding of specific skills required by various industries. Conventional linkages that exist between academic institutions and industry through research and development (R&D) units, dedicated training centers, and business incubators, to give some examples, have their own limitations in the present perspective (Narasimharao and Nair 2010; AISBL 2012).

There is an untapped potential of linking the concept of corporate universities in industry with traditional universities to provide the professional skills and training required. The concepts used to build the various types of corporate universities

2. A detailed description of the spectrum of learning and development initiatives related to corporate universities has been presented in the literature of the field (Mahmood and Minhas 2011).

around the world show that they can be used, with some modified structures, as potential catalyzing entities that are capable of accomplishing the required link between academic programs offered by traditional universities and professional training provided by corporates within certain industries. Some proposals have focused on the collaboration between universities and the industry to create centers for corporate education within the universities. This has been discussed by Panduranga Narasimharao (2010) who elaborated on the benefits of such collaborations in helping integrate activities and studies of various disciplines and in acting as a coordination unit between industry and university. One of the most important benefits of creating centers for corporate education is the possibility to overcome the lack of association between universities and entrepreneurships in the developing countries (Narasimharao 2010). Another benefit is the possibility to create suitable and effective ecosystems for technology start-ups.

Figure 2.4: Percentage of budget allocation on education (2010)



Source: UNESCO 2010

In general, the realization of corporate universities can be categorized within four main levels (Edelstein and Armstrong 1993; Allen 2002), as shown in Table 2.1. These levels of realization have been implemented over a wide spectrum and structures. In its simplest form, a corporate university realized at Level I is the training department within an organization. The next level of the corporate university provides training that focuses on skills required by the industry, in addition to

management and executive courses designed to improve certain behaviors (Edelstein and Armstrong 1993). The Level III model of corporate universities offer courses that can be accredited by traditional universities, in addition to the training offered by other models. The last and most prominent model is Level IV, which offers courses that can lead to academic degrees from traditional universities, in addition to professional training that develops skills needed by the industry (Giulio 2011).

In this paper, we will focus on the Level IV model and discuss the possibility of introducing a new type of custom-designed corporate university in the GCC that takes into consideration the needs and drawbacks mentioned earlier.

Custom-Designed Realization of a Corporate University: Centers of Excellence

According to Pedrini Giulio, corporate universities that offer training and courses which lead to academic degrees are rarely found (Giulio 2011). Such institutions do not exist in most European countries except, to some extent, in Germany (Hilse and Nicolai, 2004) and Italy (ASFOR 2004). However, Level IV corporate universities are well known in the US and are being established in a number of organizations.

The needs of labor markets in the GCC countries are concentrated around middle class jobs, with severe shortages in skilled national workforce that has led to continued reliance on foreign labor (Fasano and Goyal 2004). Previous surveys show that the shortage in the labor market is mainly a shortage of skilled national labor that has completed two year applied programs considered as associate diplomas or higher national diplomas (EDB 2005). To resolve a good proportion of their labor problems, the GCC countries should concentrate on programs that satisfy local labor market needs, in terms of both specializations as well as duration of the programs.

Figure 2.5: Proposed realization of corporate university in the GCC countries

Furthermore, the focus of public tertiary education institutions needs to be changed in order to keep up with the evolving role of university in knowledge societies. The ability of universities to reintroduce traditional disciplines in diverse forms by taking into considerations the labor market needs is the key to the success of corporate universities.

The creation of Centers of Excellence as partnership projects between universities and corporations, with the aim to develop both university graduates and corporate employees, can be considered a first step towards bridging the current gap between labor market needs and university graduates around the world. This partnership can be easily introduced in most GCC universities which have missions that can be divided into three parts, namely: Education, Scientific Research, and Community Service. The proposed setting up of the centers of excellence that realize Level IV corporate universities would be the ultimate outcome of integrating "Education" with "Community Service" in any university in the GCC.

The implementation process can be initiated by creating a Center of Excellence with a Governing Board (CEGB) which consists of representatives from the industry within a particular sector with academics from related departments or schools in a university. The main role for the industry representatives will be to maintain the level of applied training and practical work in each program, while the academics will make sure that programs are satisfying accreditation needs at national as well as international levels as illustrated in Figure 3.5, which demonstrates a proposed structure for a CEGB.

Conclusion

The evolution of the knowledge economy emphasizes the importance of developing national human resources at international standards, especially in developing countries. The GCC countries have invested in traditional public tertiary education. However, global economic developments and demographic change have left a gap between the needs of industry and the traditional universities' graduates. Traditional academic programs offered by public universities in the GCC are not fulfilling industry requirements. Moreover, the private tertiary higher education sector in the GCC has been duplicating academic programs offered by public institutes, with lower quality and admission criteria as they seek to enroll as many students as possible and increase their annual net revenues. Corporate universities have been seen to be successful over the past few decades, particularly in the US, in particular in bridging the gap between labor market needs and university graduates. Some

large corporates have been able to design training programs with courses that are also accredited by universities.

This paper discussed the possibilities of presenting new types of degrees that can be offered jointly by traditional academic universities and industry in the form of corporate universities run through centers of excellence. The proposal to establish centers of excellence as a custom-designed form of the corporate university may help in broadening the horizon of a new type of applied tertiary education, which academic universities can offer in collaboration with corporations. Hopefully, such a development will improve the role of universities in the GCC and other developing countries in preparing the national workforce for the knowledge economy.

References

Abu-Nasr, D. 2012. "Saudis Skip Arab Spring as Nation Pours Money into Jobs." Retrieved from http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-04-02/saudis-skip-arab-spring-as-nation-pours-money-into-jobs.html.

ACE. 2009. "U.S. Branch Campuses Abroad." American Council on Education, Center for International Initiatives. Retrieved from http://www.acenet.edu.

Allen, M. (ed.) 2002. *The Corporate University Handbook—Designing, Managing and Growing a Successful Program.* New York: Amacom.

Altbach, P. 2011. "Is there a Future for Branch Campuses?" *International Higher Education* 65 (Fall): 7-10).

Altbach, P., and J. Knight. 2007. "The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities." *Journal of Studies in International Education,* 11 (3): 290-305.

Areias, T. 2006. "An Overview of Corporate Universities, European Corporate Universities & Academies Network (ECUANET)." Retrieved from http://www.scribd.com/doc/9407517/An-Overview-of-Corporate-Universities.

AISBL. 2012. "Making Industry-University Partnerships Work: Lessons from Successful Collaborations." *Science Business Innovation Board.* Retrieved from http://www.sciencebusiness.net/Assets/94fe6d15-5432-4cf9-a656-633248e63541.pdf

Associazione per la Formazione alla Direzione Aziendale (ASFOR). 2003. "Corporate University in Italy: A Survey on 25 Internal Training Schools." *Managerial Training* 2: 1-21.

Barber, M., M. Mourshed, and F. Whelan. 2007. "Improving Education in the Gulf." *The McKinsey Quarterly - Special Edition: Reappraising the Gulf States* 4: 39-47.

Barro, R, and X. Sala-i-Martin. 2003. *Economic Growth* (Second Edition). Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Bashir, R. 2010. "Wanted: A National Labor Force: Labor Policies and Youth Unemployment in the Gulf Region." *A Middle East Point of View.* Dubai: Deloitte.

Bernasconi, A. 2013. "The Profit Motive in Higher Education," *International Higher Education* 71 (Spring): 8-10.

Bertelsen, R. 2009. "Private Higher Education in the GCC: Best Practices in Governance, Quality Assurance and Funding." Boston Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

Booz and Company. 2011. "Youth in the GCC Countries: Meeting the Challenge." Riyadh: Booz & Company Inc.

Davis, C. 2010. "American Higher Education in the Arabian Gulf – A Force for Liberalization." M.A. Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, California, USA. Retrieved from http://edocs.nps.edu/npspubs/scholarly/theses/2010/Jun/10Jun_Davis_Christian.pdf.

Dhillon, N. and T. Yousef (eds.). 2009. *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

DiGregorio, D. and S. Shane. 2003. Why Do Some Universities Generate More Start-ups than Others?" *Research Policy* 32 (2): 209-227. Available at http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/4097/SShane_Why_More_Start-Ups.pdf.

Economic Development Board (EDB). 2005. *Diagnosis of Tertiary Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain.* National Committee for Reform of Education. Bahrain: EDB.

Economist Intelligence Unit. 2009. "The GCC in 2020: The Gulf and its People." Retrieved from http://graphics.eiu.com/upload/eb/Gulf2020part2.pdf.

Edelstein, B., and D. Armstrong. 1993. "A Model for Executive Development." *Human Resource Planning,* 16 (4): 51-67.

Eurich, N. 1985. *Corporate Classrooms: The Learning Business.* Princeton: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Fasano, U. and R. Goyal. 2004. "Emerging Strains in GCC Labor Markets." IMF Working Paper No. 04/71. Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund.

Giulio, P. 2011. "The Corporate University Phenomenon and the Competences "Pipeline": The Role of Innovation and Institutional Change." *Journal of US-China Public Administration* 8 (9): 1004-1015.

Gerbman, R., 2000. "Corporate Universities 101." *HR Magazine* 45 (2): 101-102.

Guy, S. 2003. Beyond Degrees: *Professional Learning for Knowledge Services.* New York: K.G. Saur.

Gonzalez, G., L. Karoly, L. Constant, H. Salem, and C. Goldman. 2008. *Facing Human Capital Challenges of the 21st Century: Education and Labor Market Initiatives in Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.* MG-786, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation.

Hilse, H., and A. Nicolai. 2004. "Strategic Learning in Germany's Largest Companies: Empirical Evidence on the Role of Corporate Universities within Strategy Processes." *The Journal of Management Development* 23 (4): 372-398.

IMF World Economic Outlook Database, December 2012. Retrieved from http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/01/weodata/index.aspx.

Karoly, L. 2010. "The Role of Education in Preparing Graduates for the Labor Market in the GCC Countries." RAND Working Paper Series WR-742.

LaPlante, A., 1996./, "Opposing Schools of Thought." *Computer World* 99, July 15.

McBurnie, G., and A. Pollock. 2000. "Opportunity and Risk in Transnational Education – Issues in Planning for International Campus Development: An Australian Perspective." Higher Education in Europe 25 (3): 333-343.

McBurnie, G., and C. Ziguras. 2007. *Transnational Education: Issues and Trends in Offshore Higher Education.* London, UK: Routledge.

Meister, J. 1998a. "Extending the Short Shelf Life of Knowledge." *Training and Development* 52 (6): 52-53.

Meister, J. 1998b. "Ten Steps to Creating a Corporate University." *Training and Development* 52 (11): 38-43.

Narasimharao, P. 2010. Tertiary Education Institutions for Corporate Education – Need and Relevance of Corporate Education Centers. Discussion Papers in Social Responsibility. Retrieved from http://www.socialresponsibility.biz/discuss1003.pdf.

Narasimharao, P., and P. Nair. 2010. "Universities and Corporate Education: 21st Century Social Responsibility of Developing Countries." Discussion Papers in Social Responsibility. Retrieved from http://www.socialresponsibility.biz/discuss1002.pdf.

Prince, C., and G. Beaver. 2001. "The Rise and Rise of the Corporate University: The Emerging Corporate Learning Agenda." *The International Journal of Management Education* 1 (3): 17-26.

Renaud-Coulon, A. 2008. *Corporate Universities: A Lever of Corporate Social Responsibility.* Paris: GlobalCCU.

Schuman, M. 2011. "Why the Arab Spring's Success Depends on Jobs, Not Guns," TIME, August 22. Retrieved from http://business.time.com/2011/08/22/why-the-arab-springs-success- -on-jobs-not-guns.

Schwartzman, S. 2012. "Economic Growth and Higher Education Policies in Brazil: A Link?" *International Higher Education* 67: 28-29.

TresVista Financial Services. 2010. *For-profit Education in GCC.* November 2. Retrieved from http://www.tresvista.com/images/insights/whitepapers/TVFS_For-profit%20Education%20in%20GCC.pdf.

Tolmacheva, M. 2008. Bringing the American College Model to the Arabian Gulf: New Challenges for Intercultural Education. Proceedings of the 4th International Barcelona Conference on Higher Education 6. Barcelona: GUNI.

United Nations Development Program (UNDP). 2010. *Arab Human Development Report.* Regional Bureau for Arab States.

Wilkins, S. 2011. "Who Benefits from Foreign Universities in the Arab Gulf States?" *Australian Universities' Review* 53(1): 73-83.

Walton, J. 1999. *Strategic Human Resource Development.* London: Pitman.

Wiseman, A. 2010. "The Institutionalization of a Global Educational Community: The Impact of Imposition, Invitation and Innovation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)." *Orbis Schola* 4 (2): 21-40.

World Bank. 2011. *Internationalization of Higher Education in MENA: Policy Issues Associated with Skills Formation and Mobility.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

—. 2012. World Bank List of Economies. Retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/CLASS.XLS.

3

English as an International Language Pedagogy: A Sustainable Alternative for Teaching English in the GCC Region

Ali Fuad Selvi and Bedrettin Yazan

Introduction

The exponential growth of English as a global language is now an international phenomenon which has a wide spectrum of local impacts in areas like education, trade, tourism and foreign relations. According to McKay (2002), what makes English different from other widely spoken languages such as Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic is the fact that English is spoken by a large number of native speakers of other languages and serves as the de facto lingua franca in the 21st century. Although statistics vary, English is used by approximately 1.5 billion speakers with varying degrees of competencies (Curtis and Romney 2006), 375 million of them as their first language, and as the national language or as an official language in about 75 countries (Braine 2005). Today, the English language is unquestionably the lingua franca of the world (Crystal 2012; Graddol 2006) and, consequently, is at the center of the linguistic, ideological, sociocultural, political, and pedagogical implications (Sharifian 2009).

Considered as "the world's first truly global language" (Crystal 2012: 21), "the common linguistic denominator" (Power 2007) or "the international language par excellence" (Phillipson 1992: 6), English fulfills an array of pragmatic and

instrumental functions in all domains of life, and the field of education is no exception. For this reason, English is appreciated for being a basic survival skill (Graddol 1997) and considered a necessary development (Zughoul 2003) and sine qua non for citizens of the globalized world (Elyas 2008). Along the same lines, Crystal (2012) argues that in order for a language to attain a global status it should have a special role recognized in every country in the form of official language used in government, courts, education, or in the nation's educational system.

The global influx of the English language is probably best manifested in the context of English language teaching across the world. The increased importance of the English language is ubiquitously evident at every level of the educational curricula worldwide. The global demand for English language proficiency necessitates providing a quality education for English language learners and "the need for better accommodating the needs of English language learners has no geographical and professional boundaries" (Selvi 2011: 389). Therefore, English acquires topmost priority in the educational agenda of many countries, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the Sultanate of Oman) are no exception (Ahmed 2010; Ali 2009; Al-Issa 2006, 2011; Karmani 2005a, 2005b; Mohd-Asraf 2005; Moody 2009; Syed 2003; Zughoul 2003). The English language teaching (ELT) enterprise has been exponentially growing in the region for several decades. The increasing number of expatriate ELT professionals, huge budget allocations to planning and implementing ELT programs, the proliferation of respected institutions of higher education with greater emphasis on the English language are testament to this fact.

Despite the fact that the primary driving force behind the formation of the GCC was the idea of a cooperative framework to promote coordination and integration and sustain cooperation and collaboration among these states, the English language teaching enterprise has not received enough attention from the member states (Al-Issa 2011). The perceived status of English as a language of successful career, being the lingua franca of the international business, and the elitism/privatization trend in education all contribute to the growing interest in English language. However, this bias in English has created a growing public concern in the region and, therefore, resulted in an increasing emphasis on Arabic as a linguistic tool connecting with the new generation, rich cultural heritage, representations of personal identity, and trajectories of economic prosperity. Therefore, being an English language teacher in the shadow of this delicate interplay between English and Arabic at various levels is an unfathomably complex endeavor, particularly due to increasingly fluid ethnolinguistic, geographical, and ideological boundaries in the GCC region.

Handling this complexity entails a novel perspective to understanding the ELT pedagogy to prepare English learners for intercultural communication in globalized contexts.

In this paper, we set the scene with a survey of the use of English in the Middle East/GCC region at the current time with specific references to the literature on how it is being taught and the critiques it receives. In the light of this portrayal, we will present theoretical underpinnings and practical manifestations of the EIL pedagogy (references to varieties, standards, models and policies) and describe the reasons why it should stand out as a viable response to the need for English language teaching practices in the GCC region. In the conclusion section, we intend to share some key strategies for teachers and teacher educators in the GCC region to appropriate EIL pedagogy in a way that suits their particular individual contexts, needs, learners and teaching settings, as echoed in a recent TESOL White Paper (Mahboob and Tilakaratna 2012). The primary audience of this paper includes but is not limited to teacher educators, administrators, policymakers, and researchers who are engaged in various levels of teaching and education of pre- and in-service teachers in or for the GCC region.

An Overview of the English Language in the GCC Region: Opportunities and Challenges

The unprecedented spread of English as the world's lingua franca in the age of globalization created a widespread impetus towards learning the language, which endogenously contributed to the emergence of a lucrative ELT business. Considered "the UK's biggest export success story" by the British Council websites for Portugal and Mexico, today, ELT is a multi-billion industry. In order not to be deprived of monetary, materialistic, linguistic, social, and symbolic values associated with and accessed by means of the English language, governments in the GCC region have embarked upon a series of educational reforms that were structured around the English language (Ahmed 2010; Al-Issa 2011; Karmani 2005a, 2005b; Zughoul 2003). However, the missing piece in the picture is an investigation of the interplay between ELT and its implications on the contextual dynamics of the Gulf region. The discussion within the scope of the GCC region rests upon four major pillars:

1. Current status of English as the language of globalization
2. Relationship between Islam and the English language
3. Employment landscape for both local and foreign teachers, and

4. The ever-diversifying multilingual and multicultural milieu of the GCC region.

English as the Language of Globalization

Responding to the unprecedented need for English as the language of globalization has been a challenge at global scale, and the GCC region is no exception. From this point of view, the challenges associated with the teaching of English in the region share similarities with other contexts around the world. In his analysis, Syed (2003) concluded that the current challenges of ELT in the Gulf region primarily included lack of motivation, heavy reliance on memorization and rote learning, the use of ahistorical curricular initiatives and methodologies, the emphasis on high-stake testing, and inadequately trained teachers. In the same vein, Moody (2009) criticized the implementation of communicative language teaching policies as reflected in textbook production and the implemented means of assessment. Al-Issa (2011) pointed out that these trends are still largely in vogue in many parts of the GCC states and the Arab world and attributed to such trends as a determinant of a relatively weaker economic growth and unemployment crisis in the region (Al-Issa 2009). A report entitled "The GCC in 2020 - The Gulf and its People" by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2009) indicated that the large-scale expansion of higher education is likely to have profound impacts on (a) increased foreign involvement in education, (b) the greater need for English language skills, (c) the extension of ELT through K-12 levels (which may result in the challenge of maintaining high Arabic literacy standards and generating sentiments about English) and (d) the widening range of educational opportunities for women in education and in the workforce (which may result in public debates about the cultural appropriateness). As a result, it is suggested that the current status of English as the language of globalization necessitates a fundamental shift in approach, methodology, curriculum, and perceptions at large (Zughoul 2003).

Despite the fact that English has been playing a major role for the countries in the Arab world as well as for the entire GCC region, the sociolinguistic and educational implications of the English language for the region and its people necessitates a closer and a more regional focus on this issue (e.g., Damerow and Bailey 2014). Today, there seems to be a tension in the Arab Gulf with respect to the role that the English language plays vis-à-vis the local languages, and most importantly Arabic. On one end of the spectrum, there has been a growing interest in educating students in English as the language of science, business, technology, and international relations. On the other end of the spectrum, English is severely

criticized for being the language of instruction (Belhiah and Elhami 2014), marginalizing Arabic as the language of research and academic publication (Hanafi and Arvanitis 2014) and devaluing the importance of Arabic and Arab identity. As a result, there has been a growing trend among scholars, policymakers and public figures to revert to Arabic as the language of instruction (e.g., Qatar University), place greater emphasis on students' language development in Arabic (e.g., courses in Modern Standard Arabic at Northwestern University, creating instructional materials and different learning tracks for Arabic speakers at Georgetown University), and prioritize Arabic as a linguistic tool to reinstate and maintain the Arab identity (Randall and Samimi 2010). More recently, a bilingual approach to education emerges as a compromising, viable and balanced approach that seems to address both global ideals and local realities (Belhiah and Elhami 2014).

