

# English as the Medium of Instruction in Saudi Higher Education: Necessity or Hegemony?

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**Abstract**—English has been implemented as the medium of instruction of engineering, medicine and science in Saudi universities. This decision was taken by some universities without consultation with students or teaching staff, and stands in violation of the Saudi policy that states that Arabic should be the language of instruction. This study investigates the attitude of 702 Saudi students and 162 instructors towards English as the medium of instruction, and towards Arabic as an alternative. The Component of Attitude and the Theory of Reasoned Behavior were adopted to analyze the findings. It explores the consequences of these choices based on theories regarding functions of attitude among students and instructors of the Science Colleges in King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. Sub-themes include the effectiveness of English as the medium of instruction for Saudi students; the consequences of imposing English as the medium of instruction; the potential of Arabic as the medium of instruction in higher education, and students' right to be taught in their own mother tongue. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were used based on a questionnaire survey. Findings show strong attitudinal differences between students and instructors, which may be attributed to the degree of hegemony affecting the groups.

**Index Terms**—hegemony, Saudi Arabia, English, Arabic, attitudes, higher education

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Saudi government, like other globalizing states, has been rapidly expanding English language teaching and the use of English in education in the last few decades. This policy, along with other globalizing forces, has exerted an immense influence on the highly educated, privileged sector of Saudi society. This educated class desires the government to move even more rapidly in its implementation of English and its inclusion in the state's language policies. This attitude is reflected in the decision of some universities in Saudi Arabia to use English as the only medium of instruction (MOI) without considering stakeholders' opinions and without taking the Saudi language policy, which states that Arabic should be the MOI at all levels of Saudi education into consideration (Alamri 2008). Regardless of choosing English as an MOI because of superficial simplicities of such an alternative, substantial problems at the pedagogical level of a more significant effect have emerged. Such problems include linguistic incompetency that resulted in lower student achievement, confusion among Arabic and non-Arabic speaking instructors, little attention to the transformation of scientific knowledge in both term and concept into Arabic. Similar studies were conducted in other ESL contexts reported similar findings (Pennycook, 1994). This study investigates the viability of English as the sole MOI in higher education by describing teachers' and students' attitudes towards the language; appraising their perception of the potential of Arabic to replace English as MOI; predicting the acceptability of English to Saudi students in the future in light of the 'theory of reasoned action' (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975); and assessing the influence of linguistic hegemony in the choice of English as MOI. The paper concludes with a call for the necessity of revising the current fussy practices regarding English MOI in colleges of Engineering, Medicine and Science in Saudi Arabia. More rigorous language planning in the form of upgrading the status of Arabic as the MOI for Engineering, Medicine and Science is required; while enhancing the teaching of English as an ESP to boost students' linguistic abilities to keep in touch with advances in these fields of study.

### *Point of Departure*

#### *Components of Attitude*

In this paper attitude is approached from a mentalist perspective. This view suggests that attitude may have cognitive, affective and conative components (Gardner, Lalonde and Moorcroft 1985). The cognitive component encompasses an individual's beliefs about the world that might result in stereotyping of the attitudinal object. For example, if a strong cognitive component is further strengthened by affective and conative components, an individual may stereotype English as good or bad, which may or may not be close to the reality. According to Tajfel (1981) an individual

stereotypes the attitudinal object for three reasons: a) to make the complex social world more coherent; b) to create and maintain group ideologies; and, c) to differentiate between the ingroup (to which the individual belongs) and outgroup (to which the individual does not belong). For an individual, the stereotype might become the repository of commonsense beliefs through which they conduct and interpret their social life. The affective component involves an emotional response to the attitudinal object. Sometimes an individual's belief is overwhelmed by their emotions so that a strong affective component may exist even if there is no cognitive aspect (McKenzie, 2010). A student who is unable to comprehend an English lecture or textbooks may evaluate the language negatively. Once a negative attitude towards English has developed, they might dislike every aspect of the use of English in education. The conative component refers to a person's predisposition to behave in certain ways. For example, a teacher might be predisposed to use English for their long stay abroad or for being spellbound by the hegemony of the English language.

