

Parents' Attitudes towards the Implementation of Arabic as an Additional Language in Dubai: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract—As part of the Ministry of Education (MoE) language policies, the UAE government made Arabic language a compulsory subject for non-speakers in all private schools. The UAE government stipulates that private schools must offer a core programme in Arabic as a second language. Thus, non-Arab expatriates are required to study Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) from Grade 1 to Grade 9. This qualitative case study aims to explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) in one of the private British schools in Dubai, wherein AAL has been rated 'Acceptable'. This exploration is a snapshot of attitudes held by parents as key stakeholders in the triad of school, teachers, and parents' partnership towards the learning and teaching of AAL- whether approving or disapproving of it. It will illuminate some of the arising issues related to potential gaps between the implementation of AAL (practice) and the MoE framework (Theory). Ultimately, this paper aims to uncover challenges and proffer recommendations. To enhance the implementation of AAL in schools, this paper will propose potential parental engagement initiatives that can yield valuable policy decisions.

Index Terms—Arabic language, second language learning, parental attitudes, parental engagement, case study, discourse analysis, educational policy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the UAE, the official language is Arabic, yet the percentage of expatriates who live in Dubai is 91.3% (Dubai Statistics Center, 2016). This demographic imbalance resulted in English language dominance as the Lingua Franca (Randall & Samimi, 2010). This created a deep concern towards Emirati cultural identity especially the loss of mother tongue, Arabic Language (AL). However, the UAE reflects its commitment to preserving and empowering AL to enable it to regain its status. The UAE National Agenda 2021 underlines that "Arabic will re-emerge as a dynamic and vibrant language, expressed everywhere in speech and writing as a living symbol of the nation's progressive Arab-Islamic values" (UAE Vision 2021, 2019).

At the national level, several initiatives were proclaimed to enhance the learning of AL such as the establishment of a dedicated educational facility at Zayed University to promote the teaching and learning of Arabic for non-Arabic speakers (Sambidge, 2012). As part of the Ministry of Education (MoE) language policies, the government made AL a compulsory subject for non-speakers in all private schools (Randall & Samimi, 2010). The UAE government stipulates that private schools must offer a core programme in Arabic as a second language (UAE Government, 2018). Thus, non-Arab expatriates are required to study Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) from Grade 1 to Grade 9, and schools should provide lessons four times a week (KHDA, 2019) (see Appendix A). The aim of AAL is to enhance "their (expatriates') understanding of the local culture and give them significant opportunities and advantages in later life" (KHDA, 2016). Hence, the learning of AAL can be conducive of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of the local values, as it could offer better career prospects. Though AAL is not explicitly and officially mentioned as a 'Policy', schools that do not provide it are fined as it is considered a violation under the Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017 (KHDA, 2017). According to Souza and Del Olmo (2019), language policy is what the government does officially through legislation and judicial decisions to determine how languages are used to meet national priorities, hence AAL fits this definition. Thus, this paper will discuss AAL as it pertains to language-related educational policies in the UAE.

Since AAL 'policy' has been imposed in a top-down approach, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement amongst numerous stakeholders, significant challenges arose (Heck, 2009), for example, the need for revamping the Arabic curriculum, providing teacher training opportunities in AAL, motivating students to learn it (Bell, 2016), and the challenge for the majority of expat parents (who do not know any Arabic) was helping their children in learning AAL ("*Arabic in Foreign Private Schools*" na). Moreover, parents voiced their concerns in the media over their children's lack of proficiency after years of learning Arabic in Dubai schools (Clarke, 2016; Ahmed, 2012). This coincided with the KHDA's school inspection reports which revealed that the majority of Dubai schools have reached an 'Acceptable' evaluation in teaching AAL (Knowledge Group, 2016). This highlights a need to explore the reasons behind the shortcomings of implementing AAL in schools.

As the MoE is constantly honing its educational policies to ensure that the programs developed in its schools comply with international standards, MoE has lately devised ‘The 2017 framework for teaching and learning AAL’ (See Appendix B) in private schools and determined three key parameters that reflect language proficiency: functions, context and content, and type and level of text (MoE, 2017). One empirical indicator that MoE has added as a national goal, which measures the progress in Arabic toward the 2021 National Agenda, is to ensure that 90 percent of students in the ninth grade have a proficiency in Arabic (MoE, 2017). Yet, this seems to target Emirati students only and indicate a significant policy gap as there is no specific government targets for the expatriate students.