Islam and the English Language: The (Un)easy Relationship

The interesting and delicate interplay between English and Islam has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of a binary discourse of clash or opportunity. On the one hand, English is seen as the flag of Judeo-Christian culture and values, a vehicle for the transmission of Western values (Mohd-Asraf 2005), and a linguistic force destructing and demonizing Islam (Karmani 2005a, 2005b). Therefore, the only justification to learn English would be to "learn the language of your enemy." On the other hand, the learning of English may have additive value and pragmatic advantages for Muslim populations (Mohd-Asraf 2005). Rahman (2005) identified three "Islamic" responses to English, namely (a) rejection and resistance (by Islamic conservatives), (b) acceptance and assimilation (by the secular professional and middle classes) and (c) pragmatic utilization (by Islamists). This new trend, encapsulated as the promotion of "more English and less Islam" (Glasser 2003), perpetuates the religion-oriented anti-English sentiments and depicts English and Islam as polar opposites (Karmani 2005b). Mahboob and Elyas (2014: 128) in their recent examination of English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, acknowledge that English in the local context is "not neutral," rather "loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones and is a topic of heated debate…[and spurred] processes of resistance to English that question its validity and contribute to a shift in the language to suit local beliefs and practices." In his response to Karmani, Kabel (2007: 136) highlighted the need for "tak[ing] into account how the language is constantly and unpredictably appropriated and creatively reshaped and expropriated to give voice to emerging agencies and subjectivities." In his compelling case against Karmani (2005a, 2005b), Elyas (2008: 38) echoed the additive value of bilingualism

and biculturalism (Mohd-Asraf 2005), and more importantly, underscored the importance of "conflict" "as a stimulating mind activity" that may lead to mediation across languages and cultures:

> Despite the fact that learners are exposed to a language 'embodying' values and ideologies of the West sometimes in conflict with their own and drawn by coercion or alluring fascination, it can be seen as a stimulating mind activity, and in turn, an opportunity to look 'outside the box' and appreciate differences between the two cultures.

Quite interestingly, the opening chapter of the recent British Council (2013) report investigating the perspectives on English in the Middle East and North Africa is devoted to the new role of English as a global language in promoting interfaith and co-existence (Al Kilani 2013). In her analysis, Al Kilani recognizes the interesting and complex conceptualization of the English, historically stuck between labels such as the "language of the enemy" and "a linguistic link to peace, interfaith, dialogue and intercultural understanding" between the East and the West. On the one hand, there is the escalating violence against Christians in Iraq and Egypt, increasing tensions fueled by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, marketed as efforts of "democratization" and "emancipation." On the other hand, there is the inflation of hatred towards and discrimination against Muslim communities in the Western countries propagated by the ideological extremism exacerbated by Al-Qaeda's aggression in the West in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. Built upon these historical as well as recent sociopolitical incidents, the "collective memory of grave injustices on both sides" thus endogenously feeds this relationship, often defined by unprecedented intolerance and a skeptical approach in dealing with "the other" (Al Kilani 2013: 13). Al Kilani (2013: 14) ends her sociolinguistic and political analysis with a linguistic reference to English as a language of "dialogue," which may serve as an important tool in "presenting each other's arguments and learn to embrace new virtues that provide the basis of learning, understanding and cohabiting with each other."

The Employment Landscape: Double-edged Sword

Being one of the fastest-growing populations in the world with an increasing proportion of youth, and striving to move towards a knowledge economy and become a global actor, the GCC countries are facing the pressing challenge of preparing the youth for the labor market in the 21st century (Al-Ruwaihi, chapter 3, this volume). The last decade has been an era of proliferation of transnational higher education in

the world, where "the Gulf States have been the largest recipients of transnational higher education globally, whilst Australia, the UK and USA have been the largest providers" (Wilkins 2011: 74). For instance, the cities of Sharjah and Dubai in the UAE established university cities (namely, Sharjah University City and Dubai Academic City), and the UAE continues to host the largest number of international branch campuses (n=37) in the region and in the world (The Observatory of Borderless Higher Education 2009). GCC governments have placed considerable emphasis on higher education reforms (e.g., adopting international models, allocating large amount of funds, establishing new institutions of higher education), which spearheaded a glocal response in the region (e.g., influenced by education systems of the West and Asia in a fashion to be congruent with local traditions and values, including the provision of education for female students through segregated sections) (Al-Ruwaihi, chapter 3, this volume). Smith (2008: 20-21) argued that the countries of the GCC "may be in the process of creating the world's most globalised higher education system ... [one] which is largely built upon standards, systems and faculty imported from Western Europe and North America and which operates almost entirely in English." Therefore, "the GCC countries are actively encouraging English-medium Western higher education for their citizens with the aim of increasing their productivity in the globalized economy of the 21st Century" (Hudson 2012: 3).

Human resource development in the GCC region as a higher education hub has been historically outsourced to professionals both at teacher and administrator levels in government-sponsored institutions of higher education from Inner Circle countries (Baalawi 2009). Unfortunately, a cursory review of the advertisements for ELT positions in the region easily reveals instances of discrimination such as "native speaker only", "passport holders from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, US or UK," or instances of lack of professionalism such as "formal education/ certification in teaching not required," "experience is helpful but not compulsory." Consequently, "English teachers from the Outer and Expanding Circles have never filled teaching positions in well-established private schools, colleges and universities in the GCC" (Ali 2009: 36). Hudson (2012: 2) recognized that there are English teachers working in the universities and colleges of the GCC region from various linguistic backgrounds; however, "the fact that the majority tend to be hired from Anglophone countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Ireland etc., could be said to reflect such discriminatory hiring practices," a trend which resonates the employment issues and concerns in different parts of the world (Selvi 2014).

Increasing Multilingualism and Multiculturalism in the Region

By and large, the role and status of English in the GCC region share certain similarities with other countries in different corners of the world belonging to the Expanding Circle of the Kachruvian (1992) concentric conceptualization of the World Englishes. However, a closer look at the GCC context reveals diversity weaved into the historical, cultural, religious, political, and economic fabric of these countries. This intragroup variability necessitates a more in-depth analysis for any individual who would like to get a comprehensive account of the GCC region. While the notion of diversity in the region transcends linguistic spheres, the discussion within the scope of this paper is limited to the depiction of a linguistic portrayal of the region with specific emphasis on the uses, users, and instruction of the EIL.

In a geographical context welcoming a total of 45.9 million people spread over 2,423 million km^2 in six states, with a total GDP of $1.37 trillion and of $29.900 per capita, the GCC region offers much more than strong economic figures. It goes without saying that the official language of the GCC region is Arabic. The Arabic language in the Gulf region is a complex endeavor for linguists and sociolinguists who have been struggling to develop a typology since it comprises various dialects, categorically referred to as Gulf Arabic. Another distinction is between what is commonly referred to as Modern Standard Arabic (the standardized and literary variety derived from Classical Arabic) and Classical Arabic (based on Quranic form of Arabic). While Arabic is the dominant actor in the cultural and linguistic landscape of the GCC region, it is not the only actor. Other languages such as Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Tagalog, and Swahili, among others, create an additive value to the linguistic repertoire of the people living in the region and contribute to the establishment of a multilingual and multicultural GCC region. The current cultural and linguistic landscape of the region would be further flourished with the possible accession of Jordan and Morocco into the GCC since these countries are home to speakers of such languages as Berber, French, Russian, Armenian, and German.

The depiction of the linguistic and cultural landscape of the GCC region would be incomplete if it did not include a special paragraph for English. English is widely spoken in the region due to its importance as a global language, its presence in the educational curricula in K-12 and higher education settings, the political and economic incentive or tendency to maintain business relationships in which English is used as the language of business transaction, and the presence of large expatriate communities (Ali 2009). Because of these idiosyncratic features of the GCC region, a great majority of the 25-35 million users of English in the Middle East (Mahboob

2012) is located in this region. When the expatriate population living in the region is added to this picture, the total figure certainly increases. Across the GCC region, English plays a prominent role in the educational realms, with different points of onset in the educational curricula. As Mahboob (2012) reminds us, the existence of English language newspapers (both in print and online formats), the small yet growing number of individuals choosing English as the linguistic medium to transmit their creative thoughts, reflections, and works, English-Arabic signs across the region are all manifestations of the deeply ingrained role and importance of English in the region. This exemplifies that "the English language has local characteristics and shows signs of undergoing a process of nativization" (Mahboob 2012: 16), which serves as a testament to the growing prominence of the English language on the one hand, and the expanding diversification of the local uses of the English language on the other. Perhaps the most interesting finding of the analysis by Mahboob and Elyas (2014: 128) in the Saudi Arabian context is their claim that the English language in Saudi Arabia is in the process of being nativized and, therefore, Saudi English as an emergent variety carries "a local flavor" and "recognizably local cultural, religious and social values and beliefs."

Some Fundamental Questions in ELT

The unprecedented global spread of English, the emergence of its nativized varieties, and the rapidly increasing number of non-native speakers (NNSs) of English across the world created an unparalleled global interest in teaching and learning English. As a pedagogical response, increasing importance is attached to developing principles and practices specific for teaching EIL. In this vein, McKay (2002: 1) argues, "the teaching and learning of an international language must be based on an entirely different set of assumptions than the teaching and learning of any other second and foreign language." This simple yet profound statement generates a series of questions surrounding EIL pedagogy: Whose language are we now talking about? Which speakers are we modeling our instruction upon? Which language variety/ies should we be teaching to our learners? Which teachers are qualified to teach the English language? Which approaches are the best in teaching? These are some fundamental questions that should be of interest to all ELT professionals in the new millennium and therefore define our goals throughout this paper.

Those questions are relevant for the practitioners of English in the GCC region where governments are committed to building their presence in the global arena. The enterprise of ELT in the GCC states is marked by traditional language

teaching pedagogies at the classroom level, although English is widely acknowledged as the language of globalization or as an indispensable tool to access international communication (Al-Issa 2011). Scholars observed a heavy use of outdated curricula and methods, unmotivated language learners, huge impact of high-stakes national exams, poorly educated cadre of teachers, as well as the integration of communicative language teaching in English language policies with no consideration of the local cultural and linguistic contexts (Al-Issa 2011; Moody 2009; Syed 2003). Therefore, it is crucially important to address the fundamental questions mentioned previously and discuss their implications for the GCC context.

Whose Language?

As is plain from the discussion so far, English has become an international commodity used more by its NNSs. It has been used, modified, and appropriated in different countries for various purposes. Its speakers and their cultural and linguistic features tremendously impacted English, which led to the emergence of its varieties across the globe. Therefore, people today use English mostly to communicate with "multilingual speakers than with monolingual speakers, and for their own cultural, social, political, and economic purposes, removed from Inner Circle norms" (Burns 2005: 2). Inner Circle countries which are considered to originally hold the ownership of English no longer have a worldwide influence on it. English does not anymore belong to any particular nation, culture, or region and anyone who uses it can become a legitimate user of English and claim its ownership. It "belongs to all people who speak it, whether native and nonnative, whether ESL or EFL, whether standard or non-standard" (Norton 1997: 427).

Which Speakers?

Since English is no longer deemed as an exclusive property of its native speaker (NS) communities, the notion of NS as the norm of language teaching and learning needs to be interrogated. The slippery term of NS has been exposed to a lengthy debate among language scholars (Rudolph, Selvi, & Yazan 2015; Selvi 2014). Traditional ELT views NSs as the absolute source of linguistic knowledge and the goal of language learning and teaching, whereas it labels NNSs as deficient communicators of the language (Firth and Wagner 1997). This stigmatization reflects a deficit perspective in language classroom where teachers find themselves "negatively judging the gaps between learner and NS production rather than acknowledging learners' ongoing gains" (Burns 2005: 4). This atmosphere adversely impacts learners' motivation and identity by setting an unrealistic and unattainable

target for them. It fails to serve as a useful measure to inform learning goals and teacher qualities, yet its persistent presence can be observed in every element of our field from teacher preparation to course books and students' and teachers' beliefs and attitudes. As summarized by Jenkins (2009) the notion of NS perpetuates monolingualism, essentializes Anglo-American user of English as a reference point, marginalizes non-native speakers, fails to recognize proficient speakers in Outer/Expanding Circles and emphasize learner accomplishments, and creates a false dichotomy between speakers and teachers of English (NS vs. NNS).

Which Language?

The spread of English and emergence of indigenized Englishes led to the reconsideration of the notion of instructional "standard," too. Burns (2005) observes that some scholars worry that because of the variations across the uses in EIL, English speakers will no longer be intelligible to each other. They argue for a single NS standard to serve in all contexts. Others attend to social, cultural, and linguistic differences across English-speaking settings and find this argument utterly unrealistic. For instance, McKay (2002: 13) maintains that "it is the users' cultural content and their sense of the appropriate use of English that should inform language pedagogy." If ELT views British or American English varieties as universal instructional standards and recognize them as desirable language learning targets, it will neglect the current realities emerging in the EIL contexts. Assigning a single native variety as the target in the pedagogical realm means conceiving language as an unchanging phenomenon dearth of dynamism, and causes the prioritization of imitation over communication as the major goal in language learning process (Burns 2005).

Mahboob's (2014) three dimensional model of language variation presents a rigorous framework to apprehend the variation in English and to address this variation in conceptualizing and designing the pedagogy of teaching EIL. His three major dimensions comprise: (a) users of English (local vs. global, low vs. high social distance); (b) uses of English (specialized/technical vs. everyday/casual discourses); and (c) modes of communication (written vs. oral texts). He views each dimension as an independent continuum which is influential on what choices English users make when communicating. However, putting the three dimensions together, Mahboob (2014: 262) offers a model to "map … variations [in English] out and study them systematically" in global and glocal contexts and to understand English varieties based on community rather than nativeness or ownership. For example, it presents eight domains of variation in language from "local, written, everyday"

to "global, oral, specialized." Parsing English out by using those domains can be instrumental to make instructional decisions regarding what aspects of English to integrate in the curriculum in the glocal contexts of ELT.

Which Teachers?

Although around 80 percent of English teachers in the world are NNS of English (Canagarajah 2005), and this trend is likely to continue, NNS teachers are not given equal opportunities when compared to NS teachers. While the former are believed to be less qualified and linguistically less competent, the latter are characterized as the ideal teacher in the classroom because of their "nativeness" bio-developmental feature. This pervasive misconception haunting the field of ELT is named as the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson 1992). Sadly, this fallacy which falsely dichotomizes NNS teachers and NS teachers is still a reality in the field of ELT (Selvi 2014). It causes detrimental impacts on teachers' professional persona, leads to unprofessional favoritism and frequently results in hiring discrimination. The contexts of ELT in the GCC states are no exception, because employers in those states tend to view nativeness as a primary quality when hiring teachers of English. This tendency casts a shadow over professional qualifications that both native and non-native speaking teachers have as a double-edged sword. In their research of ELT job advertisements from East Asia and the Middle East, Mahboob and Golden (2013) observed that nativeness was one of the key requirements that employers include in those advertisements. Recently, as a response to this discrimination and unprofessional practices, there is a growing greater advocacy in teaching, research, and teacher education efforts that aim to empower NNS teachers, promote professionalism, and more collaborative and democratic practices for qualified teachers regardless of any label.

Which Approaches?

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has long reigned supreme in the field of ELT. However, it has now begun to receive a lot of criticism because it is incapable of paying sufficient attention to local culture of learning and the cultural and linguistic needs of the local community, while it forces the utilization of prepackaged, one-size-fits-all methods, techniques, materials, and assessment tools borrowed from the West (Bax 2003). These criticisms have brought about a novel understanding of method which is called post-methodology and it highlights "a pedagogy of particularity, practicality, and possibility" (Kumaravadivelu 2003). This paradigm shift entails relying more on local teachers as prominent actors

of curricular reforms and key decision makers who hold the best knowledge of learners' needs and goals, local dynamics and intricacies, global context along with the realities of EIL. However, in the implementation of the post-method paradigm, which assigns many pedagogical and social responsibilities to teachers (Akbari 2008), those teachers who are under-resourced and over-worked should be provided support. Otherwise, it might lead to too much reliance on local teachers who are not given any clear guidelines unlike methods in the past (Akbari 2008).

EIL in the GCC Region: A Sustainable Alternative

Having explicated the current sociolinguistic and educational landscape of the GCC region, we now would like to describe the fundamental pillars of the EIL pedagogy and discuss its relevance and plausibility as a sustainable alternative for the GCC region.

EIL Pedagogy Offers a Plausible and Sustainable Alternative that is Capable of Responding to the Current Status of English as the Language of Globalization

We argue that EIL pedagogy offers a plausible and sustainable alternative that is capable of responding to the current status of English as the language of globalization. EIL pedagogy is capable of recognizing Englishes as valid varieties in the world, providing more sensitive instructional principles and practices for speakers from diverse ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds, and adjusting the teaching of English to the local cultures of learning so as to meet the local needs in a sensitive way (Selvi and Yazan 2013). The major principles and practices of EIL pedagogy reveal "how the teaching and learning of English can be undertaken in such a way as to maintain linguistic diversity while providing equal access to the acquisition of English" (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008: 21). EIL pedagogy:

- is a radical shift from the traditional conceptualization of ELT
- is sensitive to the local teaching context and culture of learning
- is sensitive to achieving balance between local and global concerns
- offers a viable alternative to NS framework in terms of norms and cultural tendencies in the curriculum, methods, material design, assessment, teacher qualities, and identity
- recognizes and promotes plurality of present-day local and global English uses, users, and contexts

- equips learners with a repertoire of sociolinguistic and cultural strategies to better function as competent users in cross-cultural encounters
- encourages English-speaking ownership and participation in (mostly digital) global discourse communities
- recognizes the importance of local teachers in designing and providing socially-sensitive, diverse and rich opportunities for ELT
- creates a global pedagogical space where multiple identities, realities, varieties, voices, and cultures co-exist
- examines sociocultural identity in respect to diverse teaching contexts of use and profiles of users
- redefines the notion of proficiency, authenticity, acceptability, and appropriateness in the learning, teaching and assessment of the language (Selvi and Yazan 2013: 39)

EIL Pedagogy Offers an Intellectual Space and Serves as a Pedagogical Tool that Fosters Negotiation of the Relationship Between Islam and the English Language

EIL pedagogy responds to the ongoing juxtaposition between English and Islam by serving as a contextually-sensitive alternative, coalescing individual aspirations with societal norms. There are two specific ways by which EIL pedagogy overcomes this challenge: (1) re-distributing the ownership of the language, and re-conceptualizing language teaching at the nexus of cultural globalization and identity formation, (2) challenging theoretical and pedagogical assumptions about ELT by promoting socioculturally-sensitive, locally-appropriate operations.

The primary impetus behind the EIL pedagogy is to move beyond the institutionalized structures perpetuating hegemony of English infused into the teaching of English language for several decades. The first step towards achieving this goal is to differentiate between the English language and English-speaking societies. For example, while Cooper (1988: 1) argues that "English is powerful… because the powerful use it and because they use it to pursue power," Baker (2011: 88) approaches the matter more cautiously and distinguishes between "language" and "the people who use it."

> Yet it is not the language that is dominating but the people who use it. A language such as English is not intrinsically dominating. No language is more suited to oppression, domination, Westernization, secularization or imperialism than another.

> It is the speakers of that language who are the oppressors and dominators. Whether English is empowering or divisive, it is those who, for example, impose, teach, learn and use it that make it so. The danger is that language is made the symbolic scapegoat for political and economic domination, which are, in fact, the consequences of people and politics.

Kubota and Lin (2009) and Lin (2008) recognized that the English language has been appropriated by the Inner Circle countries as an instrument for spreading Western cultural beliefs and practices; however, people across the world see it and use it as a communication tool. Kumaravadivelu (2012) gives examples from countries such as India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia where English language is used to meet the local educational and institutional needs. It is kept separate from cultural beliefs (in India, Krishnaswamy and Burde 1998), reflects Islamic values, and embodies South Asian Islamic sensitivities (in Pakistan, Mahboob 2009), prioritizes national and religious identities over the Western way of existence (in Turkey, Atay and Ece 2009) and is far from being a point of contradiction for Islamic and Arabic identity (in Saudi Arabia, Elyas 2008). For this reason, EIL pedagogy offers the possibility of stripping the English language off its hegemonic and imperialistic dimensions (Phillipson 1992) and a chance for "reshaping, remoulding, and adjusting" the language (Elyas 2008) to suit the contextual needs of the GCC region and its people.

In the process of coalescing the discourses of ELT and Islam, EIL pedagogy relies on a thorough evaluation of local needs and dynamics as well as the contribution of local professionals. Local teachers are considered to be agents of curricular reforms and decision-makers, who are cognizant of learners' needs, local dynamics, global context, and realities of EIL. As McKay (2003a: 19) reminds us, the ultimate aim of the EIL pedagogy is to acknowledge the use of English in multilingual contexts recognize the multilingual context of English use and "to put aside a native speaker model of research and pedagogy. Only then can an appropriate EIL pedagogy be developed in which local educators take ownership of English and the manner in which it is taught." Aligned with the waves of post-methodology, McKay (2002) argued that EIL pedagogy refrains from subscribing to a single set of methods and encourages teachers (both local and expatriate) to adapt their own approach in constant negotiation with the local sociopolitical (e.g., the role, importance and varieties of English, linguistic and cultural attitudes, the role of religion), institutional (e.g., the institution's vision, mission, and philosophy of ELT) contexts, as well as the backgrounds of themselves (e.g., their academic

and professional training, teaching and learning experience, and familiarity with the teaching context) and students (e.g., their age, race, gender, religion, linguistic background, exposure to English and learning goals and aspirations).