The advantage of this tripartite model is that it can deal with the complexity of the human mind and explain the ambivalence that individuals often report. An attitude becomes ambivalent when there is uncertainty, incongruity or a clash between attitudinal components. For example, students might believe that English should be the MOI in science colleges, but at the same time when considering of their own incompetence in the language, they may fear failure and think otherwise. Here, the conflicting cognitive and affective components might cause ambivalence.

#### *Attitude and behavior*

In social psychology, attitudes are considered to be the major determinants of behavior (Bohner and Wanke, 2002). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the 'theory of reasoned action' (TRA) to predict specific behavior. In this theory, the investigation of attitude is not focused on the attitudinal object but on the action, e.g. to investigate students' attitudes towards English as MOI, the focus should be on their performance as English medium students not on the English language *per se*. TRA has four major components: a) attitudes towards behavior: the individual's judgment of whether the behavior is good or bad, e.g., whether learning through English is effective or not; b) subjective norms: the individual's perception of pressure from society to perform a particular act, e.g., whether there is pressure from Saudi society to use English as MOI; c) behavioral intention: the individual's plan to perform the behavior, e.g., whether Saudi students plan to use English as MOI in the near future; and d) behavior: the actual performance of the individual's intent, e.g. the materialization of the intention of using English as MOI.

#### *Hegemony*

The term 'hegemony,' conceptualized by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci, means domination through consent and persuasion (Gramsci 1971). It consists of three concomitant processes: a) domination without coercion; b) domination through legitimation; and c) domination through consensus. In the first process (a), the dominant group has ascendancy over the subordinate group by creating consciousness, rather than exerting force over it. For the second (b), the subordinate group takes it for granted that the rule of the dominant group is legitimate, just, right, and unquestionable. In the third process (c), the majority of members of the subordinate group think that they are in that position by choice because they get as much benefit as the dominant group receives for having common needs and concerns (Collins 1989; Fontana 1993; Fontana 2001; Gramsci 1971; Gramsci 1985; Gramsci 1995).

#### *Research Questions*

This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are teachers' and students' attitudes towards English as MOI?
2. What are their perceptions of the potential of Arabic to replace English and the significance of this?
3. Will English be increasingly acceptable to students in the near future?
4. Has English been chosen as MOI under the spell of linguistic hegemony?

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### A. Sampling

Our sample consisted of teachers and students from the science disciplines at King Khalid University, Assir in the southern province of Saudi Arabia. They were regarded as representative of the national population of science teachers and students as King Khalid University is one of the biggest Saudi universities and its teachers and students hail from all over the country. The Deans of all the Science Colleges of the University were requested to distribute a total of 1500 questionnaires randomly among students of all levels and instructors of all ranks. The questionnaires were distributed using the random sampling method. After checking the questionnaires returned, 864 (702 from students; 162 from staff) were accepted as complete and valid. The questionnaires were then grouped into three categories: a) Science: Natural Sciences, Applied Sciences, Computer Science, and the science departments of the Faculty of Education; b) Engineering; and c) Medicine: Dentistry, Pharmacology, Medical Sciences, Medicine, and Nursing.

### B. Students

There were 702 completed student questionnaires. The distribution of the students in terms of college, level, sex, and Grade Point Average (GPA) is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS (N=702) PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Independent Variables	Categories	N. of Subjects	%
College	Science	285	41%
	Engineering	162	23%
	Medicine	255	36%
Level	1-6	303	43%
	7-12	399	57%
Sex	Male	577	82%
	Female	125	18%
Grade Point Average (GPA)	1-1.99	426	60.7%
	2-2.99	65	9.3%
	3-3.99	124	17.7%
	4-5	87	12.3%

C. Teachers

The number of questionnaires filled-in by teachers was 162. As the teachers are not as homogenous as students, in addition to the variables like college and sex, the instructors are described in terms of age, mother tongue (L1), rank, and the country in which their degrees were obtained (see Table 2).