Although schools, teachers and students are affected by language policies that are implemented, parents are considered the guardians of students, end-users and key stakeholders, and have certain academic expectations for their children. From the review of related literature, it is obvious that the vantage point of parents is rarely studied. In addition, “a bottom-up approach to education reform fosters sustainable and ‘deep’ educational change that is driven by a common social vision among key stakeholders” (Warner & Burton, 2017). According to Fowler (2013) “although students are the direct clients of most policies in education, ...their parents are the indirect, behind-the-scenes clients. The parents become players in the evaluation arena much more frequently than their children do” (p. 255). Therefore, this study will explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of AAL.

The main purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of AAL (that received a rating of ‘Acceptable’) in one of the private British schools in Dubai. This exploration is a snapshot of attitudes held by parents as key stakeholders in the triad of school, teachers, and parents’ partnership (Sanders & Epstein, 2005) towards the learning and teaching of AAL- whether approving or disapproving of it. It will illuminate some of the arising issues related to potential gaps between the implementation of AAL (practice) and the MoE framework (goals). Ultimately, this paper aims to uncover challenges and formulate recommendations, which are elicited from parents. To enhance the implementation of AAL in schools, this paper will propose potential parental engagement initiatives that can yield valuable policy decisions.

Parents as end-users and key stakeholders are affected by the outcomes of implementing AAL in schools. Hence, the key research question is:

- What are the parents’ attitudes towards the implementation of AAL in a Dubai private school?

The sub-questions that will assist in unpacking and answering the key research question include:

- Do parents’ support the AAL requirement or not and why?
- What roles are parents playing -if any- in supporting the teaching and learning of AAL?

The data collection instrument used in the qualitative study is in depth semi-structured interviews. To answer the research questions and achieve their objectives, this paper will analyse and interpret collected data, discuss and report findings and their implications, and finally conclude with recommendations elicited from parents’ views.

Given the recent announcement of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum: “We have a national agenda for Arabic language, and we have issued directives to work further through studies and initiatives to cement the Arabic language as a language of life” (“Emirates 24/7,” 2018), this paper is considered timely. In addition, this research will explore a perspective that is under researched, given the dearth of scholarly research on expatriate parents’ attitudes of AL learning matters in the UAE and the Arab world. Furthermore, AAL implementation faces many challenges and the KHDA inspection reports allude to the need to enhance the teaching and learning of AAL in schools since students are not attaining expected proficiency levels according to the MoE framework. Therefore, exploring parents’ attitudes will bring insight into what they think works and what is needed for AAL to work. This will contribute to the existing literature and provide original insights from a different vantage point. While this study is contextualised within the context of Dubai school system, it could have resonance for many expatriates living in the UAE and GCC.

For the purpose of better exploring parental attitudes, an overview of three related conceptual frameworks is presented. These include: parental engagement and second language learning motivation, heritage and non-heritage learners, and language attitudes.

A. *Parental Engagement and Second Language Learning Motivation*

The notion of parental engagement, involvement or encouragement is perceived as multifaceted and multidimensional in nature. This aligns with Fan and Chen’s (2001) definition of ‘parental involvement’ which comprises five dimensions: educational expectation/aspiration for children, communication with children about school-related matters, parental supervision, parental participation in school activities, and general parent involvement. From their meta-analysis study that scanned the literature on parental involvement and academic achievement, the scholars concluded that a positive influence of parental involvement impacts students’ academic achievement and parental expectation/aspiration for their children’s education achievement as it also shows the strongest relationship with students’ academic achievement. Likewise, Gardner (2010) posits in his Motivation battery, the ‘Parental Attitude Model’, in which parents play a crucial role whether actively or passively in influencing their children’s motivation to learn a Second Language (L2), either encourage or discourage. Similarly, Dornyei (2005) conceptualized the L2 Motivational Self-System and included ‘Parents’ Influence’ as a factor that impacts learners’ motivation to learn languages. The seminal research of the aforementioned scholars resonates strongly with the purpose of this study and

the need to illuminate parental involvement as a factor that impacts students' language learning motivation and achievement in AAL within the context of Dubai.