EIL Pedagogy Provides a Sustainable Response to Discrimination and Ensures a More Democratic Employment Landscape for Both Local and Foreign Teachers

Despite the fact that the ownership of English is shared by all its speakers (Norton 1997), and 80 percent of English language teachers worldwide are thought to be non-native English speaking teachers (Canagarajah 2005), the dominant discourse of "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson 1992) leads to detrimental consequences for the employment landscape of the teaching profession. Often times, NNS teachers encounter unethical and unprofessional treatments and discriminatory practices. Although this may be highly ironic for a field that constantly strives for values such as multilingualism, multiculturalism, diversity, and plurality, the discrimination on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, and nativeness are still evident in job advertisements as well as in the figments of employers' imagination (Selvi 2010).

It is a widely accepted fact that the ubiquitous presence of "native speakerism," "an established belief that native-speaker teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which springs the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday 2005: 6), is detrimental for the English language teaching profession. This deficit view conceptualizes the native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) as the ideal teacher in the classroom, known as "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson 1992), and thereby defines non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) as linguistically, pedagogically, and professionally less qualified (Lippi-Green 1997; Maum 2003). This "linguistically unsound and pedagogically irrelevant but also politically pernicious" view leads to implicational exclusivity of ownership, linguistic elitism, and imperialism (Nayar 1994). In more practical terms, the anecdotal and empirical accounts suggest that the widespread occurrences of the native speaker fallacy (Phillipson 1992) in the ELT profession lead to "unprofessional favoritism" (Medgyes 2001) and thus, frequently result in hiring and workplace discrimination (Clark and Paran 2007; Flynn and Gulikers 2001; Mahboob, et al. 2004; Mahboob and Golden 2013; Moussu 2006; Selvi 2010), and in most cases often create asymmetrical power and salary relationship among teachers (Braine 1999, 2010).

The current employment landscape in the GCC region necessitates a profession-wide response to promote employment for "competent" teachers of English, regardless of ideologically infused, value-laden terms such as "native" or

"non-native". The current discriminatory picture in the region damages qualified local teachers, impedes workforce cooperation among GCC states, and excludes professionals from Outer and Expanding Circles. Prioritizing teacher education, professionalism, and collaboration over binary oppositions such as native/non-native, EIL pedagogy provides a sustainable response to discrimination and ensures a more democratic employment and workplace conditions not only for local teachers but also for those who come from all Circles of Englishes. As a result of collaborative practices among teachers of English from various ethnolinguistic backgrounds, learners of English in the Gulf could gain access to more educationally, contextually, and socially-appropriate teaching practices and a wider sociolinguistic and intercultural repertoire (McKay 2002). In order to sustain this, EIL pedagogy needs (a) administrators/policy makers, who prioritize professionalism, teacher education, experience and expertise over accents, ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, (b) in-service and pre-service teachers from all types of backgrounds (NSs and NNSs) who embrace these professional values to support one another in favor of collaboration and a greater recognition of diversity within teachers of English, and (c) scholars and teacher educators, who extend their research agenda and publication efforts along these professional values and infuse them in teacher education and professional development programs.

EIL Pedagogy Is Sensitive to the Ever-diversifying Multilingual and Multicultural Milieu of the GCC Region

With respect to the cultural and linguistic landscape of the GCC region, EIL pedagogy offers two major arguments: an equal distribution of the ownership of the language among the speakers of English, and the promotion of bilingual/multilingual and bicultural/multicultural context where other languages used by EIL users are recognized (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008). To begin with, EIL pedagogy rests upon the premise that in today's globalized world, "English is no longer exclusively owned by native-speaking communities but that its ownership is also shared by newly emerging members of the English-speaking community (i.e., non-native speakers), who therefore have a right to be heard in matters affecting the language" (Widdowson 1994 as cited in Llurda 2004: 314). English "is not a possession which [native speakers] lease out to others, while still retaining a freehold. Other people actually own it" (Widdowson 1994: 385). Thus, English belongs to either everyone or to no one (Norton 1997). Therefore, EIL is not an exclusive commodity of any language, cannot be linked to any single (or a set of) country or the culture of any single (or a set of) expatriates working in the GCC

region (Ali 2009). This unique status of English helps EIL users to meet their varying local needs, to engage in meaning-making and identity building. Thus, EIL users are able to co-construct hybrid identities as individuals who can use English as a glocalized (global and local) medium by means of three sources of culture: (1) cultural content from English-speaking countries, (2) local cultural content, and (3) international cultural content (McKay 2002). This fosters learners' successful navigation in both local and global communities and negotiation and construction of hybrid identities (Alsagoff 2012). For McKay (2003b), this will bring positive implications on moving beyond native English-speaking culture as the basis for cultural content, informing the appropriate pedagogy by local expectations regarding the role of learning, learner and teacher, and recognizing the strengths of bilingual teachers of English.

The second point to be made is that EIL pedagogy is built upon promoting the use of individuals' languages and supporting the development of bilingualism/multilingualism as opposed to monolingualism (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008). The Arab world, including the GCC region, presents a typical case of diglossia, where multiple varieties of Arabic co-exist in specific domains. This situation becomes an even more interesting one with the realization of the multilingual landscape of the GCC region within a diglossic mother tongue and the growing importance of English. EIL pedagogy is a reaction against emphasizing English at the expense of the mother tongue. On the contrary, it specifically underscores the importance of linguistic and cognitive development in the first language for the development of the second language and recognizes all languages as an asset contributing to a user's sociolinguistic repertoire.

Conclusion

In this paper, we presented a three-layer discussion. We first portrayed the current challenges inherent in the diverse uses, users, functions and contexts of English in the GCC region. Utilizing the GCC region and its idiosyncratic dynamics as a unit of analysis, the second section recognizes the necessity to offer a novel pedagogy in ELT, which is completely different from the existing foreign or second language teaching pedagogy. Departing from this realization, we provided the description of the major components of EIL pedagogy. Ultimately, we revisited the GCC context and explored the question of whether EIL pedagogy can constitute a plausible and sustainable alternative for the region and its challenges. More specifically, our discussion within the context of the GCC region revolved around four points: (a)

using EIL pedagogy to respond to the current status of English as the language of globalization which considerably influences the use of English in the region, (b) utilizing it as a pedagogical tool to foment a constructive relationship between Islamic values and understanding and the English language by eliminating the traditional juxtaposition between the two, (c) implementing EIL pedagogy to provide a democratic employment practice for foreign and local ELT practitioners in the region, and (d) using EIL pedagogy to generate ELT practices more sensitive to the ever-diversifying multilingual and multicultural milieu of the region.

If gatekeepers and policy-makers in ELT, as an international enterprise with tremendous potential, genuinely intend to provide an instructional framework, which fosters and encourages awareness of and sensitivity to local realities in specific contexts, then it needs a fundamental change in its conceptualization which can manifest as a new pedagogy. As Kumaravadivelu (2012: 24) contends, helping ELT "professionals generate sustainable knowledge systems that are sensitive to local historical, political, cultural, and educational exigencies" necessitates moving away from "an epistemic operation that continues to institutionalize the coloniality of English language education." Through the discussion in this paper, we maintained that EIL pedagogy can play a critical role in this "move" in the GCC region.

References

Ahmed, Khawlah. 2010. "English in the Arab Gulf." *Asian Journal of University* Education 6 (1): 1–12.

Akbari, Ramin. 2008. "Postmethod Discourse and Practice." *TESOL Quarterly* 42 (4): 641-652.

Ali, S. 2009. "Teaching English as an International Language (EIL) in the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) Countries: The Brown Man's Burden." In *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues,* edited by Farzad Sharifian (ed.), 34–57. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Al-Issa, Ali. 2006. "The Cultural & Economic Politics of ELT in the Sultanate of Oman." *Asian EFL Journal* 8 (1). Retrieved from http://asian-efl-journal.com/quarterly-journal/2006/03/28/the-cultural-and-economic-politics-of-english-language-teaching-in-sultanate-of-oman/.

—. 2011. "Advancing English Language Teaching Research in Gulf Cooperation Council States Universities." *Modern Journal of Applied Linguistics* 3 (2): 60–77.

Al Kilani, Dina Zaid. 2013. "The New Role of English as a Global Language in Promoting Interfaith and Co-existence." In *Perspectives on English in the Middle East and North Africa,* 9–14. London: British Council.

Al-Ruwaihi, K. M. "Corporate Universities in the GCC: The Necessity for Custom-designed Market-driven Higher Education Institutions in the 21st Century." In *Educational Challenges in the GCC in the 21st Century,* edited by Ahmar Mahboob, T. Elyas, and K. Bawazadeh. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Alsagoff, L. 2012. "Identity and the EIL Learner." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language,* edited by Lubna Alsagoff, S. L. McKay, G. Hu and W. Renandya, 104–122. New York: Routledge.

Atay, Derin, and Ayse Ece. 2009. "Multiple Identities as Reflected in English-language Education: The Turkish Perspective." *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 8 (1): 21–34.

Baalawi, Zahra and Saeed Suleiman. 2009. "Investigating the Provision of Academic Development Initiatives - A Case Study of a Tertiary Institution in the United Arab Emirates." Ph.D. thesis. Leicester: University of Leicester.

Baker, C. 2011. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism.* Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Bax, Stephen. 2003. "The End of CLT: A Context Approach to Language Teaching." *English Language Teaching Journal* 57 (3): 278–287.

Belhiah, Hassan, and Maha Elhami. 2014. "English as a Medium of Instruction in the Gulf: When Students and Teachers Speak." *Language Policy.* doi: 10.1007/s10993-014-9336-9.

Braine, George. (ed.) 1999. *Nonnative Educators in English Language Teaching.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

—. (ed.) 2005. *Teaching English to the World: History, Curriculum, and Practice.* Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

—. 2010 *Nonnative Speaker English Teachers: Research, Pedagogy and Professional Growth.* New York, NY: Routledge.

British Council (ed.). 2013. *Perspectives on English in the Middle East and North Africa.* London: British Council.

— (eds.). 2013. *The New Role of English as a Global Language in Promoting Interfaith and Co-existence.* London: British Council.

Brown, J. D. 2012. "EIL Curriculum Development." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language,* edited by Lubna Alsagoff, S. L. McKay, G. Hu and W. Renandya, 147–168. New York: Routledge.

Burns, A. 2005. "Interrogating New Worlds of ELT." In *Teaching English from a Global Perspective.* Case studies in TESOL series, edited by Anne Burns, 1–18. Alexandria: TESOL.

Canagarajah, S. 2005. "Reconstructing Local Knowledge, Reconfiguring Language Studies." In *Reclaiming the Local in Language Policy and Practice,* edited by Suresh Canagarajah, 3-23. New York: Erlbaum.

—. 2006. "Negotiating the Local in English as a Lingua Franca." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 26: 197–218.

Clark, Elizabeth, and Amos Paran. 2007. "The Employability of Non-native-Speaker Teachers of EFL: A UK Survey." *System* 35 (4): 407–430.

Cook, Vivian. 1999. "Going beyond the Native Speaker in Language Teaching." *TESOL Quarterly* 33 (2): 185–209.

Cooper, Robert Lee. 1988. Book notice on *The Power of English: Cross-cultural Dimensions in Literature and Media,* edited by Braj. B. Kachru and Larry E. Smith. *World Englishes* 7, 359.

Crystal, D. 2012. *English as a Global Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Curtis, Andy, and M. Romney (eds.). 2006. *Color, Race, and English Language Teaching: Shades of Meaning.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Damerow, Ryan, and K. Bailey (eds.). 2014. *Teaching and Learning English in the Arabic-speaking World.* New York: Taylor and Francis/Routledge.

Elyas, Tariq. 2008. "The Attitude and the Impact of the American English as a Global Language within the Saudi Education System." *Novitas-ROYAL* 2 (1): 28–48.

Firth, Alan, and Johannes Wagner. 1997. "On Discourse, Communication, and (some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research." *The Modern Language Journal* 81 (3): 285–300.

Flynn, Kathleen, and Goedele Gulikers. 2001. "Issues in Hiring Nonnative English-speaking Professionals to Teach English as a Second Language." *CATESOL Journal,* 13 (1): 151–161.

Graddol, D. 1997. *The Future of English.* London: The British Council.

—. 2006. *English Next: Why Global English May Mean the End of English as a Foreign Language.* London: British Council.

Hanafi, Sari, and Rigas Arvanitis. 2014. "The Marginalization of the Arab Language in Social Science: Structural Constraints and Dependency by Choice." *Current Sociology* 62 (5): 723-740.

Holliday, A. 2005. *The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language.* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Hu, G. 2012. "Assessing English as an International Language." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language,* edited by Lubna Alsagoff, S. L. McKay, G. Hu and W. Renandya 123–144. New York: Routledge.

Hudson, Paul. 2012. "'Shababbery' and 'Banattitude': Western ELT Professionals' Perceptions of the Role of Gender in English-medium Higher Educational Institutions in the Gulf." *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: Gulf Perspectives* 9 (2): 1–16.

Jenkins, Jennifer. 2006. "Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca." *TESOL Quarterly* 40 (1): 157–181.

—. 2009. *World Englishes. A Resource Book for Students.* London: Routledge.

Kabel, Ahmed. 2007. "The Discourse of Appropriation: A Response to Karmani (2005)." *Applied Linguistics* 28: 136–142.

Kachru, Braj. 1990. "World Englishes and Applied Linguistics." *World Englishes* 9: 3–20.

—. 1992. *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Karmani, Suheil. 2005a. "English, 'Terror' and Islam." *Applied Linguistics* 26 (2): 262–267.

—. 2005b. "Petro-linguistics: The Emerging Nexus between Oil, English, and Islam." *Journal of Language, Identity and Education* 4 (2): 87–102.

Kramsch, C. 1993. *Context and Culture in Language Teaching.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Krishnaswamy, N. and Archana S. Burde. 1998. *The Politics of Indians' English: Linguistic Colonialism and the Expanding English Empire.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kubota, R. and Angel Lin (eds.). 2009. *Race, Culture, and Identity in Second Language Education: Exploring Critically Engaged Practice.* New York: Routledge.

Kumaravadivelu, B. 2003. *Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

—. 2012. "Individual Identity, Cultural Globalization and Teaching English as an International Language: The Case for an Epistemic Break." In *Teaching English as an International Language: Principles and Practices,* edited by Lubna Alsagoff, S. L. McKay, G. Hu and W. Renandya, 9–27. New York: Routledge.

Lin, Angel (ed.). 2008. *Problematizing Identity.* New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lippi-Green, Rosina. 1997. *English with an Accent.* London: Routledge.

Llurda, Enric. 2004. "Non-native-speaker Teachers and English as an International Language." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 14(3): 314–323.

Mahboob, Ahmar. 2009. "English as an Islamic language: A Case Study of Pakistani English." *World Englishes* 28 (2): 175–189.

—. 2012. "Englishes of the Middle East: A Focus on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." In *Middle East Handbook of Applied Linguistics,* edited by Ramin Akbari and C. Coombe Dubai: TESOL Arabia Publications.

—. 2014. "Epilogue: Understanding Language Variation: Implications for EIL Pedagogy. In *The Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Perspectives from Scholars, Teachers, and Students,* edited by Roby Marlina, and R. Giri, 257-265). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Mahboob, Ahmar, and Tariq Elyas. 2014. "English in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." *World Englishes* 33 (1): 128-142.

Mahboob, Ahmar, and Ruth Golden. 2013. "Looking for Native Speakers of English: Discrimination in English Language Teaching Job Advertisements." *Voices in Asia Journal* 1 (1): 72–81.

Mahboob, Ahmar, and Namala Tilakaratna. 2012. "A Principles-based Approach for English Language Teaching Policies and Practices – A TESOL White Paper." Retrieved from http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/a-principles-based-approach-for-english-language-teaching-policies-and-practices-.pdf.

Mahboob, A., K. Uhrig, K.L. Newman, and B.S. Hartford. 2004. "Children of Lesser English: Status of Nonnative English Speakers as College-level English as a Second Language Teachers in the United States." In *Learning and Teaching from Experience: Perspectives on Nonnative English-speaking Professionals,* edited by Lia Kamhi-Stein, 100–120. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Matsuda, A. 2012. "Teaching Materials in EIL." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language,* edited by Lubna Alsagoff, S. L. McKay, G. Hu and W. Renandya, 168–187. New York: Routledge.

Maum, Rosie. 2003. "A Comparison of Native and Nonnative English-speaking Teachers' Beliefs about Teaching English as a Second Language to Adult

English Language Learners." Ph.D. thesis. Louisville, KY: University of Louisville.

Medgyes, P. 2001. "When the Teacher is a Non-native Speaker." In *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language,* edited by Marienne Celce-Murcia, 429–442. London: Heinle and Heinle.

McKay, S. L. 2002. *Teaching English as an International Language: Rethinking Goals and Approaches.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—. Sandra Lee. 2003a. "Towards an Appropriate EIL Pedagogy: Re-examining Common ELT Assumptions." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 13(1): 1–22.

—. Sandra Lee. 2003b. "Teaching English as an International Language: The Chilean Context." *ELT Journal* 57 (2): 139–148.

—. S. L. 2012. "Teaching Materials for English as an International Language." In *Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language,* edited by Aya Matsuda, 70–83. New York: Routledge.

—. S. L. and Wendy Bokhorst-Heng. 2008. *International English in Its Sociolinguistic Context: Towards a Socially Sensitive EIL Pedagogy.* London: Routledge.

Mohd-Asraf, Ratnawati. 2005. "English and Islam: A Clash of Civilizations?" *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 4 (2): 103–118.

Moody, J. 2009. "A Neglected Aspect of ELT in the Arabian Gulf: Who is Communication between?" In *Englishes and Literatures-in-English in a Globalised World: Proceedings of the 13th International Conference on English in Southeast Asia,* edited by Lawrence Jun Zhang, R. Rubdy and L. Alsagoff, 99–119. Singapore: National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

Moussu, Lucie. 2006. "Native and Non-native English-speaking English as a Second Language Teachers: Student Attitudes, Teacher Self-perceptions, and Intensive English Program Administrator Beliefs and Practices." Ph.D. thesis. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University.

Nayar, P. Bhaskaran. 1994. "Whose English is it?" *TESL-EJ,* 1 (1).

Norton, Bonny. 1997. "Language, Identity, and the Ownership of English." *TESOL Quarterly* 31 (3): 409–429.

Paikeday, T. 1985. *The Native Speaker is Dead!* Toronto: Paikeday Publishing Inc.

Phillipson, R. 1992. Linguistic Imperialism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Prabhu, N. S. 1990. "There Is No Best Method — Why?" *TESOL Quarterly* 24 (2): 161–176.

Power, Carla. 2007. "Not the Queen's English." *Newsweek International,* March 7. Retrieved from http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2005/03/07/not-the-queen-s-english.html.

Rampton, Ben. 1990. "Displacing the 'Native Speaker': Expertise, Affiliation, and Inheritance." *ELT Journal* 44 (2): 97–101.

Randall, Mick and Mohammad Amir Samimi.. 2010. "The Status of English in Dubai." *English Today* 26 (1): 43–50.

Richards, J. and Theodore Rodgers. 2001. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rudolph, Nathanael, Ali Fuad Selvi, and Bedrettin Yazan. 2015. "Conceptualizing and Confronting Inequity: Approaches within and New Directions for the "NNEST movement." *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 12 (1): 27-50.

Seidlhofer, Barbara. 2004. "Research Perspectives on Teaching English as a Lingua Franca." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 24: 209–239.

Selvi, Ali Fuad. 2010. "'All Teachers Are Equal, but Some Teachers Are More Equal than Others': Trend Analysis of Job Advertisements in English Language Teaching." *WATESOL NNEST Caucus Annual Review* 1: 156–181. Retrieved at http://sites.google.com/site/watesolnnestcaucus/caucus-annual-review.

—. 2011. "The Non-native Speaker Teacher." *ELT Journal* 65 (2): 187–189.

—. 2014. "Myths and Misconceptions about the Non-native English-speakers in TESOL (NNEST) Movement." *TESOL Journal* 5(3): 573-611.

Selvi, A. F. and Bedrettin Yazan. 2013. Teaching English as an International Language. TESOL Publications: Alexandria, VA.

Sharifian, Farzad (ed.). 2009. *English as an International Language: Perspectives and Pedagogical Issues.* Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Smith, P. M. 2008. "Introduction." In *Higher Education in the Gulf States: Shaping Economies, Politics and Culture,* edited by Christopher Davidson, Christopher

and P. M. Smith, 9–22. London: Saqi.

Swan, Michael. 1985. "A Critical Look at the Communicative Approach." *ELT Journal* 39 (1): 2–12.

Syed, Zafar. 2003. "TESOL in the Gulf: The Sociocultural Context of English Language Teaching in the Gulf." *TESOL Quarterly* 37 (2): 337–341.

TESOL. 1992. "A TESOL Statement of Non-native Speakers of English and Hiring Practices." *TESOL Quarterly* 2 (4): 23.