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF INSTRUCTORS (N=162) PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Independent Variables	Categories	N. of Subjects	%
College	Science	52	32%
	Engineering	29	18%
	Medicine	81	64%
Age	Below 40	45	28%
	40 and above	117	72%
Sex*	Male	100	62%
	Female	60	37%
Mother tongue (L1)	Arabic	111	69%
	Non-Arabic	50	31%
Country in which degrees were obtained	Arab	46	28%
	Non-Arab	116	72%
Rank	Faculty Members	48	30%
	Teaching Assistants	112	69%

\* One respondent did not specify his/her sex.

D. Research Tools

The questionnaire items comprised a Likert scale with twenty-five statements. Participants were requested to make a decision about their level of agreement with each statement by selecting one of the following four points: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). A range of 2.5 was used as the cut-off point between agreement and disagreement. The first point, Strongly Disagree, began with 1 and the last point, Strongly Agree, ended with 4. The difference between the points is .75 and they were arranged as follows: SD (1-1.75); D (1.75-2.5); A (2.5-3.25); and SA (3.25-4).

The questionnaire was prepared in two languages for the two different groups. Arabic was used for the students to rule out any comprehension difficulty that might influence their responses, while English was used for the teachers since they were all considered to be proficient in the language. Prior to administration, the questionnaire was reviewed by five professors. First, the Arabic version was sent to a professor in the Arabic department to review and revise its linguistic accuracy and appropriateness. Secondly, the revised questionnaire was translated into English and slightly modified to suit the university instructors. Finally, the two English sets (one for the students and the other for the teachers) were reviewed by four other professors. The reviews were discussed and many of the suggestions incorporated in the final version of the questionnaires.

In addition to the process described above, the internal consistency of the survey was measured by Cronbach's Alpha with a resulting value of 0.80, sufficiently high to make the survey reliable. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) provided evidence for the validity of the research instrument. The three components generated by EFA were in harmony with the major research questions. The research tool's validity and reliability were also tested by inserting rephrased versions of the same statement into different parts of the questionnaire. The mean, standard deviation, and level of significance of the responses prove that they are reliable. Even the slight shift of the mean for the similar statements can be explained by the slight change in the content of the statements.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data were analyzed using version 16.0 of the SPSS and interpreted in three phases. First, data were organized and grouped through EFA. Then they were grouped by research questions, and finally interpreted to derive at answers.

## EFA

Principal Component Analysis, the first phase of EFA, is a variable reduction procedure used to determine the main themes and compute factor weights with a view to extracting the maximum possible variance (Williams, Brown and Onsmann 2010). EFA grouped the statements into three components (shown in Table 3). As all components were not found to be relevant to the research questions, they were not given similar importance: the first (principal) and second components are focused on more than the third one.

TABLE 3  
COMPONENTS GENERATED BY EFA

Component Titles	Statements from questionnaire
Preference of using Arabic as a medium of instruction (1st or principal component)	6, 11, 13, 14, 24, 5, 23, 12, 20, 1, 10, 7, 19, 2.
Usability of English as the medium of instruction (2nd component)	18, 8, 3, 9, 22, 15, 17.
English for future professional development (3rd component)	4, 16, 25, 21.

The three components produced and a one-sample t-test for comparing the two groups' mean values are shown in the following tables.

**Interpretation of responses to the statements**

The Likert scale statements were categorized into nine themes (shown in Table 4). These are interpreted group-by-group to answer the research questions.