B. *Heritage and Non-heritage Learners*

Scholars in the field of AAL have acknowledged a crucial nominal definition as they classified students according to their background into three separate groups: "learners of Arab descent, non-Arab Muslim learners, and learners of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds other than the first two groups" (Husseinali, 2006, p. 103). Hence, the first two are commonly called Heritage Learners (HLs) versus Non-Heritage Learners (NHLs) (Husseinali, 2006). While HLs can affiliate themselves to AL through family, religion, or identity, NHLs assume no cultural or personal affiliations to AL. This is also linked to parental roles and encouragement to learn AAL. Parents who affiliate themselves to an Arab or Muslim background are generally more encouraging, involved and proactive in their children's learning of AL (Martin, 2009; Zabarah, 2015). Since their attitudes towards Arabic culture, Arab people and Arabic language are mostly favourable, their children are being held accountable for their progress and the parental expectation is high in matter of AL academic achievement.

C. *Language Attitudes*

Several Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies have correlated attitudes with motivations to learn a Target Language (TL). Smith (1971) defines attitude as a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or a situation, predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. An attitude is relatively enduring because it is learned. Oskamp and Schultz (2005) explicate, "A child's attitudes are largely shaped by its own experiences with the world, but this is usually accomplished by explicit teaching and *implicit modelling of parental attitudes*" (p.126). In the 'Parental Attitude Model', Gardner and Lambert (1972) postulate four main attitude dimensions, which include attitudes towards: learning languages in general, the TL culture, learning the TL in specific, and the speakers of TL. When students enter the class with favourable attitudes about the target language, people and culture, they are more likely to be open to perceive, respond, and learn the TL. Therefore, favourable parental attitudes and feelings towards learning AAL are needed to increase the motivation of the students in language learning classes. For the purposes of this paper and as means to capture the construct of parental attitudes, these dimensions will be adopted in framing the interview questions and guiding the data analysis.

To capture the attitudes of parents towards AAL, there are two theoretical lenses that underpin the study at hand. The first emerges from the seminal work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) which culminated in the 'Parental Attitudes Model' and interlinked parents' attitudinal constructs with children's language learning motivation and achievement. Some of the many ways parent exert attitudinal influence are "through discussion, by encouraging participation in foreign language exchange programmes and excursions, helping the child with homework, encouraging the child to read material written in the foreign language and by making the target language country the destination for a family holiday" (Young, 1994, p. 85).

The second lens is related to the attitude towards the TL, which links to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) theory of language status and prestige and the notion of Linguistic Capital. Individual attitudes toward foreign languages are strongly influenced by the special status of a language and its perceived significance and prestige of economic, social and cultural capital. Within the context of Dubai and due to the demographic reality, AL status has been in the decline. Therefore, this study adopts Gardner and Lambert's (1972) 'Parental Attitudes Model' and Bourdieu's (1991) Linguistic Capital, as they all guide the study instrument, analysis and discussion.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review is composed of selected comparable, parallel and local empirical studies that include two or more of the following keywords: Arabic language, second/foreign language acquisition/learning, parent, influence, engagement, attitude. The studies were analysed and synthesized by applying Machi and McEvoy's (2012) 'The Six Steps of the Literature Review' model. The relevant and current comparable studies that investigated parents' attitudes towards learning a foreign language were conducted in Slovenia (Lesnik, Bremen, & Greek, 2013) and Catalonia (Wilson, 2012). On the other hand, parallel studies investigated parents' attitudes and learning Arabic as a second/foreign/additional language in the USA (Husseinali, 2006; Zabarah, 2015; Sehlaoui & Mousa, 2016; Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). However, local studies from the UAE context that partially discussed parents' attitudes, include: Hamidaddin (2008), Taha-Thomure (2008), Al-Hilali (2014), Baker & Hourani (2014), the Knowledge Group qualitative report (2016).

The initial critical review of research revealed that most studies used quantitative methods and questionnaires as data collection instrument. Therefore, qualitative methods were rarely used. Moreover, three major variables emerged when approaching parents' attitudes and second/foreign language learning: parents' background, parents' perception of language status and significance, and parents' perceptions of their own roles in their children's language learning.

A. *Parents' Background: Heritage versus Non-heritage*

One of the parallel studies conducted in four states in the USA, concluded that parents' heritage/ethnic background impacts their attitudes toward language learning which in turn impacts children's learning of TL (Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). The scholars noted a discrepancy between the attitudes and expectations of Arabic heritage versus non-Arabic

speaking parents regarding learning AL. “Arabic-speaking parents were significantly more involved than the non-Arabic-speaking parents” (Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017, p. 14). This confirms Husseinali’s (2006) results that parental attitudes toward AL learning play a crucial role as it highlights heritage and non-heritage learners’ differing interests. Alili and Hassan (2017) also concluded that while Muslim non-Arab parents wanted their children to learn Arabic so they would be able to read and understand the Qur’an, Arab parents wanted their children to maintain their Arabic identity and culture, and NH parents encouraged their children to learn Arabic for instrumental reasons, to access job opportunities both in the USA and Middle East. Hence, parents’ background can steer them towards encouraging or discouraging their children’s learning of AAL.