—. 2006. "Position Statement against Discrimination of Nonnative Speakers of English in the Field of TESOL." Retrieved from http://www.tesol.org/docs/pdf/5889.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2009. *The GCC in 2020. The Gulf and its People.* A report from the Economist Intelligence Unit. Retrieved from http://graphics.eiu.com/upload/eb/Gulf2020part2.pdf.

Tollefson, J. 1991. *Planning Language, Planning Inequality: Language Policy in the Community.* New York: Longman.

Widdowson, Henry. 1994. "The Ownership of English." *TESOL Quarterly* 28 (2): 377–389.

Wilkins, Stephen. 2011. "Who Benefits from Foreign Universities in the Arab Gulf States?" *Australian Universities' Review* 53 (1): 73–83.

Zughoul, Muhammad Raji. 2003. "Globalization and EFL/ESL Pedagogy in the Arab World." *An International Journal for Language and Education Studies* 1 (2): 106–146.

4

The Dilemma of English and Its Roles in the UAE and the Arabian Gulf

Salah Troudi and Gail Al Hafidh

Introduction

Issues of language policy in the Gulf, policy-making in education, and the language of instruction, in particular, are complex challenges because of their multifarious nature. As a result of the social composition and economic realities of countries like Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the stakeholders involved in education represent a variety of agendas, approaches, and even educational priorities. In this paper, we discuss how Western educational companies, schools, and universities bring in a global dimension with their economic and cultural agendas, while local voices are striving to reach a state of equilibrium between global forces and local knowledge. In the UAE, the situation is made even more complex because it is not clear whether language policy is a top-down affair or a bottom-up one (Tollefson 2002; Spolsky 2004; Shohamy 2006). The policy of English as medium of instruction (EMI) and its effects, such as alienation from one's mother tongue during the years of formal education, remains under-researched in the Gulf. This paper is an attempt to address the effect of the hegemony of English in the UAE and suggest solutions to redress the imbalance between English and Arabic.

English as a Lingua Franca

The domination of English as a lingua franca, or possibly a "lingua Frankenstein" (Phillipson 2008), in today's globalized world is well established. English is the language of international trade and business and a knowledge of and competency in it, are perceived by many as a crucial skill that can lead to social, cultural, and economic success. This is clearly apparent in the UAE, and in the Middle East in general. This paper will chart the hegemonic process of English language domination in the region, with particular reference to the UAE. The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) has enlisted the support of various private, Western consultancy companies – for example, NordAnglia, CfBt and others to work in partnership with the Education Zone and Ministry of Education to, according to their mission statement, "produce world-class learners who embody a strong sense of culture and heritage and are prepared to meet global challenges." A strong command of English is seen to be key to achieving this goal and from Grade 1, many "model schools" are now teaching Maths and Science to Emirati children through the medium of English. So, the question is whose culture and heritage is being embodied?

Alptekin (1993) argues that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbook authors will write, whether consciously or subconsciously, through culture-specific schemas, in most cases English and American. Pennycook (1998) refers to this as the cultural constructs of colonialism. The writers' views, attitudes, beliefs, and values are transmitted through the teaching materials and so, as young Emirati learners acquire new sets of skills in English, Maths, and Science from the newly created English-medium curriculum (written by western consultants), they are also being exposed to the cultural system embodied therein. The gamble being taken here is of a potential loss both of competency in mother tongue Arabic and of cultural and social identity. Ironically, 2008 was declared the year of National Identity in the UAE. However, it seems that "Auntie English" has, in fact, been invited to stay.

This paper will address the current language of instruction policy in the UAE, with reference to other Gulf States such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It will engage in a discussion of the official discourse and rationale behind such policies and their possible effects on Arabic as a language of science and academia and as a symbol of cultural identity.

The United Arab Emirates: Historical Background

Today, English is used by at least 750 million people (British Council, 2013), though barely half of those speak it as a mother tongue. Some estimates have put

that figure closer to a billion. English is more widely spoken and written than any other language has ever been. McCrum et al. (1992) would argue that it has become the language of the planet, the first truly global language, but for others the apparent "pre-eminence of English is legitimated as being a 'common sense' social fact, thus concealing whose interests are being served by the dominant ideology and dominant professional practice" (Phillipson 1992:76). Global English as a "project," as described by Phillipson (2009: 104), reflects more than the apparent worldwide spread of the language for economic and communication reasons. Describing the increasingly powerful status of English in a a number of countries around the world, Phillipson argues that "the declared goals [of the spread of English] are primarily economic but also cultural and political, with considerable uncertainty about where the project will lead" (2009: 109).

Ku and Zussman (2008: 3) argue that not having a common language can have an adverse impact on international trade and that English is the "leading candidate to play this role." This is supported by an International Research Foundation study (TIFR: 15) that suggests there are "measurable economic returns on English and plurilingual skills for individuals, corporations and economies." In their global survey of corporations, it was found that "pluralism in English and the local language" were important factors to the success of the companies and this view was echoed by the 70,000 employees surveyed among whom "nine out of ten reported that English proficiency was either important or required for promotion at their company"(TIRF 2009: 20).

It is hard to deny the global influence that English has at this time, the beginning of the 21st century. It is widely considered today as a symbol of modernization, as a key to expanded functional roles, and as a lever facilitating success and upward mobility in culturally and linguistically pluralistic societies (Kachru 1990). Kachru, like Pennycook (1994) and Phillipson (2001), points to the insidious ways in which English has become much more than a simple tool for communication purposes or of "modernization," into a symbol of power, authority, and elitism. He refers to English as being a "vehicle of values not always in harmony with traditional views and beliefs," and a language that "unites elite speakers across ethnic, religious and linguistic boundaries used for political change" (1990: 2). However, Kachru does not view English as a static entity, but one that has adapted to suit its role in the maintenance of power. On the one hand, English can be seen as a liberating force, unifying countries, corporations, and individuals; on the other hand, it can be seen as a divisive weapon used by political and corporate power brokers to control the

international balance of power, flow of money, and cultural values in their own interests.

It is very difficult to make generalizations about the influence of English globally without looking more specifically at regional and local differences. Wherever English is spoken, it is against a background of that country or region's historical, political, religious, and cultural context. This paper will focus on the UAE specifically and more generally on the Gulf area and discuss how the history of this particular region is inextricably linked with the rising role of English as the language of globalization.

For the past 200 years, British influence, and therefore the influence of English language, in the region has been indisputable. From the early 18th century, the British viewed their role as being to police the waters of the Gulf and protect British trading interests from piracy (Bristol-Rhys 2009: 111), although, arguably they were equally guilty of piracy and destroying other ships themselves. At the turn of the 19th century, the British, through a series of treaties, insulated and isolated what were then known as the Trucial States. A poor region, which relied heavily on the fishing and pearling industry, it was nevertheless strategically very important to the British as a gateway, via the Gulf, to Iran, colonial India, and beyond. In the UAE, it was not until the discovery of oil in the late 1950s that modern infrastructure started to be developed. Interestingly, many of the historical documents relating to the region at the time were written by British soldiers, traders, and sailors and are therefore "the very people who represented hegemony" (Bristol-Rhys 2009:110) and certainly not without bias. Bristol-Rhys falls short of referring to the Gulf region as part of Britain's colonial empire, although clearly the British forces were dominant there, especially in the coastal areas. In 1838, the British forced the Gulf leaders to sign an anti-slavery agreement which effectively gave them free rein to board, detain, and inspect ships (Kazim 2000). Bristol-Rhys (2009: 112) reflects, "The British are as ubiquitous as sand and camels, and the history of the country is inextricably tied to the British." Darwin (1999: 159) referred to the Middle East region as Britain's "undeclared empire" and argued that this informal empire status was important in order to protect British India and its trade and communication routes (Onley 2005: 42) : "Britain's primary motive for entering into these relationships was strategic: to establish a cordon sanitaire around British India."

Historians, including Davidson (2005), Hawley (1970), and Kelly (1968) offer other insights into the motives of the British in the region, and Al Qasimi (1986), the ruler of Sharjah, points to the destruction of the Qawasim trading economy as being a direct result of British policy to control the trading in the Gulf. Bristol-

Rhys (2009) cites accounts which present the British as more friendly, being on first-name terms with the leaders and acting as allies, supporting and helping to develop the administration of the country. Yet other accounts, according to Bristol-Rhys, paint the British as interfering imperialists who were evicted at the hands of Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (Abu Dhabi) and Shaikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum (Dubai) (Bristol-Rhys, 2009).

There is an undeniable link between the country now known as the United Arab Emirates and Britain. Whether for friendly or other motives, the British have played their part in the development of the country. So too have the Americans and a variety of other countries. The British, for example, built the first runway in the country for their Royal Air Force planes to land in Sharjah. Apart from the military connections, civilian companies from English-speaking countries have been integral to the rapid development of the UAE. International giants such as Microsoft and PepsiCo have head offices in the country and the cranes of construction companies such as Halcrow and Taylor-Woodrow are visible evidence of the profitable contribution that international companies have made to the country's development. The UAE offers a range of business opportunities for entrepreneurs, from the individual businessman to multinational corporations. Invariably, the common language linking the employees of these companies is almost always English, and not Arabic. Hence, a good command of English, and the ability to negotiate various varieties of English, is directly linked to employment prospects and economic success in the region, as many of these international companies are among the top employers, offering attractive salaries and good promotion opportunities. Competency in the English language has become synonymous with career success.

Educational Context and National Identity

In March 2009, an announcement was published in the International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism declaring that the National Research Foundation of the UAE had approved funding for a center for Bilingualism and Bilingual Education to research and promote academic and professional proficiency in Modern Standard Arabic and English in the country. Zayed University, which was slated to house the center, is committed to its national graduates emerging as "well-prepared professionals ready to become leaders in government, business, civil society and family life." To do this, the graduates of all programs are expected to "command both the linguistic resources of their modernised mother tongue (Arabic) and the language of international communication (English)" (Piller 2009). Unfortunately, the center, due to lack of funding, did not get off the ground. However, it should

be mentioned in this context that in spite of official discourse, and an apparent awareness of the importance of Arabic, there is practically no biligualism at UAE universities. Some universities, like Zayed University, have some courses in Arabic in some departments, but English remains the dominant language of instruction (Troudi & Jendli 2011).

Clearly, equal proficiency in both languages in the UAE is associated with success, not only in the professional and political sphere, but also in the social and familial environ. Arabic is important as the official language of the country and of the Koran. Young graduates are effectively being groomed to be bilingual, both in their private lives as well as their public lives. It is commonly thought that only by being bilingual (English/Arabic), can Emirati nationals take their place as modern citizens who are able to compete on the international stage. The focus on the importance of English is reinforced at all levels in the education sector with subjects such as Maths and Science being taught through the medium of English at primary level, in some educational zones, and at tertiary level. In the state-funded Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), a basic level of competency in English is a prerequisite for entering the college: graduation from the college is only possible with an appropriate International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score (currently 5.5) irrespective of the level of success in the content areas, which are all taught via English. Similar restrictions also apply for entry into the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Zayed University, and if students wish to apply for scholarships to study abroad. There is a prerequisite English and Maths competency requirement which is assessed by the school-leaving exit exam, Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA), administered by NAPO, the national admissions placement office. This is a two-hour written English exam with Arabic and English instructions and a 90-minute bilingual multiple choice maths exam. The results from the placement test determine which institution the candidate is eligible to apply to. There is currently no test of Arabic for entry into a state-funded tertiary institution.

Since unification in 1972, the demographic composition of the UAE has changed. In the 1960s, UAE citizens constituted 60 percent of the population, but this was down to 25 percent by 1980, and in a census conducted in 2006, this was found to be between 15 and 20 percent (Saayegh 2008). Due to the intense period of development in the UAE since the late 70s, there has been an influx of foreign workers of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Emirati nationals are numerically a minority in their own country and the language spoken between all the expatriate residents and the local population is often English and other

languages such as Hindi and Urdu, not Arabic. There is regular debate in the local media about the issue of national and cultural identity and that is intrinsically linked to the perceived decline in both the prevalence and status of the national language, Arabic. Al-Kitbi states, "Worries about the national identity emanate largely from two main factors: demographic and cultural. Demographically speaking, we have become a minority in our homeland. This has seriously threatened the stability of our society, while its values and mother tongue are adversely influenced by these demographic shifts" (Al Kitbi 2008: 2).

Al Kitbi (2008) specifies three key areas contributing to the growing feeling of insecurity about national identity: the huge multinational foreign presence in the UAE; the UAE's educational policy; and the government's economic strategies. In order to encourage a sense of national identity, she emphasizes the need to promote Arabic in daily life, officially and individually, and to promote national education, media, and culture through the medium of Arabic.

The population of the UAE, and the Middle East region generally, is a young one. According to Lock (2008), six out of ten of the Middle East region's local population is under the age of 29. In the UAE, 34 percent of nationals are under the age of 24 (CIA World Factbook, 2013). In previous generations, employment choices for the indigenous population were few, but as a result of globalization, the Internet and satellite television, today's youth are bombarded with images and ideas, in both English and Arabic, which may sit uncomfortably with their traditional past. Khalaf (2002: 18) refers to this as "a rupture in the local life pattern and their historical memory of their social self." The question is, to what extent is this feeling of uncertain cultural identity a direct result of the perceived status of English as compared with that of Arabic?

Michael, cited in Kayman (2004: 5), refers to the beginnings of compulsory education in nineteenth-century England, when children were sent to school "to learn their mother tongue." He argues that, because language itself is cultural, children had to be educated in English to sustain the "national imagined community," and that, through the language, children "learnt how to be English." This was followed through in colonial British India where English literature was taught "to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (Lord Macaulay, cited in Kayman, 2004:5). The link between language and culture here is indisputable, especially through the vehicle of literature, of reading the language.

Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (1994) cite the British Council's promotion of English language teaching from the late 1950s in Europe as not so much a means of inculcating the learners with the culture, but more as a way of ensuring that British ideological and commercial interests were maintained in Europe and further afield. Following on from this came the explosion in global, technical communication via the Internet. English, once again, is the dominant language of this and, consequently, the phenomenon known as globalization. Giddens (cited in Kayman 2004:13) writes "Globalisation is political, technological and cultural as well as economic" (p. 13) and so the language of English has become not only a vehicle for promoting English culture but also the "technical tool" for global communication.

In the UAE, as everywhere, the use of the Internet as a means of communication has increased exponentially and so too the use of English as a result. But does this necessarily mean that the two languages, Arabic and English, are necessarily in competition with one another? Does it mean that, as Al-Kitbi (2008) fears, Arabic will be lost and the values of the Emiratis will be subjugated to Western ideals and culture via English? Chew (1999) argues that Phillipson's reference to English as a "lingua Frankenstein" is misplaced, and that as a true lingua franca, its use is pragmatic: it is the users who communicate a message via the language, and it is not the language itself that is necessarily culture- and value-bound. Chew goes further to suggest that the standing of a language is not as dependent, as Phillipson would perhaps argue, on the political and economic power of the country of origin but more on the overall use of the language. In this case the perpetuation of Arabic would seem certain, given that Arabic is the language of the Holy Quran and that there are currently estimated to be 1.6 billion Muslims, roughly one fifth of the world's population, engaging with the language. However, evidence suggests that the level of command of Arabic among Emiratis is declining: anecdotal evidence from students suggests that they feel more competent in written English than they do in Arabic (Troudi and Jendli 2011). This is partly because of the challenge of the dichotomy in Arabic between the spoken or colloquial language and that of classical, written Arabic but also because they have simply had more exposure to reading and writing in English in their school experience. Randall and Samimi found that police officers surveyed in Dubai, however, did not see this as a disadvantage: "the use of English is seen in a positive light, embedding ideas of modernization…… there is no evidence that such a widespread use of English may have a negative impact on the Arabic language" (2010: 49).

English as "Auntie"

In the UAE, home to a wide variety of nationalities, English is being appropriated and used according to the needs of its speakers. It is used by Emiratis and non-Emiratis not only to communicate with each other, but also among themselves. So are Arabic, Punjabi, Gujarati, Pashtun, Hindi, and other languages. It could be argued that Phillipson's theory of a hegemonic Anglo-American ploy to perpetuate the sociocultural and economic interests of the US and the UK is part of the reason for the status of English, but not the whole story. The British Council has a strong presence in the UAE, and there are many other universities and institutions promoting the teaching of EFL/ESL and offering the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and IELTS courses, which are of course, very lucrative for the institutions concerned. These courses are available to all who can afford them, not just the local Emirati population. So, in a sense, it could be argued that the teaching of English in the UAE is no more than a business contract crossing all cultural and linguistic boundaries. That is, however, over-simplifying the situation.

As we have already seen, Zayed University is interested in some level of biligualism. HCT, a federally funded institution, with male and female campuses in every Emirate and a current enrolment of over 18,000 UAE national students (only UAE nationals may attend), offers more than 80 programs, all of which are delivered through the medium of English. English study has therefore been federally mandated at the post-secondary level. There is an economic reason for this. Federal policymakers are concerned that the public sector cannot accommodate all the young nationals looking for work and they, therefore, need to open up opportunities for Emiratis in the private sector, currently heavily dependent on cheaper, imported labor. A good command of English is regarded as one way of gaining access into the private sector workforce.

According to the 2010 UAE Yearbook (Vine), only 8 percent of Emirati university applicants had the required English level to exempt them from an intensive English program. These "bridge" or "foundation" programs are extremely expensive. In 2008, Zayed University spent approximately Dh40 million (20 percent of its academic budget) on preparing students to reach the English level required for their program choices. In response to this, federal policy began to focus more acutely on the school sector.

Expatriate Teaching Schemes in the UAE

Since 1971, the UAE's education system has grown from just 74 schools to over 750, and by 2001, a literacy rate of 75 percent had been achieved (Kazim 2000).

However, despite this rapid progress, the education system faces many challenges. Mograby (1999, cited in Clarke, 2008) refers to the following as possible factors in this situation: unclear or conflicting educational missions and goals; inappropriate methods of teaching and learning; inflexible curricula programs; and low school life expectancy. Clarke (2006) claims that part of the reason for this is the "pedagogical gulf" between the existing and the aspirational levels of schooling – of traditional rote-learning as opposed to more experiential learning. Another "gulf" is the fact that most of the UAE government school teachers are non-Emirati expatriate teachers, culturally, but not necessarily linguistically different from their students. In 2008, over 80 percent of the male teachers working in the public sector were expatriate Arabs (Ridge 2010). By 2020, according to the Ministry of Education's Vision 2020 document, the Emiratization of teaching staff is scheduled to reach 90 percent, but one of the main barriers to this is the "poor grasp of English" of the UAE nationals (Al-Abed et al. 2005: 228).

Part of the "2020 vision" was the creation of 50 Madares Al-Ghad (schools of tomorrow) government schools in 2007. These were mandated to improve the levels of competency in Maths, Science, and English, through the medium of English. The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) embarked on an aggressive recruitment drive, with its private educational consultants (including Nord Anglia, CfBT, SABIS, Penta International Limited, and Mosaica) contracted to find who they considered to be the appropriate teaching staff. According to a teacher recruitment advertisement designed to entice English-speaking teachers from abroad to work in the Al Ghad schools, graduates of these schools would be "fully bilingual, knowledgeable about their rich culture and heritage, educated in an active learning environment, skilled in the use of information technology, soundly grounded in Mathematics and Science and prepared for higher education, successful careers, healthy lives and parenthood, all within a global context" (Burke 2007). This was a very broad and far-reaching set of goals, which not only include academic skills but also life skills (parenting, healthy living) and learning about the culture and heritage of the UAE. It would seem a tall order for an expatriate, English-speaking teacher, to teach the students about their own heritage and culture, without directly knowing about it themselves, and through the medium of English rather than Arabic, the language in which that heritage and culture is rooted.

The principals of the Al Ghad schools voiced their concerns in 2009 at the Federal National Council (FNC) meeting, citing the demise of Arabic as a major worry. The principal of a boys primary school in Dubai stated, "we have noticed that the younger children just don't use their Arabic as much; their vocabulary is

suffering. They cannot even describe the body parts in Arabic because they are learning the English words for them in science classes." A further concern was, according to the principal of a girls' primary school in Dubai, that the instruction of Maths and Science in English was causing problems between students and parents: "the parents are not as good in English, so they can't help their children with homework, or explain a concept to them, and in turn, the children don't know their numbers in Arabic ..." (Khalaf 2009).

"English as Medium of Instruction" Policy in the Gulf

As we have discussed, the dilemma for the policymakers is how to bridge that gap between having a country whose citizens are capable of operating within a global context while retaining their national identity. This is a dilemma not only for the UAE but for the Gulf region as a whole. The challenge that faces the UAE and other Gulf nations like Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia is which educational and language policy approach to follow in order to achieve a balance between the need for a competitive national workforce capable of taking part in a world economy, while at the same time, maintaining a sense of national and linguistic identity.