TABLE 4  
GROUPING OF THEMES AND STATEMENTS ACCORDING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions	Themes and the no. of statements
What are the teachers' and students' attitudes towards English as MOI?	The effectiveness of English as the medium of instruction for Saudi students (3,5, & 20); English is an obstacle for the students (1, 2, 10, & 19); the use of English should be limited to terminologies only (12); English as a medium of instruction would be a threat to Arabic (7).
What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the potential of Arabic to replace English, and the significance of this?	The potential of Arabic as the medium of instruction (11,14, & 24); replacing English with Arabic as the only medium of instruction (6); students' right to be taught in their own mother tongues (13); using Arabic for the sake of national interest (23).
Will English be increasingly acceptable to students in the near future?	English for the students' future life (16).
Is the Saudi higher education spellbound by linguistic hegemony?	All the themes and statements.

Almost all the statements of the Likert scale (except the first statement of Theme 1) are worded and structured in different ways but inherently designed with a single purpose: to elicit the attitude of the instructors and students towards Arabic and English as MOI. The resulting responses fall either into a pro-Arabic or a pro-English category. Moreover, the attitudinal object—either English or Arabic—is stereotyped: in all the statements, the instructors and students consistently favor either English or Arabic.

All the statements (except the first one of Theme 1) of the first four themes of the first group aim to measure the respondents' attitudes towards English/Arabic as MOI. The statements of the last four themes of the second group appraise their perceptions of the potential of Arabic to replace English. The last group consists of only one statement to predict the students' willingness to use English as MOI in the near future. The responses to these statements also reflect the respondents' attitudes towards English/Arabic as the medium of instruction, albeit in a different way.

*Research Question 1: What are the teachers' and students' attitudes towards English as MOI?*

*Theme 1: The effectiveness of English as the medium of instruction.*

TABLE 5  
STATISTICS OF THE STATEMENTS OF THEME 1

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	3. I think the intensive English courses students take in the first levels are adequate to study their majors.	2.43 (Disagree)	0.91	0.44	0.00
Students	3. I think the intensive English courses I took in the first levels were adequate to study my major.	1.99 (Disagree)	0.86	0.44	0.00
Instructors	5. It is better and more suitable if Arabic is used as a medium of instruction in university education.	1.94 (Disagree)	0.77	0.47	0.00
Students	5. It is better and more suitable if English is not used as a medium of instruction in university education.	2.41 (Disagree)	1.05	0.47	0.00
Instructors	20. I feel it is better to teach the difficult courses in my specialization in Arabic rather than in English.	1.90 (Disagree)	0.90	1.15	0.01
Students	20. I feel it is better to teach the difficult courses in Arabic rather than in English.	3.05 (Agree)	0.80	1.15	0.00

The first statement of Theme 1 (Table 5) is different in content from the other statements of the study. This was included in the questionnaire to gauge the respondents' perceptions of the quality of English language teaching and the students' proficiency in English, which may act as one of the determining factors in the formation of the affective component of attitude towards the language. In the case of the students it does, but it fails to do so for the instructors.

Teachers and students agree that English courses are inadequate for students. This suggests that the students are inefficient in English. However, teachers and students look at the issue from two different angles. Teachers consider the problem to be temporary and assume that students can and should overcome this obstacle if and when they are provided with better English language teaching programs. This is clear from the students additional comments they provided in the questionnaires. They want to continue to teach all of their courses in English, whether easy or difficult. Meanwhile, the students speak more plainly about removing English as the MOI from the difficult courses (in their responses to the 3rd statement above), but they do not mind using the language in easy courses (2nd statement). This suggests that teachers want English as MOI, no matter what, irrespective of the students' English language ability. Teachers' avoidance of the students' biggest hurdle to learning can be explained by the spellbinding influence of the hegemony of English. In contrast, the students consider English with a strong awareness of the learning challenges it creates for them. English serves as a barrier that makes their learning more difficult, and thus they do not want the language to be their MOI. However, they are ready to accept the minimum use of English as long as it is not an obstacle to learning.