These two goals are not contradictory in nature. In fact, many countries around the globe, and some emerging economies, are contributing to the world economy without running the risk of eroding their first languages or cultural heritage. The situation in the UAE is different because of the historical, economic, and demographic reasons explained above. Perhaps what makes this situation more complex is the apparent paradox between the official rhetoric of cultural and linguistic revival, and the official educational and language of instruction policies being put into practice in emirates like Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The official discourse coming from the UAE national bodies like the FNC is the necessity to address the threat of erosion of Emirati culture represented by major elements such as social habits, language, and customs. The forces of globalization and modern lifestyles as well as electronic media and an increase in material income have been identified as major contributors to the waning focus on cultural and linguistic heritage. There is also a clear and unequivocal recognition of Arabic as a "major component of the Arab identity and a strong preserver of heritage" (Al-Karni 2010). There have also been official calls and plans to reinstate Arabic as a vibrant language both in Qatar and the UAE. Some cultural activities and festivals have been organized in these two countries to highlight the importance of Arabic. There is therefore no doubt about the awareness of the waning status of Arabic. What is

needed is a clear strategy of how to revive it in the school system. The challenge for this revival surpasses the established issues often related to the problem of teaching Arabic, such as outdated curriculum and materials, inappropriate methodology, and the lack of teacher education schemes for Arabic teachers. While all these factors obviously need serious attention if Arabic is to regain its status, the real problem lies in the official educational position of Arabic when compared to English and the unwritten messages that the current language of instruction policy sends out about Arabic.

Unequal Bilingualism

Recent, but overall limited, efforts to revive Arabic are currently taking place within a wider educational context that is characterized by dwindling academic standards in Arabic proficiency and an increasing reliance on English as a medium of instruction in the primary and secondary school sectors in many Gulf States. In the last decade, there has been a sharp increase in the number of parents sending their children to private English-medium schools. In Qatar, the independent school system has opted to teach Mathematics and Sciences in English. This is similar to the recent scheme of the National School Model (NSM) introduced by ADEC, which will see Maths and Science subjects taught exclusively by native-speaker teachers of English, while other subjects such as Islamic Studies and Social Studies will be taught by Arabic speaking teachers starting with Grade 1. The scheme also introduces pupils in Kindergarten 1 and 2 to a bilingual education with an English and Arabic teacher working collaboratively.

It is clear that the rationale behind such a scheme is to increase the exposure of the students to English and to better prepare them for a tertiary education where English is the medium of instruction. This version of "bilingual education," also described as "bi-literal teaching" methods, is being increasingly adopted in the Gulf as a necessary approach towards a knowledge economy. Given the global status of English, this approach is shrouded in a new discourse of educational inevitability. This kind of bilingualism is at the root of why Arabic will continue its fall in its social status and in the proficiency levels of its students. Being an unnatural sort of bilingualism, given the linguistic and ethnic history of the Gulf, the message sent to the students is that of the implicit, if not explicit, inferiority of Arabic when compared to English. Within an educational curriculum that confines Arabic to the study of social studies and religion while elevating English to be the vehicle for sciences and mathematics, there is no surprise that students might associate English with modernity, technology, and power and link Arabic to cultural heritage, Islam,

and national identity (Findlow 2006; Troudi 2009). Arabic is seen by some students as a language of the past, with almost a romantic image, reminiscent of past glories (Findlow 2006).

Without studying the sciences in Arabic, the current linguistic dualism or bilingualism that characterizes the UAE and other Gulf States will remain unbalanced and unequal. This is because scientific subjects are more likely to have greater academic prestige than non-scientific subjects, and Arabic will become a language that is not perceived as a carrier of science. In this context, Findlow's question of "how far the requirement of native Arabic speakers to pursue their higher studies in English has been an inevitable response to market needs, and how far a symptom of neo-colonialist power politics in which Arabic is relegated as non-useful and Arab culture as 'other'?" (2006: 21) remains highly relevant to the current status of Arabic. There might be voices arguing that Arabic is not in any danger, especially with the current resurgence of the link between national and linguistic identity espoused by some governmental institutions, yet the reality on the ground shows a different picture of an "otherised Arabic" in education, and in other domains such as business, media, and entertainment. As for the association between development and English medium education, the argument for mother tongue education can be further reinforced by looking at cases such as Japan, South Korea, China, and some European countries where advances in science and technology have been made in first languages.

It should also be mentioned in this context that the trend of sending Arab children to private English-medium schools, which has shown a sharp increase in the last decade in the Gulf, is (Al-Dhubaib 2006) partly the result of large-scale parental dissatisfaction with the quality of state education and national curricula (Troudi 2007) . This choice of private education has also been made possible by a relatively high material standard of living and the preponderance of a consumerist style of life. Sending one's children to private, English-medium schools is a sign of social prestige. Educational choices in the area can also be explained in terms of the growing effect of Western mores and way of life on the lifestyles of Gulf citizens and residents. This expansion does not always sit comfortably with the norms, values, and traditions of the area (Buzan and Gobzales-Pelaez 2009).

A Double Burden

Absent from the academic discourse in the region is a link between English as a language of instruction and the inevitable demise of the status of Arabic as a language of science and academia (Troudi 2009). There are still very few academic

research publications about the issue. While Arabic is not in danger as a language of social communication and media in the Arab world, the "English as a language of instruction" policy will expedite its erosion as a channel for academic and scientific content. What needs to be debated and evaluated is the educational and linguistic double burden an Arab student bears when forced to study in a foreign language. Research shows a direct link between mother tongue instruction and educational achievement (Marke 2002; William and Cook 2002). In the case of first language instruction, familiarity and command of the language and its cultural elements faciliate the learning of curriculum subjects whereas instruction through a foreign language can disenfranchise learners who do not necessarily benefit from it (Rea-Dickins, Khamis and Olivero 2013). In Malaysia, which is often hailed as a successful model of development, the English-medium policy for sciences and mathematics was recently abandoned in favor of a return to the use of Bahasa Malaysia and Chinese as languages of instruction in the primary and secondary system. This change in direction is due to the realization that Malaysian students did not improve in mathematics and science proficiency as a result of English instruction. This policy reversal confirms established findings in educational studies which show strong links between educational achievement and learning in the mother tongue (Williams 1996).

In the UAE and the Gulf, the issues of academic burden that come with English-medium instruction, and the students' lack of choice over the medium of instruction, remain under-researched. In a rare study on the academic challenges faced by university students studying scientific subjects in English, Bielenberg (2004) states that teachers of mathematics and information technology of first- and second-year university students have resorted to a special kind of academic English to help their students understand the content. Teachers' talk is characterized by slow speed and a deliberate focus on selected vocabulary directly related to the content of the subject being taught. In addition to the nature of the content of the specific scientific field, Arab university students have to grapple with additional difficulties associated with the nature of English, such as vocabulary, grammatical structures, rhetorical and cohesive devices, and phraseological patterning. Troudi (2009) argues that this situation is not surprising given the way students perceive English and the quality of their English preparation prior to university. It is a common university experience to be challenged by the linguistic structures of even mother tongue academic textbooks and the specific new jargon of scientific subjects. In a second-language medium of instruction, such as pertains in the Gulf, this experience becomes vastly more challenging.

On top of this linguistic burden, students in the Gulf need to be able to manage the psychological pressure and anxiety of having to do well in English examinations to access academic departments. Pennycook (1994: 42) describes this psychological state by claiming that, "students around the world are not only obliged to reach a high level of competence in English to pursue their studies but they are also dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are often of limited value and extreme inappropriacy to the local context."

This kind of alienation through English during one's university studies remains under-researched in the Gulf. The "English as medium of instruction" policy adopted in tertiary, and increasingly in primary and secondary education in the Gulf, such as the National School Model (NSM) scheme described previously, does emanate from a genuine concern on the part of the local policymakers about the need for the Gulf students to be able to compete at national and international levels. However, this policy also has some major side effects. Such a policy will reinforce the splurge of overseas English-language teaching bodies, educational models, and experts, and this might even stifle any much-needed national solutions. Given that the model of educational development is seen to be "best coming from the West," mainly the UK or USA, local teachers with their expertise and initiatives are not going to be able to contribute fully to educational solutions. In cases where native-speaker English teachers are seen as the best and the only teachers who should be allowed in English medium classes, the fallacy of the native-speaker superiority is perpetuated and reinforced (Phillipson 2002; 2009). This of course takes place at the expense of diversity, competence, and a major need for Gulf students to see successful role models represented through English teachers from the Gulf and the Arab world.

Voices from inside the Gulf

While there is a dearth of research studies on the status of English and medium of instruction policies in the Gulf, there is certainly no shortage of voices questioning such policies and warning about their major consequences on mother tongue literacy and national identity. Looking at the situation in the UAE, Randal (2010: 2) suggested that "the socio-linguistic and socio-political consequences of a move to more English-medium instruction really need to be seriously researched and considered in a wider context than the narrow goal of university entrance." Al Karni (2010), representing the Gulf Educational Bureau (GEB), a body overseeing educational issues at the level of the Gulf States with its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, insists that the teaching of English is not going to take place at the expense of national identity. Believing that Arabic needs to be maintained and

supported, the GEB founded the Center of the Arabic Language in Sharjah to look into ways of improving the teaching of Arabic. It should be noted here that most of the voices calling for the protection of Arabic in the Gulf were not critical of the language of instruction policy. In fact, the GEB recognizes English as the language of science and that without it, "we cannot provide the right sources of knowledge to our students ... we need to teach English at primary level because it is a social, modern and a professional need" (Al Karni 2010: 4). A strong association is made between English and modernity, even in discourses calling for the protection of Arabic.

As stated earlier, at the level of official rhetoric, no link is being made between the English-medium language policy and the dwindling status of Arabic in schools. Al Dhubaib (2006) is one of the few scholars who have openly criticized the language policy and the hegemony of English in the educational systems and media in the Gulf, and in Saudi Arabia in particular. He warns that Arabic is currently facing major challenges and he traces the decline of Arabic to historical reasons such as colonialism and current forms of cultural and economic imperialism within an era of incessant globalization and ideological conflicts between major economic and political powers.

Another important reason for this decline, according to Al Dhubaib, is an internal and self-inflicted defeatism. The Arab world is suffering from a massive psychological defeat and self-doubt regarding its language, political institutions, and models of development. Many in the Arab world perpetuate the legacy of colonialism by emulating the ex-colonizer's models of education and development (Troudi 2009). The way forward, according to many Arab intellectuals, is to raise awareness in the Arab world about the importance of Arabic, both in maintaining the Arab identity and in strengthening political and economic independence (Al Askari 2002; Shibani, 2003). In fact, Al Dhubaib puts Arabic as a major condition for a modern Arab renaissance and does not see it as less able than English for the presentation of ideas, international collaboration, scientific inventions, and knowledge.

In Kuwait, specifically at the level of media and public debate, there have been voices of concern regarding the status of Arabic and its potential to contribute to world knowledge. For Al-Askari (2009), being an "Arabphone" does not clash with the globalization of knowledge, trade, and the free exchange of ideas. However, in order to contribute equally with other major languages in the world, Arabic has to undergo a major reform at the levels of educational policy, curriculum, and teacher preparation.

Describing the medium of instruction policy at tertiary level in Kuwait, Al Rubaie (2010: 72) states that it "currently experiences some of the tenets of language imperialism listed by Phillipson… [and] the policy extrapolates pro-imperialist constraints beyond the realm of ELT." She states that one of the consequences of such a policy of "anglicized" curricular content is that some university graduates face communication problems in certain domains, such as the medical services. For example, doctors have been reported to find it difficult to speak in Arabic and explain procedures and treatments to Arabic-speaking patients. The Secretary General of the Center for the Arabisation of Health Sciences for the League of Arab States has called for a strategy for the Arabization of medical and health sciences in university departments. However, such a strategy can only become reality if it is supported by political will and a realistic and futuristic approach to language policy.

In the Gulf, and to a wider extent in the Arab world, there is concern about the potential threat that the spread and hegemony of English poses to the religious and cultural identities of Arabs. This has been exacerbated by the aftermath of the 9/11 events and the escalation of anti-terrorist discourses in the media. There were also concerns voiced about the influence of foreign powers on educational decision-making and curriculum content in some Gulf States (Glasser: 2003). The other side of the argument is that there is no denial of how English has transformed the educational, professional, and social lives of many people in the Gulf. Al Rubaie revealed that "Kuwaiti female residents who managed to enter higher-education establishments envisage English as unlocking internal and external state boundaries, and helping them to virtually or physically travel between countries and cultures" (2010: 200). She further argues that, for some Arab women, "English-medium professional instruction and the English language became powerful tools of self-construction and rebellion against social and political regulations" (Al Rubaie 2010: 200).

Complexity of Language Policy

Policy-making in education, and the language of instruction issue in particular, are complex challenges because of their multifarious nature. Because of the social composition and economic realities of countries like Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain and the UAE, the stakeholders involved in education represent a variety of agendas, approaches, and even educational priorities. Western educational companies, schools, and universities bring in the global dimension with its economic and cultural agendas, while local voices are striving to reach a state of equilibrium between global forces and local knowledge. In the UAE, the situation is made even

more complex because it is not clear whether language policy is a top-down affair or a bottom-up one (Findlow 2006; Troudi 2009).

Within the current climate of the powerful presence of English in the educational institutions and societies of the Gulf, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect to reverse the situation and reinstate Arabic as a language of science and academia. In addition to strong political will and a need to reform the teaching of Arabic in terms of pedagogy, content, and materials, a major challenge remains at the level of attitude. Arab voices, calling for the creation of space for the local in knowledge construction, face additional challenges from within their own circles. There are, unfortunately, in the Arab world, voices calling for the reduction of Arabic to the study of heritage, folklore, and religion. These are voices that do not believe in the ability of Arabic to compete with other modern languages as a carrier of the sciences. These attitudes have been passed on to students at the Gulf universities. For example, Findlow (2006), who investigated the role of English language teaching in the UAE and how it is implicated in the configuring of collective identities, especially in higher education, reports that all academic, economic, and political discourses acknowledge the role of English as the language of globalisation, while native languages such as Arabic have become "symbolic of nostalgia and authenticity" (Findlow 2006: 2).

Perhaps this kind of unequal educational bilingualism will continue to describe the educational language policies of the Gulf for the foreseeable future. It is a bilingualism that is no doubt viewed by those in power as a positive and enabling tool that learners will use to negotiate the demands of national and external worlds. The participants in Findlow's 2006 study argued for the necessity of a dual-language system in education. Linguistic dualism fits a fluid and dialogic view of the language-culture relationship where culture is not static but continually redefined in a changing world. Students have to learn and adjust to new modes of communication to be able to adapt to changing circumstances and purposes. This linguistic dualism, an increasingly strong feature of the Gulf, will enable "two identities and cultures to be claimed at once, [and] can thus be claimed as inevitable, even essential, for societies undergoing processes of acute global-local transition" (Findlow 2006: 22).

Conclusion

The position of English in the UAE and other Gulf countries is still being presented, by policymakers and academics alike, as neutral, necessary, and harmless. It is a language that came into the region a few decades ago as a friendly "Auntie", shy and not very confident of its role. It was, however, on the whole content with its function as a foreign language. Now this situation has changed and this "Auntie" has become much more confident, stronger, and certainly more established and even aggressive. Auntie's language has become a medium of learning and has managed to associate itself with power, social prestige, knowledge, modernism, the future, and even freedom. However, some will argue that it is an "Auntie" with more than one face, that it has become too loud, pervasive, and invasive; and that underneath its educational aims it has hegemonic agendas that serve the global forces of linguistic and cultural imperialism. If left unchecked, this "Auntie" might cause some irredeemable damage to local cultures, languages, and educational practices. Al Kitbi's views of English in the UAE clearly question the supposedly gentle and benign role of this "Auntie" and depict it as a dominant and pervasive intruder:

> The increasing reliance on English is an example of the sort of proposed changes in educational systems that serve foreign interests more than they serve the societies of the Gulf. The insistence of foreign powers on a change in the educational philosophy in the Arab Gulf region comes within the context of the control and suppression of university youth so that their world view in the future will be compatible with and serve the interests of those powers (Al-Kitby 2006: 2).

We believe that the way forward is to continue in the efforts of reclaiming the local (Canagarajah 2005) to reach a balanced version of linguistic dualism and educational bilingualism. Arabic is and has been a language of science and academia; it is beyond the scope of this chapter to endeavor to justify and support such a statement (for further reading on this point, see Abou Ghayour (2014) and Kacem (2014) who argue for Arabic as a vehicle for scientific knowledge). In theory, Arab students do not need to study their academic disciplines, scientific or not, in English in order to gain reliable and practical knowledge useful for their futures. For voices concerned about the need for Arab students to communicate their knowledge and needs to the rest of the international community, there is always the option of English for academic purposes (Troudi 2009). What the educational system in the UAE needs is a critical look at the status of Arabic and the linguistic and academic proficiency of the Emirati students. Troudi and Jendli's study (2011) revealed that university students were struggling to perform adequately in Arabic. Many were denied access to jobs because of poor Arabic language skills.

Perhaps Al-Sultan's (2009) statement from Saudi Arabia captures the feeling of many in the Arab world about the problematic status of English:

Knowing or mastering the English language is of paramount importance, but not to the extent of submerging our cultural identity. By making English the medium of instruction, we will be making dead our own language. Japan and South Korea have not achieved progress by phasing out or marginalizing their national languages. They have, instead, adopted an ambitious translation program that enriched their languages. The deficiency of English has not deterred the Japanese and Koreans from excelling in all spheres of knowledge, while at the same time preserving their cultural identity (*Arab News,* 2009).

References

Aitchison, J. (ed.). 2001. *Language Change: Progress or Decay? 3rd edition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Al-Abed, I., P. Hellyer, and P. Vine. 2005. *United Arab Emirates Yearbook 2005.* London: Trident Press Ltd.

Al-Askari, S. 2002. "Arabs and the Arabisation of Modern Sciences?" *Al-Arabi* 508 (3): 8-5.

—. 2009. "Arabophone in the Age of Globalisation." *Al-Arabi* 613 (2): 8-13.

Al-Dhubaib, A. 2006. *The Arabic Language in the Era of Globalisation.* Riyadh: Obeikan Publishers.

Al-Karni, A. 2010. *The Teaching of English in the Gulf Won't be at the Expense of the Arab Identity.* Online at: http://www.aawsa.com. Accessed February 13, 2010.

Al-Kitbi, E. 2006. "Gulf States: Educational Reform's Real Goals." *Arab Reform Bulletin* 4 (4): 1-2.

—. 2008. "Prevent being Side-lined." *The Gulf News,* May 29.

Al-Qasimi, S.M. *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf.* London: Routledge, 1986.

Al-Rubaie, R. 2010. "Future Teachers, Future Perspectives: The Story of English in Kuwait." Unpublished Doctoral dissertation. University of Exeter.

Al-Sultan, A. 2009. *English as Medium of Instruction.* Accessed November 13, 2010 from Arab News online at: http://archive.arabnews.com.

Alptekin, C. 1993. "Target Language in EFL Materials." *ELT Journal* 47 (2): 136-43.

Altbach, P. G. 2008. "The Imperial Tongue: English as the Dominating Academic Language." *International Educator* 17 (5): 56–59.

Barber, C. 2000. *The English Language: A Historical Introduction* (2nd edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bielenberg, B. 2004. "Identifying Linguistic Challenges for English Language Learners in Mathematics and IT Classrooms." In *Proceedings of the 9th TESOL Arabia Conference: English Language Teaching in the IT Age* 109-118, edited by P. Davidson, et al. Dubai: TESOL Arabia Publications.

British Council. 2013. *British Council.* Retrieved January 26, 2014, from http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm)

Bristol-Rhys, J. 2009. "Emirati Historical Narratives." *History and Anthropology* 20 (2): 107-121.

Burke, M. 2007. "Al Ghad Schools." http://www.greatteflobs.com/teachers-needed-in-uae-5025.html. Accessed September 10, 2010.

Buzan, Barry, and Ana Gonzalez-Pelaez, (eds.). 2009. *International Society and the Middle East: English School Theory at the Regional Level.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cameron, D. 2000. *Good to Talk? Living and Working in a Communication Culture.* London:Sage.

Canagarajah, A.S. 1999. "Interrogating the Native Speaker Fallacy." In *Non-Native Educators in English Language Teaching* 77-92, edited by G. Braine. New Jersey: Lawrence.

—. 2005. "Reconstructing Local Knowledge, *Reconfiguring Language Studies." In Reclaiming the Local in Language Policy and Practice* 3-23, edited by S. A. Canagarajah. Mahwah NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Chew, P. 1999. "Linguistic Imperialism, Globalism, and the English Language: English in a Changing World." *AILA Review* 13: 37-47.

CIA World Factbook. 2013, February 13. *United Arab Emirates Demographics Profile* 2013. Retrieved February 26, 2014, from Index Mundi: http://www.indexmundi.com/united_arab_emirates/demographics_profile.html.

Clarke, M. 2008. *Language Teacher Identities.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

—. 2006. "Beyond Antagonism? The Discursive Construction of New Teachers in the United Arab Emirates." *Teaching Education* 17 (3): 225-237.