The teachers' attitude towards English is represented in each of the three attitudinal components. From a cognitive perspective, there is the belief that English as MOI is essential in higher education. In terms of affect, they are motivated by the supposed efficiency of English which is used in most universities in English speaking countries. Conatively, they are under the influence of the hegemony of English and are predisposed to use it as MOI. With the exception of the cognitive component, the students' attitudinal components are in contrast to their teachers'. Like their teachers, they have a belief that they need English to survive in this globalized world and are ready to accept English wherever they can. Nevertheless, their affective component (promoted by limited English competence and a strong attachment to their mother and religious tongue) is overwhelming and often overpowers their cognitive perspective. Many of their responses indicate that they want to get rid of English by replacing it with Arabic as MOI as soon as possible. The teachers sent a strong positive message about their overall attitude towards English. In the case of the students, only the cognitive component favors English, but that is significantly weakened by affective and conative components.

*Theme 2: English is an obstacle for the students*

TABLE 6  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 2

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	1. I think using English as a medium of instruction is an obstacle preventing outstanding students in the secondary school from maintaining their distinction when they join university.	2.10 (Disagree)	1.18	0.96	0.00
Students	1. I think using English as a medium of instruction is an obstacle preventing outstanding students in the secondary school from maintaining their distinction when they join university.	3.07 (Agree)	0.91	0.96	0.00
Instructors	2. I feel some outstanding students quit their favorite majors due to the use of English as a medium of instruction.	2.44 (Disagree)	0.82	0.41	0.58
Students	2. I feel some outstanding students quit their favorite majors due to the use of English as a medium of instruction.	2.85 (Agree)	0.85	0.41	0.58
Instructors	10. I believe using English as the medium of instruction makes the study more difficult for students.	2.21 (Disagree)	0.75	0.68	0.27
Students	10. I believe using English as the medium of instruction makes my major more difficult.	2.89 (Agree)	0.90	0.68	0.27
Instructors	19. I think using English as the medium of instruction is one of the main reasons behind students' weak performance.	2.33 (Disagree)	0.79	0.62	0.18
Students	19. I think using English as the medium of instruction is one of the main reasons behind students' weak performance in my major.	2.95 (Agree)	0.91	0.62	0.18

As the responses of both teachers and students to the statements in Table 5 show the inadequacy of the English language teaching programs and imply that students struggle with English, one might logically conclude that English is an obstacle for the students. In their responses to all four statements of Theme 2 (Table 6) the students make it clear that English is indeed an obstacle. However, the teachers, perhaps under the spell of English hegemony, contradict their own responses to the first statement of Theme 1 and turn a blind eye to the difficulties the students face when they have to learn and take tests in English.

It should be noted that in the case of the first two statements, the teachers' responses might be given more credibility than the students as teachers usually know their outstanding students well. However, the word 'outstanding' might have different connotations for the teachers. To a teacher, an outstanding student may mean the student who achieves high grades because of his/her proficiency in English. So, in this case, there is every possibility that students who are otherwise outstanding, but low-achieving because of English inefficiency, are excluded.

*Theme 3: The use of English should be limited to terminologies only*

TABLE 7  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 3

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	12. I prefer that English is only used for some required terminologies in scientific majors and not as the only medium of instruction.	2.27 (Disagree)	0.89	0.57	0.00
Students	12. I prefer that English is only used for some required terminologies in my major and not as the only medium of instruction.	2.84 (Agree)	1.06	0.57	0.00

The students want to limit the use of English to terminologies only which means they want to avoid English wherever it seems unnecessary to them. In contrast, the teachers want English as the sole MOI, and do not want to use Arabic even though they admit that it is difficult to communicate with students using English only (in their responses to the first statement of Theme 1 [Table 5]).

*Theme 4: English as a medium of instruction would be a threat to Arabic*

TABLE 8  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 4

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	7. I feel that the English language has displaced some of the educational functions of Arabic.	2.33 (Disagree)	0.76	0.53	0.05
Students	7. I feel that the English language has displaced some of the educational functions of Arabic.	2.86 (Agree)	0.90	0.53	0.05

Here the teachers' view goes against the widely accepted view that the use of English or any other foreign language as the sole MOI tends to marginalize the native language (Kontra et al. 1999). The students' responses are commensurate with this widely held theory, but the teachers' do not concur. This disagreement most likely originates as the teachers are blinded by the hegemony of English.