Darwin, J. 1999. "An Undeclared Empire: The British in the Middle East, 1918-39." In *The Statecraft of British Imperialism: Essays in Honour of Wm. Roger Louis,* 159-76, edited by Robert D. King and Roblin Kilson. London: Frank Cass.

Davidson, C. 2005. *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival.* London: L.Rienner.

Demont-Heinrich, C. 2009. "Language, Globalisation, and the Triumph of Popular Demand: The Discourse of Populism in American Prestige Press Coverage of the Global Hegemony of English." *The Communication Review* 12 (20): 49.

Donskoi, V. 2006. "Systemic Theory of Language Competition." *Journal of Language and Politics* 5 (2) : 277-298.

Findlow, S. 2006. "Higher Education and Linguistic Dualism in the Arab Gulf." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 27 (1): 19-33.

Glasser, S.B. 2003. "Qatar Reshapes its Schools, Putting English over Islam: Conservatives see Reform as Extension of U.S. Influence in the Gulf." *The Washington Post* online at: http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-24159m.html. Accessed May 12, 2009.

Hawley, D. 1970. *The Trucial States.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Kachru, B. 1990. *The Alchemy of English.* Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Kandiah, T. 2001. "Whose Meanings? Probing the Dialectics of English as a Global Language." In *Ariels – Departures and Returns: A Festschrift for Edwin Thumboo,* edited by Robbie Goh et al. Singapore: Oxford University Press.

Kazim, A. 2000. *The United Arab Emirates A.D. 600 to the Present: A Sociodiscursive Transformation in the Arabian Gulf.* Dubai: Gulf Book Center.

Kayman, M. 2004. "The State of English as a Global Language: Communicating Culture." *Textual Practice* 18 (1): 1-22.

Kelly, J.B. 1968. *Britain and the Persian Gulf 1795-1880.* London: Clarendon Press.

Khalaf, S. 2009. "Teaching Science and Maths in English Hurts Arabic, Schools Warn." Online discussion at: http://1426.blogspot.com/2009/04/teaching-science-maths-in-english-hurst.html.

—. 2002. "Globalisation and Heritage Revival in the Gulf: An Anthropological Look at Dubai Heritage Village." *Journal of Social Affairs* 19 (75): 13-42.

Kubota, R., and L. Ward. 2000. "Exploring Linguistic Diversity through World Englishes." *The English Journal* 89 (6): 80-86.

Ku, H., A. Zussman. 2008. *Lingua Franca. The Role of English in International Trade.* New York, New York: Cornell University in conjunction with Florida State University and Hebrew University.

Lock, S. 2008. "A New Generation for a New World." *The National,* October 12.

Master, P. 1998. "Positive and Negative Aspects of the Dominance of English." *TESOL Quarterly* 32 (4): 716-727.

Markee, N. 2002. "Language in Development: Questions of Theory, Questions of Practice." *TESOL Quarterly* 36 (3): 265-274.

McCrum, R., W. Cran, R. MacNeil.1992. *The Story of English.* London: Faber & Faber.

Onley, J. 2005. "Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf 1920-1971." *Journal of Social Affairs* 22 (87).

Pennycook, A. 1994. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language.* London and New York: Longman.

—. 2007. *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows.* London and New York: Routledge.

Phillipson, R. 1992. *Linguistic Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

—. 2001. "English for Globalisation or for the World's People?" International Review of Education 47 (3/4): 185-200.

—. 2008. "The Linguistic Imperialism of Neoliberal Empire." *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies* 5 (1): 1-43.

—. 2009. *Linguistic Imperialism Continued.* London: Routledge.

Piller, I. 2009. UAE Centre for Bilingualism and Bilingual Education (UAE CBBE). *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12 (2): 259-260.

Quirk, R. 1985. "The English Language in a Global Context." In *English in the World: Teaching and Learning the Language and Literature,* edited by R. Quirk and H.G Widdowson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the British Council.

Randall, M. 2010. "English Obsession is a Threat to the Mother Tongue." Online at: htpp://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs/article. Accessed May 15, 2010.

Randall, M., M. Samimi. 2010. "The Status of English in Dubai. A Transition from Arabic to English as a lingua franca." *English Today* 26 (1): 43-50.

Rea-Dickins, P., K.Z. Khamis, and F. Olivero. 2013. "The Relationship between English-medium Instruction and Social and Economic Development: A Sub-Saharan African Case Study." In *English and Development: Policy, Pedagogy and Globalisation,* 111-140, edited by E.J Erling and P. Seargeant. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Ridge, N. 2010. "Teacher Quality, Gender and Nationality in the United Arab Emirates: A Crisis for Boys." Working Paper No. 10-06. Dubai School of Government.

Sayegh, F. 2008. "How Can We Maintain a National Identity?" *The Gulf News,* May 27.

Shibani, A.M. 2003. "When Will We Take Care of our Arabic Language?" *Al-Arabi,* 541 (12): 160-163.

Shohamy, E. 2006. *Language Policy: Hidden Agendas and New Approaches.* London: Routledge.

Spolsky, B. 2004. *Language Policy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

TIRF: The International Research Foundation. 2009. *The Impact of English and Plurilingualism in Global Corporations.* http://www.tirfonline.org/. Accessed May 20, 2010.

Tollefson, J. W. (ed.) 2002. *Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Troudi, S. 2009. "The Effects of English as a Medium of Instruction on Arabic as a Language of Science and Academia." In *Power in the EFL Classroom: Critical Pedagogy in the Middle East,* 199-216, edited by P. Wachob. Newcastle uponTyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Troudi, S. & A. Jendli. 2011. "Emirati Students' Experiences of English as a Language of Instruction." In *Global English and Arabic: Issues of Language, Culture and Identity,* edited by A. Al-Issa & L. S. Dahan, 23-48. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Vine, P. (ed.). 2010. *UAE 2010.* London: Trident Press.

Williams, E., & J. Cooke. 2002. "Pathways and Labyrinths: Language and Education in Development." *TESOL Quarterly* 36: 297-322.

5

Current Status and Future Development of the English Foundation Programs in the GCC States: Example of the Sultanate of Oman

Victoria Tuzlukova and Saleh Al-Busaidi

Introduction

Globalization and integration processes in social, political, and economic spheres of today's world have inevitably led to the changes in their linguistic, technological and organizational shape. To keep pace with these changes, address the new learning needs that are related to them, and ensure quality education, the structure and organization of higher education institutions in the GCC states have recently gone through considerable changes. These reforms herald the paramount role of higher education in shaping human capital and generating a societal wealth of knowledge and advanced capabilities (Fergany 2000, p.4).

Starting 2009, one of the most important educational reforms in the GCC was the establishment of foundation programs that are currently offered in both public and private higher education institutions across the region. These are formal structured programs that are designed to prepare students for their future studies and equip them with skills and capabilities for post-secondary and higher education. They are aimed at providing an academic entry pathway and developing students' literacy, numeracy, computing and learning skills (Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs 2010, p. 6). This aim coincides with the general

mission and the fundamental purpose of education, which is "to ensure that all students benefit from learning in ways that allow them to participate fully in public, community and economic life" (Cope and Calantiz 2000, p. 9).

Though a well-established education concept internationally, foundation programs are still a relatively new experience of introduction to degree-level study in the GCC states with certain differences in focus, content, status, structure, and duration. To name just one, the foundation programs in some GCC countries have been expanded to include many skills and subjects that are supposed to work in a complementary manner to minimize the gap between skills of school leavers and skills needed for higher education, such as language skills, communication skills, and study skills. For example, in some higher education institutions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, such as the Prince Sultan University, the content of the English language course in the foundation programs features English Composition I, English Composition II – Report Writing, Business Communication Skills, and Oral Communication of Technical Information. Each course is worth 3 credit hours. In other institutions in Saudi Arabia, e.g., Jubail University College, English, Information Technology and Computer Applications, Mathematics, College Study Skills, Physical Education, Health Education, and Physical Sciences courses are offered during the two fifteen week semesters' preparatory level program. In Khalifa University in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the foundation program features courses in English, Mathematics, Physics, Computing and Study Skills. Qatar University offers courses in English and Mathematics to its Engineering, Pharmacy, and Science preparatory level students. The English program is a maximum of one year long. In this program, students are streamed into four levels. Levels 1 and 2 are Intensive English courses, whereas Levels 3 and 4 are Academic English courses. All the courses are offered during four nine-week terms with an optional summer term that gives students another chance to complete the program in one year. The English language area of the Foundation Program in Qatar University also features an Integrated Core Course, a Writing Workshop, and a Reading Workshop. Bahrain Polytechnic in Bahrain offers five preparatory courses that include Personal and Academic Learning (PAL), Explore (EXP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), Information Technology (IT), and Mathematics. The American University of Kuwait has a two or three semester long Pre-University Intensive English program, which consists of courses aimed at developing students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. These courses integrate grammar and vocabulary and feature self-access computer-aided instruction. Students are

encouraged to participate in reading groups for five or more hours each week. Additionally, independent learning modules in computer, reading, and audio-visual labs are offered to the students. Majan College in the Sultanate of Oman offers its students foundation program courses in English, Mathematics, Information Technology, Study Skills, and Research Skills. Oman's Sultan Qaboos University offers a foundation program that comprises eighteen hours of English with an integrated study skills' component in six levels, four hours of Mathematics in two courses, and four hours of Information Technology.

Indeed, diversity of practice and experience in running foundation programs at macro and micro-regional levels,[1] perceptions of teachers, students and other stakeholders, challenges and possible solutions demand documentation and dissemination. Educators, researchers, and policymakers need to keep up with recent developments in the foundation programs pertaining to the GCC states in order to be able to improve these programs and assure quality. Nader Fergany (2000) in his overview of Arab higher education and development contends, "Deplorably, the constraint of scant data and information on higher education is sharpest in the area of quality. There are no rigorous and comparable studies on quality of higher education in Arab countries" (p.15). He goes on to say, "This shortcoming is not solely due to the complexity of the required studies but also to the fact that higher education is treated with understandable, though unhelpful, veneration … As a result, widespread criticism about the quality of higher education is aired in Arab countries, but the evidence does not go beyond impressions or anecdotes, both no substitute for serious investigation and research" (Fergany 2000, p.15). To address this research gap, in our study we inquired into the situations, events, and teachers' perceptions related to the implementation of the foundation programs in higher education institutions in the GCC states. The exploratory analysis was conducted in the Sultanate of Oman to provide an account of the foundation programs with the aim to better understand their strengths and limitations and to direct the efforts

1. Read more about macro-micro educational operations and the relationship between educational processes at the macro-level and their micro-or institutional-level adjustment effects in G. Covington McBride, *Brightly High School: An Analysis of the Macro-Micro Politics of a Small, Innovative School's Failure to Survive* (USA: Columbia University Teachers College, 2002); M. Bussolo and R.E. De Hoyos, *Gender Aspects of the Trade and Poverty Nexus: A Macro-Micro Approach* (VA, USA: Palgrave Macmillan and World Bank, 2009); R. Al-Mahrooqi and V. Tuzlukova, "Bringing the Global and the Local Together through English in Oman," in *Regionalizing Oman-Political, Economic and Social Dynamics,* ed. Steffen Wippel, United Nations University Series on Regionalism, Volume 6, (Springer: Dordrecht, Netherlands): 305-317.

and attention of the educators in GCC to, at least, some of the challenges and complicated issues.

In this paper, we will examine the English foundation programs in Oman, specifically in Sultan Qaboos University, to identify their current status and future prospects. Admittedly, an example of one GCC country or one higher education institution does not allow compelling generalizations to be made; yet, individual institutional experiences can be considered as important evidence of the performance of the English foundation programs in the region.

English Foundation Programs in Oman: An Overview of Current Educational Practices

The history of the development of the foundation programs in the Sultanate of Oman goes back to 2006 when the Oman Accreditation Council started a project to establish internationally benchmarked academic standards for the general foundation programs (Carroll, Razvi, Goodliffe and Al Habsi 2009). The project focused on the ideas of enhancing the quality of education, bridging secondary and tertiary education, maximizing the potential of young Omanis and enabling them to fully benefit from higher education, and providing additional assistance to those who had exposure to the required academic standards but had not yet succeeded in meeting them.

The standards were implemented in the academic year 2009/2010 to ensure quality education as well as serve as a quality enhancement tool for the general foundation programs (Carroll et al. 2009). The program was introduced as a "formal, structured program of study licensed in the Sultanate of Oman and provided by a licensed higher education institution"(Oman Academic Standards 2010, p.6). Designed to prepare Omani students for their post-secondary education studies and allow them a pathway into higher education institutions, the program was aimed at developing literacy, numeracy, computing and learning skills.

Currently offered in both public and private higher education institutions, the foundation programs in Oman have common academic standards, which establish the minimum requirements that programs of study are expected to attain (Carroll et al. 2009). According to the developers of the Oman Academic Standards, who were represented by the specialists of Oman Accreditation Council and some leading educators, the general foundation programs':

> …primary focus is on student learning outcomes, placing the students and their potential contribution to society at the heart of higher education. These outcomes are

> not achieved by chance, but are the result of carefully planned and executed formal programs of study. Therefore, the standards also address the minimum structural and resourcing requirements. Standards are not curricula. It is the responsibility of each HEI to develop the curriculum, teach and assess students, and review and improve its GFP curriculum in line with the requirements of these standards (Oman Academic Standards 2010, p.4).

The differences in the general foundation programs across public and private higher education providers are grounded in the flexibility in program design and delivery provided by the creators of the "Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs" as a set at the level of generic learning outcomes (Quality Audit Manual 2008). The standards, for example, do not impose a time line. Likewise, they do not have mandatory guidelines for structuring the Foundation Programs in relation to the English language area of learning. To quote Carroll et al.:

> The General foundation program standards are designed to discriminate according to each student's learning needs, in that students are assessed according to their level of achievement in the four subject areas and are only expected to undertake as much study as is necessary to achieve the requisite learning outcomes. This, in turn, requires HEIs to develop more flexible approaches to structuring their GFPs (Carroll et al. 2009, p. 6).

Owing to this relatively flexible philosophy, higher education institutions in the Sultanate interpret the generally accepted perspective of the implementation of foundation programs in different ways, but they teach and assess students, and review and improve their curriculum, in line with the general requirements of these standards (Carroll et al., 2009, p.11). For example, Sohar University offers a full-time General Foundation Program, which, in the area of the English language, consists of three components: Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, and is tailored to fulfill English language requirements for entry to Sohar University diploma programs (IELTS 5 or TOEFL 500). Meanwhile, the English language unit of the General Foundation Program at Dhofar University offers incoming students with low proficiency in English an intensive program to help them pursue their studies in the major of their choice through the medium of English. The English program at Dhofar University is divided into a General English course and an Academic English course, with the aim of immersing the students in the English language. The foundation program English Language component at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman's leading higher education institution, consists of six proficiency levels. As

stated in the Foundation Program's English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012, "each level has its own set of learning outcomes and materials. There is a gradual increase in difficulty from one FPEL level to the next" (Foundation Programs English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012:4). These six levels are viewed by the program developers "more like a continuum rather than discrete levels" (Foundation Programs English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012:4). Such understanding is grounded in their belief in the developmental nature of language learning that needs a lot of recycling and reinforcement throughout the learning process.

The English Language Foundation Program at Sultan Qaboos University: One institution's experience

General Review

In the academic year 2010/2011, to better prepare its students for their studies in the medium of English, Sultan Qaboos University introduced the foundation program as a mandatory non-credit program. The structure and learning outcomes of the foundation program were developed according to the recommendations of the Oman Academic Standards. According to Dr. Badria Ibrahim Al Shihi (2012), Head of the Foundation Program at Sultan Qaboos University, the main goals of the foundation program include: 1) improving the students' English language proficiency, with some emphasis on technical and business applications in preparation for undergraduate courses; 2) reinforcing the knowledge of basic mathematical and analytical techniques that is considered obligatory for enhancing their problem solving skills; 3) consolidating their knowledge of basic applications of computer science as a means for effective learning and interaction; and 4) integrating the necessary study skills needed to effectively adapt and learn throughout the years of study.

It should be noted here that the English language is seen in the present educational context in Oman as a sign of future academic success, employability, enhanced communication and networking, and as "an important mediator for the creation of new socio-cultural contexts and pedagogical orientations in teaching and learning" (Al-Mahrooqi and Tuzlukova 2010, p. 691). Sultan Qaboos University has offered almost all of its programs and courses in English since its inception in 1986. The university realized the deficiency in students' English proficiency upon entry and therefore included pre-sessional English instruction. Prior to the introduction of the foundation program at the university, there was a preparatory

intensive English language program that students had to pass before entering degree courses. The intensive program consisted of 20 hours of instruction a week. The latest modification was when the General Foundation Program was introduced. This included the reduction of teaching hours from 20 to 18 hours per week and the adoption of the semester system (previously the intensive program operated on an eight-week block system).

The current English foundation program at Sultan Qaboos University is a structured program that offers eleven semester long Foundation Program English Language (FPEL) courses. These courses are designed to help students to become independent learners and prepare for their degree programs and the world of work. They are also aimed at extending students' English language skills to enable active participation in their higher education studies. The focus of the English foundation courses is both on General English and Academic English with some differences at higher level courses that are related to the students' future majors. In each of the courses, in addition to the four main language skills, namely listening, reading, speaking and writing, students acquire study skills which they need to be successful in their degree programs. The English foundation program has been designed and is currently implemented by the university's Language Center. The prominent attributes of the Language Center that relate to the Foundation Program include such resources as a library, a Writing Center, a Tutorial Center, and seven computer laboratories. These resources cater to the diverse individual needs of the students, provide guidance to students at different levels as well as promote self-study and autonomous learning. Teachers are central to the implementation of the Foundation Program curriculum in the Language Center. To smoothly run the English foundation program, the Language Center provides its teachers with a variety of teaching materials that are aligned with the curriculum and learning outcomes. However, teachers can map out their own curriculum, plan and construct their own lessons, and continuously supplement their teaching with their own teaching materials to meet their students' needs (Abdali and Ginosyan 2011, p. 1).

The above program implements a learning outcome-oriented curriculum built on language and study skills and competencies, which students should develop by the end of each FPEL course (Abdali and Ginosyan 2011, p.1). The learning outcomes have been created to help the providers to guide students in their learning in turn helping them to succeed in their studies and to benchmark their exit requirements (Al-Mamari 2012).

At the end of the program, the students are expected to:

- Actively participate in a discussion on a topic relevant to their studies by asking questions, agreeing/disagreeing, asking for clarification, sharing information, expressing and asking for opinions
- Paraphrase information (orally or in writing) from a written or spoken text or from graphically presented data. Prepare and deliver a talk of at least 5 minutes
- Use library resources in preparing the talk, speak clearly and confidently, make eye contact and use body language to support the delivery of ideas. Respond confidently to questions
- Write texts of a minimum of 250 words, showing control of layout, organization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar and vocabulary
- Produce a written report of a minimum of 500 words showing evidence of research, note taking, review and revision of work, paraphrasing, summarizing, use of quotations and use of references
- Take notes and respond to questions about the topic, main ideas, details and opinions or arguments from an extended listening text (e.g., lecture, news broadcast)
- Follow spoken instructions in order to carry out a task with a number of stages
- Listen to a conversation between two or more speakers and be able to answer questions in relation to context, relationship between speakers, and type (e.g., formal or informal)
- Read an extensive text broadly relevant to the student's area of study (minimum three pages) and respond to questions that require analytical skills, e.g., prediction, deduction, inference (Abdali and Ginosyan 2011, p.1).

According to Al-Mamari (2012), the national standards for the General Foundation Programs "define what students should know before starting their academic programs; they do not define how students should learn or how teachers should teach. That is the job of the institutions" (p. 2). Following the recommendations embedded in the National Standards, the English foundation program, implemented

at Sultan Qaboos University, has created a learning environment in which language skills are developed in parallel with students' study skills and supported by various teaching materials and online learning resources. Teachers have been given many opportunities to demonstrate their creativity and professionalism (Al-Busaidi and Tuzlukova 2013). A number of quality enhancement opportunities "that are shared throughout the nation and that extend far beyond merely modifying curricula" (Carroll et al. 2009, p. 7) have been provided. Among these are, for example, focus on students' autonomous and independent learning; emphasis on integration of computer and information technologies in learning; active engagement of administration, program providers, and teachers during implementation; and focus on teachers' professional development. However, in spite of the dedicated work of both students and program providers, the English foundation program has appeared to be not an easy task. Looking at the statistics over the last three years, it seems that the majority of students exit the English foundation program with low grades (see Appendix 5A for more information). A large number of students barely pass the foundation English courses. The Language Center administration has also been receiving feedback from the Language Center credit (LANC) programs and the colleges about the students' poor English levels, especially in writing and grammar.

Interestingly, challenges that the Sultan Qaboos University foundation program providers and students are experiencing are mostly similar to those faced by other foundation program stakeholders in the Sultanate. For example, Al-Mamari (2012) reports the following challenges: 1) low proficiency in English for higher education intake; 2) four areas of learning, namely English, Mathematics, Information Technology; and General Learning (Study) skills; 3) entrance requirement and placement test; 4) exit requirements; 5) resources. Reflecting upon the causes of these obstacles that higher education institutions in Oman have confronted, Al-Mamari (2012) observes that "the main cause of most of the above mentioned challenges facing all stakeholders in higher education in Oman regarding the preparation of students for university level studies is the mismatch of goals and policies of the three essential components of higher education: the Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and the National Academic Standards for General foundation programs" (p. 5).

Aiming at bringing into discussion the current challenges in implementing the General foundation programs, Samantha Burns (2013) provides a description and analysis of students' challenges related to their social-emotional and cognitive-academic development. She also portrays the multidimensional learning that takes place for both teachers and students in the English units of such programs in

Southern Oman. In her view, English teachers structure syllabi to meet the learning outcomes in the four macro skills and study skills, develop lessons to engage students and improve their skills for further studies, and evaluate the effectiveness of their programs. However, these planned "formal" structures are the tip of the iceberg. Students in the foundation programs in tertiary education institutions are faced with a multitude of new learning experiences at a more fundamental level than these "formal" lessons. In Burns's (2013) view, just as the nation walks the tightrope between tradition and modernity, so too do our students. Beneath their English language learning, students face challenges relating to their notions of social interaction, individual responsibility, time management, and limited global awareness. This observation can be supported by an example given by Chirciu and Mishra (2013) to demonstrate Majan University College students' "very personal take on their individual learning journey":

> The majority of our respondents admitted having to cope with the co-educational environment, to which some of them were exposed for the first time. Rahima mentions that "I expect that different from school because school life and college life are very different. In school we didn't have any boys in our class or in the school but here we have boys with us in the class or in the college. Everywhere there are boys. I didn't know how to handle with them how to talk with them." Musa admits facing the same challenges: "I expected that it will be easy like school, not that organized but kind of better. I saw that it's different. The ways is different. Because it's mixed boys and girls and a lot of girls not guys. At the school only guys. I expected the education would be easier but it's harder." (p. 166)

Additionally, foundation program students face challenges that are related to external factors, such as their individual language learning needs, their ability to take charge of their own learning, motivation and attitude as well as low low proficiency in English upon entry. Workload, new and unfamiliar ways of interactions, the need to deal with new knowledge in a short time – these are some other challenges that students face. In relation to foundation students' insecure feelings and their reasons, Jayachandran (2007) writes:

> When they [school learners] move from school to college their horizon of knowledge is expected to expand. They are expected to take down notes while they listen to lectures in the classroom. They are also expected to seek information from various other sources and read more than one book for any given subject and assimilate the information presented in them. This requires

> efficient ways of reading. They need to organize this information and present it in their assignments, examinations and projects. But when it comes to training in colleges at tertiary level, it is rather inadequate instead they are made to receive dense information in a short time. Due to their inability to assimilate the input they receive in various subjects, a sense of insecurity grips their minds. (p. 1)

It is true that the tasks and challenges of the new learning experience, the English foundation program, have brought out a wide range of responses from students. Most students think that during their study at the English foundation program at the Language Center they have learnt many things, which they believe to be useful for enhancing and "enriching" their English, developing their study skills and qualities, becoming more confident and preparing for their future studies. According to a majority of the students, the English foundation program has provided them with learning experiences that they describe as "nice", "useful", "perfect", "helpful", "wonderful", "great", "excellent" and "exciting." They believe that the program is very "important and necessary" for their adaptation and adjustment to university life.[2] However, some students perceive that the challenges of the program have caused feelings of doubt, insecurity, and boredom. To describe her sense of insecurity one of the English foundation program students once said to one of the authors of this paper that "there are new ways of teaching. The teacher does not depend on the textbook. I feel I improve slowly." There are students who sometimes complain about the lack of motivation and boredom in the classroom. To exemplify, one of the students shared her perceptions about the program as "being really boring." Another student contended that students often "feel bored in the class." It is clear that it is not easy to fight and erase boredom in the classroom, and this challenging issue has been addressed in the literature before with regard to a double aspect of boredom–its negative brooding and its positive yearning (see, for example, Strong, Silver et al. 2003, p. 24-29; Reeve, Young et al. 2004, p.147-169). Both make it difficult to deal with boredom in the life of classrooms (Strong, Silver et al., 2003). In Reeve's (2012) view, motivation and piquing students' interest and curiosity are "prerequisites" for learning and providing information or a learning experience (p.149). Regretfully, some students think that they did not get

2. Read more about students' self-perceived experience in the English foundation program at Sultan Qaboos University in S. Al-Busaidiand V. Tuzlukova, "Learner Autonomy Support in EFL Classroom: Students' Perspective." In *General Foundation Programmes in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future,* eds. S. Al-Busaidi and V. Tuzlukova (Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing, 2013), 138-157.

in the Foundation Program what they had expected [emphasis ours]. One of the students confessed: "Actually I do not think it added much for me and I really wish I had passed." The significance of such confessions, though individual and often momentary, is simply too important to be ignored, especially due to the English foundation programs' "invisible integrative and communicative roles in making students transition from the previous learning experience and integration into the new context" (Al-Husseini 2006, p. 35).

Limitations of the Program

At present, it is still not clear to both the teachers and the administration of the Language Center at Sultan Qaboos University how effective the foundation program is in addressing the students' diverse problems and challenges, including those associated with the English language. Aiming at examining its English foundation program and trying to determine the weaknesses and suggest solutions, the administration of the Language Center and its Assessment and Curriculum units asked the teachers to share their experiences and concerns in the Spring semester of 2013 (see Appendix 5B for more information). Teachers were particularly requested to focus on the current English Foundation Program and on how it can be improved. Curriculum, materials, and assessment were used as key parameters for eliciting teachers' feedback. Almost 100 teachers participated. The teachers' feedback was elicited during weekly or biweekly program meetings. The teachers were given a template (see Appendix 5B) to guide their discussion. Feedback meetings were divided into two parts. In the first part, teachers were divided into three groups each representing one of the key parameters. Each group first discussed the area and identified issues/problems. The second part of the meeting was devoted to consensus building. The members of each group were asked to agree on the main concerns and come up with clear and practical suggestions for each area, namely curriculum, assessment, and materials, in order to address the issues outlined in the first part of the discussion. The documentation and analysis of the teachers' responses were conducted by the authors of this chapter.

Curriculum

The teachers' feedback contains some areas of weaknesses related to curriculum. These include, for example, overloading students with various assignments, projects, tasks, and homework. As a consequence, the students have to do a lot of work. To explain, the English language course of the Foundation Program at Sultan

Qaboos University implements an outcome-oriented curriculum. This institutional curriculum, built on skills and competences that students should develop by the end of the course, is implemented across all the Foundation Program English Language (FPEL) courses and is reviewed systematically by the Language Center Curriculum Unit (Ginosyan and Al-Abdali 2013, p. 202). However, curricula, which are planned and designed by the teachers themselves, are also implemented. For example, in their study, aimed at identifying ways to reconcile the gaps between the curriculum and its implementation and to provide clues or directions for those responsible for choosing language teaching materials at the Language Center, Ginosyan and Al-Abdali (2013) state that

> Teachers are central to curriculum implementation because it is their responsibility to deliver the curriculum in a way that learning outcomes are attained. To this end, they have to plan and construct lessons that will meet their students' needs. Language Centre teachers are provided with both published and in-house teaching materials that are aligned with the curriculum, to name but a few, Contemporary Topics, Explore Writing, Medical Readings, etc. Nevertheless, teachers often supplement their lessons with materials they find more appropriate. As a result of continuous supplementation, teachers map out their own curriculum. (p. 202)

Though teachers' concerns about curricula weaknesses vary, most of them think that they "try to do too much in too little time" to implement the curricula which is, in their opinion, "too complicated with more focus on projects and portfolio and less focus on linguistic skills" One of the groups of teachers described this challenge in the following way: "The learning outcomes are rather ambitious given the lack of time for practice and reinforcement. Hence, the apparent low level of English." Another group documented their concerns related to curricula as: "Courses aren't integrated, material not recycled, not properly absorbed." The third group reported, "Documents are not realistic, the needs and expectations of the students are mostly not met."

According to teachers' responses, other areas of weaknesses of curriculum include:

- lack of "horizontal transparency" between all FPEL courses (Mathematics, IT, English, Study Skills)
- fragmented character of the FPEL programs/courses
- lack of integration of skills across the FPEL programs/courses

- lack of grammar component (as a result students struggle with simple sentence structures)
- lack of vocabulary component
- lack of critical thinking skills' tasks and activities
- lack of individual approach to low level students
- insufficient class time for implementing the curricula and practicing language skills
- artificial ("not real life") nature of listening and speaking tasks
- emphasis on fluency not on accuracy

Teachers' feedback has also identified some weakness of the English language curricula in relation to four areas of study suggested by Oman Accreditation Authority. According to teachers, Oman Accreditation Authority documents have been too literally interpreted. There is too much emphasis on study skills in the English language curricula; too much time is allocated to mathematics and information technology courses that are offered to students simultaneously with their English courses. This does not help "students to achieve the desired level of English that intrinsically motivates them to learn in order to achieve the intended learning objectives of their academic programs" (Al Mamari 2012, p. 5), and, therefore, adequate action is required in order to rethink the interrelations among the areas of the foundation program to maximize its impact.

Assessment

Vennakkadan (2013) argues that the "high degree of flexibility in curriculum and assessment mechanisms outlined in the Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs (2010) has led to rampant diversity in assessment strategies adopted by various higher education providers in Oman" (p. 252). His view was shared by a majority of the teachers who participated in feedback program meetings. According to the teachers, there are challenges with continuous assessment, placement tests and exit tests. The weaknesses of the assessment process in the English foundation program, in their opinion, include:

- lack of mandatory and consistent guidelines for continuous assessment and its components

- lack of link between what is learnt by the students and what is assessed (e.g., "Not all areas that are taught are adequately tested"; "Paraphrasing, summarizing skills are not tested adequately, as well as not covered well in curriculum or teaching materials")
- lack of a placement test component to assess writing ability
- imbalance in weighting of some tested components (reading in total is given too much weight compared to grammar, or speaking)
- lack of correlation between international tests, e.g., IELTS, TOEFL and Cambridge ESOL Exams, and assessment at the Language Center
- too high formative assessment used for low level students (e.g., portfolio)
- recurrent problems with test construction and administration
- lack of practice tests

Teachers' feedback demonstrates that, in many cases, as described by one teacher, "assessment is completely divorced from teaching." Another teacher asserts that "material taught is not what is tested. Students don't have motivation to study and, as a result, the benefits of the "washback" effect are lost." The same problems are described by Al-Mamari (2012) who admits that there is a variety of tests in their degree of complexity and in their content across the foundation program providers in Oman. According to Al-Mamari (2012),

> Overall, variation in these tests, whose main purpose is to identify whether a student has met the required learning outcomes of a standardized foundation program, affects the main aim of standardization which is ensuring quality of education and compatibility among institutions (p. 5).

To ensure quality, Vennakkadan (2013) suggests that "assessing learners in an EFL classroom must be on the basis of systematic guidelines, meticulous execution and well- defined yardsticks as it is a valuable tool for providing information critically relevant to several concerns in language teaching" (p. 252). He further emphasizes that tests, being a major component of assessment, "provide evidence of the results of learning and instruction, efficacy of programs/courses, feedback on the learning materials, individual promotion and achievement of instructional objectives/learning outcomes" (Vennakkadan 2013, p. 252).

Materials

As stated in the Language Center Foundation Program's English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012, each of the six proficiency levels has "its own set of learning outcomes and materials. There is a gradual increase in difficulty from one FPEL level to the next" (Foundation Programs English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012:4). Based on the program developers' belief in the developmental nature of language learning, these six levels are viewed "more like a continuum rather than discrete levels" (Foundation Programs English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012:4). However, as reported by the teachers, some of the materials are above the students' level. Sometimes there are too many books for one level. Sometimes some skills, e.g., study skills, are not covered in books suggested to the students. Other weaknesses in this area include:

- insufficient quantity of online materials and resources
- lack of relevance of the materials on Moodle platform to students' learning outcomes
- lack of integration in teaching materials
- insufficient practice in the skills detailed in the outcomes or in the question types/text types (e.g., monologues, dialogues in listening) of the Language Center tests
- contradictions and bias in some in-house materials and lack of their attractiveness

In spite of contradictions and bias in some in-house textbooks, many participants of the feedback meetings rated them much higher than commercial textbooks. The issue of the quality of the materials was also highlighted: for example, some of the materials "do not relate to the relevant component of the course" and "do a limited job tackling learning objectives."

Other Challenging Issues

Teachers who participated in the feedback sessions shared their concerns about multiple issues of the English foundation program's running, management, and administration. For example, some aspects of program administration and resources are described as an obstacle for its effective implementation, such as the length of the English foundation program and mixed classes with noticeable gaps in students' level.

Another big concern appears to be the admission of low level students to the English foundation program. This concern is shared not only by teachers at Sultan Qaboos University, but also by many educators across all higher education institutions and foundation program providers in Oman who view weaknesses in the English language of post-basic graduates as an obstacle and a challenge in their foundation studies.

Most teachers emphasize that the students lack independent learning skills. According to them, students face so many challenges when in the foundation program because they are used to a teacher-centered approach during their secondary education and cannot be expected to become independent learners all of a sudden. Consequently, there is a certain need to provide, as one of the teachers wrote, "some dimensions to develop students' autonomy."

Conclusion

The English foundation programs, which have recently been introduced in many GCC states, are an excellent means of providing an induction to university life and ensuring transition from Arabic medium school to English medium university. In spite of the diversity of content, structures and patterns of design, planning and implementation, the English foundation programs in the region are all aimed at enhancing the quality of higher education and preparing students for their future studies and the world of work.

The example of the English foundation program offered by Sultan Qaboos University in Oman demonstrates that such programs have a strong potential to provide students with worthwhile learning experiences and improve their language and study skills, thus helping them to effectively and efficiently adjust to the academic environment and their future studies. However, it remains a matter of serious concern that there are some issues which need to be addressed when considering remedial work and further development of the English foundation programs. These issues include: a) introduction of an integrated curricula that will connect all the areas of the foundation program, namely English, math, and information technology; b) structuring and standardizing the English language curriculum at every level to provide integration of skills, e.g., elimination of the portfolio from the curriculum or simplifying it to only include vocabulary log, academic planner, and self-study log, focusing on teaching and assessing grammar and vocabulary, simplifying the curriculum, leaving only those objectives that can be realistically accomplished in the time allotted, etc.; c) introduction of team teaching and targeted practice of language skills in order to maximize students' motivation;

d) addressing needs of every individual student, e.g. organizing individual short tutorials for low level students, introduction of intensive summer course for low level students before joining the foundation program, introduction of a "supervised self-study" area where students can do their homework, complete their draft and portfolios, read their stories with teacher(s) available at this place to support them when they need help, etc.; e) revising teaching materials, e.g., use of commercial books with integrated skills that can be supplemented with in-house materials, selecting commercial materials produced by experts and especially those produced for the Middle East , reduce the number of the books used in some programs, implementation of the policy aimed at integration of teaching materials across all foundation program courses, etc.; f) development and consolidation of links between the foundation program and credit programs, e.g., introduction of an exit test at the end of the program requiring all students to demonstrate the same level of proficiency as those who go directly to credit, etc.; g) further development of resources, e.g., writing centers, tutorial centers, computer labs, libraries, students' language clubs, language learning activities on Moodle, and providing students with iPads/laptops/tablets; h) focus on teachers' professional development that is related to the context of the English foundation program.

It is also important to develop the students as independent and autonomous learners. Here the emphasis should be on gradual introduction of student-centered pedagogy that allows students to be interactive and take responsibility for their own learning. However, learner autonomy does not normally develop in isolation. There should be deliberate efforts from learners and teachers towards active involvement (Thanasoulas 2000, n.p.). To guide the development of learner autonomy in the context of the English foundation program, three principles for promoting and sustaining an autonomous language learning environment offered by David Little in his papers on autonomy in language teaching and learning (See: Little, 2009, p. 222-233; Little, 2007, p. 14-29; Little, 2000, p. 45-56) can be used. The first principle states that learners should be fully involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluating stages of language instruction. This will help develop a sense of ownership and responsibility among learners. The second principle is concerned with learner reflection. Learners should be given enough space in their studies to reflect on what they have achieved. They should identify their strengths and weaknesses as language learners so that they can make improvements. The third principle is about language use. Language programs should give students ample opportunities to use the target language meaningfully through genuine situations. Learners need to see the practical function of the language.

In addition to involving students in learning and developing them as autonomous learners, their previous learning experiences, socio-cultural features, individual abilities and skills should be addressed. The students' learning environment will change from Arabic medium of instruction to English. Moreover, it will incorporate traditional and digital/ virtual learning environments where the students are given various activities and tasks. This new environment of learning will require from the students the mastery of study skills and ability to work independently. As for the teachers, their roles as communicators and motivators displaying patience and understanding will gain increased importance. These are some of the most challenging tasks for the future development of the English foundation programs in the GCC states.

References

Al Abdali, Ahmed, Hranush Ginosyan, Brigitte Miller, and David Sumpter. 2011. *The Relationship between FPEL Learning Outcomes and Teaching Materials.* Muscat: Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University. http://moodle.squ.edu.om/file.php/6/CDU/Projects/2010-2011/Project_Reports_2010_2011/Materials_Learning_Outcomes_Project_Report.pdf. Accessed May 12, 2012.

Al Mamari, Atiya Said. 2012. "General Foundation Program in Higher Education Institutions in Oman National Standards: Implementation and Challenges." Paper presented at Oman Quality Network Regional Conference on Quality Management and Enhancement in Higher Education, Muscat, February 20-21, 2012.

Al Shihi, Badria Ibrahim. 2012. Message. Foundation Program. http://www.squ.edu.om/Default.aspx?alias=www.squ.edu.om/fp. Accessed December 15, 2012.

Al-Busaidi, Saleh, and Victoria Tuzlukova (eds.). 2013. *General Foundation Programs in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future.* Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing.

Al-Husseini, Suleiman. 2006. "The Visible and Invisible Role of English Foundation Programmes: A Search for Communication Opportunities within EFL Contexts." *Asian EFL Journal* 8 (4): 35-51, http://www.asian-efl-journal.com/December_2006_EBook.pdf Accessed January 10, 2013.

Al-Mahrooqi, Rahma and Victoria Tuzlukova. 2010. "The Influence of the Cultural and Linguistic Orientations of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) Students on their Responses to Literatures on the Internet." In *Handbook of Research on Discourse Behavior and Digital Communication: Language Structures and Social Interaction,* edited by Rotimi Taiwo, 687-699.Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Burns, Samantha. 2013. "The Rest of the Iceberg." In *General Foundation Programmes in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future,* edited by Saleh Al-Busaidi, and Victoria Tuzlukova, 29-35. Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing.

Carroll, Martin, Salim Razvi, Tess Goodliffe, and Fakhriya Al Habsi. 2009. "Progress in Developing a National Quality Management System for Higher Education in Oman." *Quality in Higher Education* 15 (1): 18-27.

Chirciu, Alina Rebecca and Tuluka Mishra. 2013. "Teach Me if You Can: Omani Foundation Students and the Story of Autonomy." In *General Foundation Programmes in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future,* edited by Saleh Al-Busaidi and Victoria Tuzlukova, 157-168. Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing.

Cohen, Andrew D. 1994. *Assessing Language Ability in the Classroom.* Boston: Heinle and Heinle Publishers.

Cope, Bill and Mary Calantiz. 2009. *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures.* London and New York: Routledge. http://www.english.umaine.edu/files/2009/05/A-Pedagogy-of-Multiliteracies_Ed.-by-Cope-and-Kalantzis.pdf. Accessed April 10, 2012.

Deari, Geetali and Ahmed Salim Al Abri.. 2013. "Overview of the General Foundation Programme in Oman." Paper presented at Oman International ELT Conference on Changing Times, Emerging Opportunities in ELT. Muscat: Sultan Qaboos University, April, 17-18.

Dhofar University. http://www.du.edu.om/academics/foundation_programme/index.html. Accessed February 26, 2012.

Fergany, Nader. 2000. "Arab Higher Education and Development, an Overview." Cairo: Almishkat Centre for Research, 2000. www.almishkat.org. Accessed April 4, 2012.

Foundation Programs English Language Curriculum Document 2011-2012. Muscat: Language Centre, Sultan Qaboos University. http://moodle.squ.edu.om/file.php/6/CDU/curriculum_documents/FPEL_Curriculum_Document_2011-2012.pdf. Accessed February 25, 2012.

Ginosyan, Hranush and Ahmed Al-Abdali. 2013. "Supplementing the Curriculum: Teacher Beliefs and Practices." In *General Foundation Programmes in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future,* edited by Saleh Al-Busaidi and Victoria Tuzlukova, 198-234. Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing.