On the whole, teachers and students are sharply divided in their attitudes towards English as MOI. The teachers want English no matter the cost to their students, while the students would prefer to get rid of it.

*Research Question 2: What are the teachers' and students' perceptions of the potential of Arabic to replace English, and the significance of this?*

*Theme 5: The potential of Arabic as the medium of instruction*

TABLE 9  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 5

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	11. I think it is possible to use Arabic rather than English in teaching of scientific discipline.	1.86 Disagree	.787	.827	.000
Students	11. I think it is possible to use Arabic rather than English in teaching of scientific discipline.	2.69 Agree	1.033	.827	.000
Instructors	14. I think if university textbooks were Arabized, more students will join the university and the outcomes will be of better quality.	2.21 Disagree	.930	.888	.000
Students	14. I think if university textbooks were Arabized, more students will join the university and the outcomes will be of better quality.	3.10 Agree	.930	.888	.000
Instructors	24. I think it is possible to replace the present English textbooks in scientific majors with Arabic ones.	2.01 Disagree	.823	.757	.000
Students	24. I think it is possible to replace the present English textbooks in scientific majors with Arabic ones.	2.76 Agree	.974	.757	.000

The teachers and students are consistent in their opinions. Even the slight shift of the mean across the scale can be explained by the slight change in the content of the statements. For example, though the mean of the instructors' response to the 1st statement containing the possibility of teaching in Arabic falls at Disagree (the 3rd point of the scale), it is near to the 2nd point (Agree). In contrast, when the issue is the improvement of the quality of education through Arabized textbooks (the 2nd statement), the mean moves to the other direction, towards Strongly Disagree. Regarding the possibility of translating English textbooks into Arabic (the last statement), the mean is in the middle. The responses

to the above statements are not only consistent with each other, they also agree with the teachers' additional comments where they constantly hold that to make their teaching effective, they have to use Arabic along with English. All the same, they do not mean that Arabic is more suitable than English as MOI and in fact, most of them suggest moving towards more English and providing the students with better English language teaching.

The students consistently show preference of Arabic rather than English textbooks. Most of them are not in the position to give opinions about the viability of the replacement of English with Arabic textbooks. However, their attitudes toward this statement may be formed mainly by the affective component. Their attitudes toward English are perhaps affected by their lack of competence in English (see Theme 1, Table 5). Their natural proficiency in their mother tongue, along with the religious and emotional responses to it, might have formed the positive attitude towards Arabic as MOI.

*Theme 6: Replacing English with Arabic as the only medium of instruction*

TABLE 10  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 6

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	6. I think it is better to use Arabic only as the medium of instruction in teaching all courses in my major	1.65 Strongly Disagree	.654	.957	.000
Students	6. I think it is better to use Arabic only as the medium of instruction in teaching all courses in my major	2.61 Agree	1.055	.957	.000

The statement in Table 10 is a repetition of the second statement of the first theme (Table 5). The teachers are consistent in their responses, but the students are not. In the first table the students did not agree with removing English as the MOI, but here they want Arabic as the sole MOI. Ambivalence occurs in their responses, due perhaps to the conflict between the cognitive and affective components of their attitudes towards English. On the one hand they are influenced by the status given to English as the language of science—by the world in general and the Saudi state in particular. The cognitive component persuades them to accept the foreign language. On the other, they are constrained by their inefficiency in the language, and the affective component dissuades them to accept English as MOI.