Jayachandran, J. 2007. "Computer Assisted Language Learning (Call) As a Method to Develop Study Skills in Students of Engineering and Technology at the Tertiary Level." *The Indian Review of World Literature in English* 3 (2): 1-7, http://worldlitonline.net/july-07/jeyachandran.pdf. Accessed December 11, 2011.

Little, David. 2000. "We Are All Together: Exploring the Interdependence of Teacher and Learner Autonomy." In *All Together Now: Papers from the 7th Nordic Conference and Workshop on Autonomous Language Learning,* edited by Leena Karlsson, Felicity Kjisik, Joan et Nordlund, 45-56. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, Language Centre.

—. 2007. "Language Learner Autonomy: Some Fundamental Considerations Revisited." *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* 1 (1): 14-29.

—. 2009. *Language Learner Autonomy and the European Language Portfolio: Two L2 English Examples. Language Teaching* 42 (2): 222-233.

Oman Academic Standards for General Foundation Programs. 2010. http://www.squ.edu.om/Portals/162/pdf/GFPStandards/FINAL.pdf. Accessed February 23, 2012.

Quality Audit Manual, Institutional Accreditation: Stage1. 2008. Oman Accreditation Council (OAC). http://www.oaaa.gov.om/Institution.aspx#Inst_Quality. Accessed May 12, 2012.

Reeve, Johnmarshall, Hyungshim Jang, Dan Carrell, Soohyun Jeon, and Jon Barch. 2004. "Enhancing Students' Engagement by Increasing Teachers' Autonomy Support." *Motivation and Emotion* 28 (2): 147-169. http://www.selfdeterminationtheory.org/SDT/documents/2004_Reeveetal_MOEM.pdf. Accessed March 27, 2012.

Reeve, Johnmarshall. 2012. "A Self-determination Theory Perspective on Student Engagement." In *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement,* edited by Sandra Christensen, Amy Reschly, and Cathy Wylie, 149-173. New York: Springer Science.

—. 2012. "Helping Teachers Adopt an Autonomy Supporting Style." DOI: www.caleidoscoop.be/…/v2_interview_johnmarshall_reeve-20110504-140. Accessed March 27, 2012.

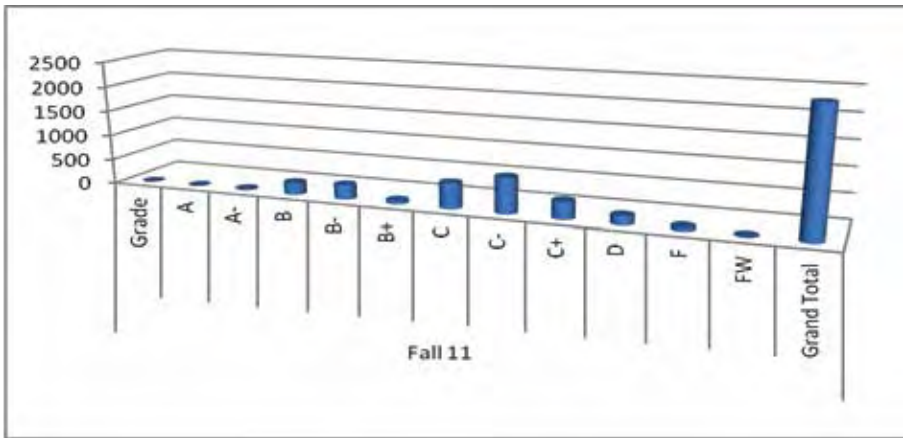
Strong, Richard, Harvey Silver, Matthew Perini, and Greg Tuculescu. 2003. "Building Classroom Relationship: Boredom and Its Opposite." *Educational Leadership* 61(1): 24-29. http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept03/vol61/num01/Boredom-and-Its-Opposite.aspx. Accessed March 10, 2011).

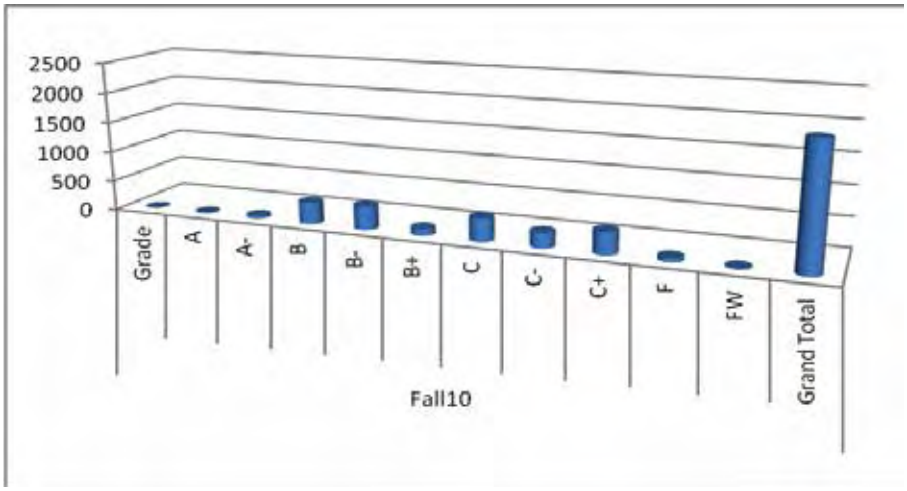
Thanasoulas, Dimitrious. 2000. "What Is Learner Autonomy and How Can It Be Fostered?" *The Internet TESL Journal* 6 (11). http://itesl.org/Articles/Thanasoulas-Autonomy.htm.Accessed April 10, 2012.

Vennakkadan, Abdul Latheef. 2013. "Prospects of an Identical Assessment Framework for English in General Foundation Programmes." In *General Foundation Programmes in Higher Education in the Sultanate of Oman: Experiences, Challenges and Considerations for the Future,* edited by Saleh Al-Busaidi and Victoria Tuzlukova, 248-256. Muscat: Mazoon Press and Publishing.

Appendix 5A

English Foundation Program students' grades (2010-2012)





Appendix 5B

Feedback on Foundation Program English language courses

a) Program/Course: _____ b) Students/Teachers (circle one) c) Number of students/teachers attending: _____

Area	Concerns	Suggestions for change
Curriculum e.g. focus, approach, skills, division of hours, etc.		
Assessments e.g. continuous assessments, mid and final exams, portfolios, 500 word report, etc.		
Materials e.g. commercial and in-house materials, number of books, etc.		
Others		

About the Contributors

Saleh Al-Busaidi is an Associate Professor of English as a Foreign Language at the College of Education, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Oman and currently teaches B.Ed. and M.A. courses and supervises M.A. and Ph.D. student theses. He served as the Director of the Language Centre at SQU (2010-2016). He received his BA in TEFL from Sultan Qaboos University in 1995, his MA in TEFL from the University of Exeter, UK in 1997, and his Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA in 2003. Dr. Al-Busaidi has participated in several national and international conferences and symposia and has published journal articles and book chapters in areas related to English language teaching and learning. His main research interests are: learner autonomy, curriculum and material development, study/academic skills, academic readiness, and language acquisition.

Gail Al Hafidh is a faculty member of the Liberal Studies Department at a Tertiary Institution in the United Arab Emirates. She has several research interests including assessment of oral skills in English as a Foreign Language; ELF and its implications for assessment of English, and the impact of the use of English on global research opportunities.

Rahma Al-Mahrooqi is an Associate Professor of English at Oman's Sultan Qaboos University, where she has worked for 20 years, teaching courses such as academic writing, communication, business English, research, and sociolinguistics. While

holding many academic and administrative positions, she has coordinated tertiary English courses and an ESP program for the university's College of Science, and, during her four years as Director of its Language Center, pioneered initiatives in English instruction for both university staff and the local community, and set up an IELTS Testing Center. Dr. Al-Mahrooqi has published widely on the rise and progress of English language teaching throughout Oman, focusing especially on areas such as TEFL, reading, literature and communication.

Khalid Al-Ruwaihi is the Executive Director of Bahrain Center for Strategic, International & Energy Studies (DERASAT), an independent think tank in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Previously, he was the Director General of External Relations and Centers of Excellence at the University of Bahrain. He was also the Dean of the College of Information Technology (2004-2011), Chairman of the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (2000-2004), and a member of the national taskforce team established by the Economic Development Board to create a National Innovation Policy for Bahrain. He was the organizer of the First International Symposiums on ICT and the Society held in Bahrain in December 2008 and was an active member of the National Taskforce Team created by HRH the Crown Prince of Bahrain to reform higher education in the country. Dr. Al-Ruwaihi's research interests include Innovation for Development; R&D aspects of Information Technology for developing countries; Strategic Planning for Educational and Technological Projects and Design; and Implementation of Hardware Artificial Neural Networks. He has published a book entitled "Bahraini Women in Science and Technology" besides many papers in national and international journals. He has been an invited speaker and presented papers at many international conferences and workshops.

Christopher Denman is a researcher at the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. He was previously affiliated with the university's Humanities Research Center and was also an instructor at its Language Center, following from English teaching experience at the secondary and tertiary levels in Australia, South Korea, and Japan. He has published a number of papers in international journals and edited books, in addition to co-editing two volumes dealing with employment and education and English education in the Arab world. He has been involved in several funded research projects concerning various aspects of education in Oman and is currently the principal investigator on a project exploring issues related to English-medium instruction at the tertiary-level in the Sultanate.

Tariq Elyas is an associate professor of Applied Linguistics, Vice-Dean for Graduate Studies, and the Director of the M.A. TESOL program at the English Language Institute, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He is also the Research Head Unit for Prince Khalid Al-Faisal Center for Moderation, Saudi Arabia. He has presented papers in various international conferences and published in prestigious peer-reviewed journals. His interests are: Global English, Teacher Identity, Policy Reform, Language Rights, and Critical Pedagogy.

Ahmar Mahboob teaches at the Department of Linguistics, University of Sydney. He is keenly interested in the application of language sciences to developmental issues. His primary research interest is on the examination of policies, practices, and implications of language variation in local and global contexts. In pursuing this goal, he draws from and contributes to a range of linguistics and applied linguistics traditions, theories, and methodologies.

Ali Fuad Selvi is an Assistant Professor of TESOL and Applied Linguistics and Coordinator of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language program at Middle East Technical University, Northern Cyprus Campus. His research interests include the sociolinguistic aspects of English as an international language and its implications for language learning, teaching, teacher education and language policy/planning; issues of (in)equity, privilege, marginalization, justice and professionalism in TESOL; and second language teacher education (particularly teacher identity, teacher cognition, the notion of praxis, and the interplay between SLA and L2 pedagogy). He is the Past Chair of the NNEST Interest Section in the TESOL International Association. His recent publications include *Teaching English as an International Language* (co-authored with Bedrettin Yazan; published by TESOL Press, 2013) and Conceptual *Shifts and Contextualized Practices in Education for Glocal Interaction: Issues and Implications* (in press) (co-edited with Nathanael Rudolph) to be published by Springer.

Salah Troudi received his doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction and TESOL from Florida State University and his M.Sc. in ESP from Aston University, UK. He is currently a Senior Lecturer of TESOL and language education at the University of Exeter, UK where he teaches in the M.Ed, Ed.D. and Ph.D. TESOL programs. He directs the Exeter TESOL doctoral program in Dubai and is the Supervisory Coordinator of the Ph.D. in TESOL. His teaching and research interests include language teacher education, critical issues in language education, curriculum in language education, English as medium of instruction and classroom-

based research. He has published papers in several TESOL and language education journals. Dr. Troudi has supervised doctoral students from many parts of the world in a number of research areas. He currently serves on the editorial board of several journals and is the editor in chief of The International Journal of Bilingual and Multilingual Teachers of English. He has taught in the US, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Victoria Tuzlukova is Head of the Professional Development and Research Unit in the Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman. She has been working in the field of English language teaching for 32 years. Her research interests focus on sociolinguistics, intercultural communication, foreign language acquisition, and the role of culture in foreign language teaching and learning. She is the author and co-author of several publications on professional discourse, language of professional communication, language teaching and education. In May 2009, she received the Best Researcher Award from the Sultan Qaboos University.

Bedrettin Yazan is an assistant professor of educational linguistics at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. His research is focused on teaching English as an international language, language teacher learning and identity development, language policy and planning, teacher candidates' practicum practices, sociocultural theories in second language acquisition, and collaboration between ESL and content area teachers. He has recently coauthored (with Dr. Ali Fuad Selvi) a book entitled Teaching English as an International Language (TESOL Press, 2013). He has published in the TESOL Quarterly, Applied Linguistics, European Journal of Teacher Education, ELT Journal, International Journal of Inclusive Education, Working Papers in Educational Linguistics and TESOL Interest Section Newsletters, among others. He currently serves as the chair-elect of TESOL Non-native English Speakers in the TESOL Interest Section.

GRC Publications

Books Published by GRC

Unfulfilled Potential: Exploring the GCC-EU Relationship	Edited by Christian Koch	ISBN 9948 424 30 1
Discovering the Arabian Gulf: Canada's Evolving Ties with the GCC States	Robert J. Bookmiller	ISBN 9948 432 18 5
A Window of Opportunity: Europe, Gulf Security and the Aftermath of the Iraq War	Christian Koch & Felix Neugart	ISBN 9948 424 73 5
Gulf Yearbook 2003	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 400 26 7
Gulf Yearbook 2004	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 400 93 3
Gulf Yearbook 2005 - 2006	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 432 22 3
Constitutional Reform and Political Participation in the Gulf	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 432 53 3
Dynamic Alliances: Strengthening Ties between the GCC and Asia	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 432 81 9
Green Gulf Report	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 432 69 X
Gulf States: Counterterrorism - Laws and Treaties	Mustafa Alani	ISBN 9948 432 61 4
E-Learning in Social Sciences and Humanities	Group of Authors	ISBN 9948 432 65 7

Defense and Regional Security the in Arabian Peninsula and Gulf States, 1973-2004 (An Annotated Bibliography)	J. E. Peterson	ISBN 9948 432 02 9
Youth and Environment Research	Group of Authors	ISBN 9948 432 67 3
Narcotics and Human Trafficking in the GCC States	Faryal Leghari	ISBN 9948 434 27 7
Gulf Geo-Economics	Edited by Eckart Woertz	ISBN 9948 434 52 8
Boom in the GCC Skies: Assessing Aviation Growth Patterns	Samir Ranjan Pradhan	ISBN 9948 434 58 7
Gulf-Pakistan Strategic Relations	Faryal Leghari	ISBN 9948 434 74 9
Gulf Yearbook 2006 - 2007	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 434 29 3
Gulf Yearbook 2007 - 2008	Gulf Research Center	ISBN 9948 434 71 4
EU-GCC Relations and Security Issues Broadening the Horizon	Edited by Christian Koch	ISBN 9948 434 83 8
Fostering EU-Italy-GCC: Cooperation: The Political, Economic and Energy Dimensions	Edited by Christian Koch	ISBN 9948 434 85 4
India's Growing Role in the Gulf: Implications for the Region and the United States	A Group of Authors	ISBN 9948 432 35 5
Russian & CIS Relations with the Gulf Region	Edited by Marat Terterov	ISBN 9948 424 00 X
The EU and the GCC: Challenges and Prospects under the Swedish EU Presidency	Edited by Christian Koch and Leif Stenberg	ISBN 9948 490 01 2
GCC Financial Markets	Edited by Eckart Woertz	ISBN 9948 16 097 7
Renewable Energy in the GCC Countries: Resources, Potential, and Prospects	Imen Jeridi Bachellerie	ISBN 978 9948 490 04 3

India and the Gulf: What Next?	Edited by Ranjit Gupta et al.	ISBN 978 1909 864 00 9
The Gulf and Latin America: An Assessment of Expectations and Challenges	Alejandra Galindo	ISBN 978 1909 864 02 3
GCC-India Relations	Ranjit Gupta, Christian Koch	ISBN 978 2970 086 90 1
Housing Markets and Policy Design in the Gulf Region	David A. Smith and Angus Freeman	ISBN 978 1909 864 04 7
GCC Relations with Post-War Iraq: A Strategic Perspective	Omar Al-Ubaydli and Andrea Plebani	ISBN 978 1 909864 05 4
The Gulf and Latin America: Exploring New Avenues of Exchange	Alejandra Galindo Marines	ISBN 978-1-909864-14-6

Research Papers

Peer-reviewed bilingual research papers and studies written by specialists in Gulf issues. The research papers are comprehensive in character and meant to open the door for more specialized Gulf studies.

GCC- EU Military and Economic Relations	Elizabeth Stevens	ISBN 9948 400 30 5
GCC- US Relations	Gregory Gause	ISBN 9948 400 36 4
GCC-EU Relations: Past Record and Promises for the Future	Giacomo Luciani & Tobias Schumacher	ISBN 9948 400 37 2
Political Reform in the Gulf Cooperation Council States	Hasanain Tawfeeq Ibrahim	ISBN 9948 424 95 6
Israel's New Friendship Arch: India, Russia and Turkey	P. R. Kumaraswamy	ISBN 9948 424 46 8
Gulf Cooperation Council Relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	Marat Terterov	ISBN 9948 432 04 5
Political Participation and Stability in the Sultanate of Oman	Joseph A. Kéchichian	ISBN 9948 424 97 2
Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union Military and Economic Relations	Elizabeth Stephens	ISBN 9948 400 30 5

Gulf Cooperation Council Relations with Russia	Elena Suren Melkumyan	ISBN 9948 424 63 8
Realignments within the Gulf Cooperation Council	Bogdan Szajkowski	ISBN 9948 424 77 8
Political Reform Measures from a Domestic GCC Perspective	Abdulaziz Sager	ISBN 9948 424 55 7
Gulf Cooperation Council Relations with Australia	Patricia Berwick	ISBN 9948 400 55 0
Environmental Situational Assessment for the GCC Countries	Frederic Launay	ISBN 9948 432 16 9
Education Policies in the GCC States	Salem Al-Khaldi	ISBN 9948 432 91 6
Piracy: Motivation and Tactics The Case of Somali Piracy	Nicole Stracke Marie Bos	ISBN 9948 434 79 X

Policy Papers

Analytical policy papers offering in-depth and well-researched exploration of public policies in the GCC countries. Policy papers set forth perceptions likely to contribute to a deeper understanding of these issues.

Reforms in Saudi Arabia	Abdulaziz Sager	ISBN 9948 400 24 0
Arab Peace Forces	Abdulaziz Sager	ISBN 9948 424 19 0
Political Kidnapping an Operational Methodology	Mustafa Alani	ISBN 9948 424 03 4
Saddam's Fate and Blunders of Intelligence Speculations	Mustafa Alani	ISBN 9948 424 02 6
Gulf Cooperation Council States Probable Attitude towards a Military Action against Iran's Nuclear Facilities	Mustafa Alani	ISBN 9948 400 99 2
Establishing a Successful GCC Currency Union	Emilie Rutledge	ISBN 9948 424 22 0

A Gulf WMD Free Zone within a Broader Gulf and Middle East Security Architecture	Peter Jones	ISBN 9948 424 40 9
The Regional Roles of NATO and its Potential Role in the Gulf Region	Musa Hamad Qallab	ISBN 9948 424 87 5
A Case for a GCC Political & Economic Strategy Toward Post-War Iraq	Abdulaziz Sager	ISBN 9948 400 61 5
The Phenomenon of Blowing up Iraqi Oil Pipelines: Conditions, Motivations and Future Implications	Amar Ali Hassan	ISBN 9948 424 52 2
Combating Violence & Terrorism in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Abdulaziz Sager	ISBN 9948 400 01 1

Gulf Theses

The Center has catalogued a growing collection of MA and Ph.D. theses beginning as early as the mid-1970s to the present day. The GRC is also committed to publishing and translating exceptional theses relevant to the Gulf.

Sea Change: Alan Villiers and the Subversion of the Arabian Travel Narrative	Grace Pundyk	ISBN 9948 424 97 2
Institutional Change in Saudi Arabia	Nicole Stracke	ISBN 9948 424 67 0
Iran and the GCC States: Prospects for Long Term Regional Security in the Gulf	Nicholas Stivang	ISBN 9948 434 04 8
EU-GCC Relations: A Study in Inter-Regional Cooperation	Abdullah Baabood	ISBN 9948 424 69 7

Yemen Studies

A peer-reviewed bilingual series that includes academic studies and research on Yemeni political, economic, social, defense and security affairs.

The Yemeni Parliamentary Elections	Ahmed Abdul Kareem Saif	ISBN 9948 400 77 1

Challenges to Education in The GCC during the 21st Century

This volume examines the applied and theoretical frames of reference that operate in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and probes the relevant aspects of scale, proportion, and the grounding of education in the Gulf region. The five papers included in this volume discuss elements of policy and curriculum, teachers and teacher identity, students and student identity, and social conditions that affect teaching and learning in the 21st century in the GCC states. Together, these papers raise and discuss issues of critical importance as we plan for education in the GCC for the 21st century.

Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Centre of Islamic Studies
University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB9 3DA, UK
E-mail: info@grc.net

Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

ISBN 978-1-909864-16-0
9 781909 864160