*Theme 7: Students' right to be taught in their own mother tongue*

TABLE 11  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 7

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	13. I believe it is the right of university students to study in their own native language.	2.02 Disagree	.830	1.034	.000
Students	13. I believe it is the right of university students to study in their own native language.	3.05 Agree	.940	1.034	.000

All the students of the world, irrespective of their creed, culture or geographical location, have the right to be taught in their mother tongue (Kontra et al. 1999). Interestingly, the teachers go against the declared right of the students although perhaps they are aware of it. In contrast, the students perceive that it is their right to be taught in their own mother tongue, although they may not all be aware of this constitutional right. Their teachers' cognitive component: the belief that English should be the MOI, is so strong that they can sacrifice not only the students' academic performance but also their human rights.

*Theme 8: Using Arabic for the sake of national interest*

TABLE 12  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 8

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	23. I believe it is for the national interest of the Kingdom to use Arabic only as the medium of instruction	1.96 Disagree	.725	.763	.000
Students	23. I believe it is for the national interest of the Kingdom to use Arabic only as the medium of instruction	2.72 Agree	.969	.763	.000

All universities in Saudi Arabia use English as MOI in their science colleges. The views of the state and the higher education authority are in contrast with each other, and similarly, the differences between the students' and teachers' opinions follow the same contrasting pattern. The parallelism between the higher education authority and teachers is easy to explain: the decision makers in higher education are comprised of these senior and highly educated teachers. Conversely, the students, the new blood of the Saudi citizens, are represented by the state. The state language policy rightly accommodates students' constrained demand for Arabic as MOI.

In summary, teachers along with the Saudi higher education authority do not think that Arabic has the potential to replace English. However, students along with the state authority firmly believe Arabic should be the sole MOI in Saudi

higher education. It should be noted that these are their beliefs only, i.e. the cognitive components of their attitudes towards English as MOI.

*Research Question 3: Will English be increasingly acceptable to students in the near future?*

TABLE 13  
STATISTICS FOR THE STATEMENT OF THEME 9

Subjects	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Diff.	Sig.
Instructors	16. I believe that proficiency in English during university education will assist students in their future profession.	3.57 Strongly Agree	.629	21.60	0.000
Students	16. I believe that being proficient in English during my university education will assist me in my future profession.	3.17 Agree	0.892	19.96	0.000

The possibility of students using English as MOI in the near future can be predicted by considering the four components of TRA. According to the first component, attitudes towards behavior, the students would be willing to use English as MOI if they think that it is good for them. The data analyzed above show that there is ambivalence in students' attitudes. Though most of the time they favor Arabic over English, in some of the responses it is clear that, following the global trend, they have a vague belief that English as MOI is necessary as long as it does not affect their academic performance. TRA's second component, the subjective norm, does not favor students' willing use of English at all because there is no social pressure for using English as MOI. In fact, the reverse may be true as there is a constitutional commitment and some pressure from Saudi society to replace English with Arabic as MOI. It has been noted that the "ideological and cultural backgrounds of English threaten the Islamic world" (Al-Haq and Al-Masaeid 2009: 274), and that the majority of Saudi citizens will share the same affective and conative components as the students.

Students' willing use of English as MOI also seems very unlikely if TRA's third component, behavioral intention, is considered. Most of the students do not have any plans to move to English speaking countries for higher education or employment. Being strongly attached to their own country, culture, and religion and being financially solvent and socially secure, they desire to remain in their homeland (Al-Kahtany 2013). TRA's fourth component, behavior, the actual use of English as MOI, cannot be applied here. The students currently have no choice but to use English and, of necessity, must suppress their intention of using Arabic as MOI.

In short, TRA's first three components predict that the students are not going to accept English as MOI willingly in the near future unless they are influenced by the hegemony of English like their teachers.

*Research Question 4: Is the Saudi higher education spellbound by linguistic hegemony?*

The decision of the Saudi higher education authority to use English as MOI, and the participants' responses to the Likert scale in this study, can be explained in light of Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Here the dominant group is represented by English, currently the most powerful language in the world. The subordinate groups are the two groups of respondents in this study, the teachers who will eventually become the decision makers of higher education and the students. In the case of the higher education authority and the teachers, the hegemony of English is exerted through all the processes that Gramsci describes. The fact that the first process, domination without force, has smoothly taken place is clear when one considers that the higher education authority and teachers have selected English as MOI without being forced to do so. Acting like agents of so-called "linguistic imperialism" (Phillipson 1992), they have enforced the use of English as sole MOI going against the state language policy and sacrificing students' academic achievement.

Hegemony's second process, domination through legitimation, seems to be observed when teachers give uncritical support to English, turning a blind eye to the students' incompetence in the foreign language, their unwillingness to use it, and the consequent poor academic performance. They legitimize English as MOI, even though it has no place in Saudi language policies. They think that it is right to use English although they admit in their responses to the first statement of Theme 1 (Table 5). They believe that English is unquestionably the best MOI, even though their own students raise questions regarding its role in the displacement of the educational functions of Arabic (see Table 8) or in the violation of their own linguistic human rights (see Table 11).

The third process, domination through consensus, has probably arisen when the teachers have studied in English speaking countries or used English as MOI in their student lives. This consensus must be sustained if they are to continue to receive the benefits as a member of the recently formed English educated privileged class of Saudi society. The agreement serves to create and maintain group ideologies, and to make a differentiation between the ingroup and outgroup (Tajfel 1981: 147–162). So, the teachers concur that, for better or worse, English as MOI is the best choice for the Saudi students, not an imposition of linguistic imperialism.

For students, the processes mentioned do not apply. They have a vague belief that English is necessary as MOI. That the first process, domination without force, does not work is obvious when in their responses they make it clear that they have no choice but to use English as it has been imposed on them. The second process, domination through legitimation, does not take place as the students tend to legitimize Arabic as MOI rather than English. The students have never used English as MOI in their pre-university education and have not received any effective English language teaching. Most of them do not have any intention of going abroad for higher education, employment or immigration;



and as most of them do not belong to the newly formed English educated privileged class (Al-Kahtany 2013) the third process, domination through consensus, has not occurred yet.

For teachers, the effects of English hegemony can be clearly observed. For students, exertion of hegemony is still in its early stages. English is, of course, dominating the students but not by securing the students' consensus, rather by imposing itself on them through its loyal agents.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

It is difficult to choose either English or Arabic as the sole MOI in Saudi higher education considering the sharply contrasting views of teachers and students. In today's learner-centered democratic education system, students' views should be given at least equal importance as teachers'. Though the teachers can be considered to be mere agents of the so-called "linguistic imperialism", it is very difficult to remove English as MOI from Saudi higher education without enriching the linguistic capability of Arabic. Moreover, neither the exponential growth of English in the arena of scientific knowledge, politics and economy nor the Saudi higher education policy makers' and teachers' choice of English as MOI can be totally ignored. A thoughtful blend of policy and practice, and curriculum and pedagogy, is required. Critical deconstruction of existing policies and practices must take place in combination with a detailed understanding of everyday realities, so that constructive suggestions for a time-befitting Saudi higher education language policy can be made. This research aimed to contribute to this process.

This state of linguistic insecurity that has resulted in conflicting attitudes among teachers and students at fields where English is used as an MOI necessitates well-planned practical solutions. One of the measures is revising the current fussy practices regarding English MOI in colleges of Engineering, Medicine and Science. An immediate step can be recognizing the state-of-affairs where English and Arabic are interchangeably used as MOI at different frequencies depending on the teachers' preference and competence on Arabic and English. This conclusion echoes Canagarajah's (2005) call to establish 'more inclusive and egalitarian language policies and practices' (p. xxix) and calls for adopting strategies that can develop policies and practices that "enrich rather than replace local languages" (Guo and Beckett 2007). More rigorous language planning in the form of upgrading the status of Arabic as the MOI for Engineering, Medicine and Science; while enhancing the teaching of English as an ESP to boost students' linguistic abilities to keep in touch with advances in these fields of study.

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