B. Parents’ Perception of Language Status

According to Wilson (2012), Catalan was considered unimportant compared to English, which is regarded as a dominant language with a very high status. The perception of the significance and utility of the language plays an important role in parental encouragement to learn that language (Lesnik, Bremen, & Greek, 2013). Similarly, Arabic is on demand as it is considered ‘a critically needed language’ in the USA and this is reflected by parents’ encouraging their children to learn it (Husseinali, 2006; Zabarrah, 2015; Sehlaoui & Mousa, 2016; Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). In the UAE, the majority of parents had a favourable attitude towards learning AAL as they perceived it to be an essential language to learn while living in the UAE (The Knowledge Group, 2016). While heritage parents’ rationale for learning Arabic is the fact that it is the language of the Qur’an and the heritage language (Hamidaddin, 2008), NH parents stressed that the utility of the language is of most importance (Sehlaoui & Mousa, 2016). However, according to Al-Hilali (2014) and Taha-Thomure (2008), parents believed that Arabic in Dubai is not used outside the classroom and that it has a lower status compared to English.

C. Parents’ Perceptions of Their Own Roles

Wilson posits that “for decades now, researchers have been aware of the influence that parental encouragement, or lack thereof, can have on individual’s motivation to learn L2” (2012, p. 44). In her study, Wilson emphasizes the lack of studies that investigate the parents’ attitudes and their influence on their children. Likewise, Baker and Hourani (2014) explored the nature of parental involvement in Abu Dhabi schools and their findings highlighted the importance and value of parental involvement in enhancing the learning experiences of children. Yet, parents perceived their roles as recipients of information on the curriculum, pedagogy changes and their children’s progress. Henceforth, knowledge-sharing and curriculum updates from the school were needed, especially since parents voiced several gaps in knowledge and communication. Baker and Hourani’s (2014) findings pointed to parents being disenfranchised and recommended a need to bridge the gap by conducting workshops on parent roles and responsibilities -as interventions- and opening channels of communication to express concerns raised by parents. This concurs with Hamidaddin’s (2008) findings that all parents agreed that they show interest in their children’s learning, yet they believe that children’s learning is the responsibility of the teachers.

D. Situating the Current Study

From this review, a gap in the literature emerges from the lack of studies that undertake the angle of parents within a qualitative methodology and their impact on students’ motivation to learn AAL in Dubai context. An investigation of the attitudes of parents of heritage and non-heritage AL learners is therefore considered required. Accordingly, it is of great importance to explore parents’ attitudes toward the implementation of AAL as they have a direct impact on students’ language learning development and achievement, consequently it can either hinder or encourage the success of AAL.

III. METHODOLOGY

Since this study will consider the parents’ emotions, beliefs and attitudes and explore socially constructed meanings as parents’ interpretations of the world, the interpretivist paradigm emerges as the one that provides insights into and meets the requirements of the key RQ (Walter, 2013). Mertens (1998) emphasizes that the interpretivist paradigm aims to understand society by understanding the socially constructed realities. This resonates with the main purpose of the key RQ which is: to explore parents’ attitudes towards the implementation of AAL as it provides insight into their subjective perception towards the importance of AL and their own perceptions of their role in supporting this requirement. Therefore, because of its micro-level emphasis that aligns with the purposes of meaning making and deals with qualitative data collection methods and analysis, the interpretivist paradigm suits this study (Creswell, 2003).

A. Data Collection

Context and site: This qualitative single case study collected data from parents at a private British primary school in Dubai, in which AAL was given an ‘Acceptable’ evaluation by the KHDA inspection report (2017-2018) and the sample is considered convenience sampling.

Instrument: Because of time limitations, the instrument used was face-to-face 30 minute-interview, whereby semi-structured questions were developed and conducted by the researcher as a result of adaptations from Gardner and Lambert’s ‘Parental Attitude Model’ (1972) and Fan and Chen’s Construct (2001). The interview questions were

piloted on two volunteers and modified accordingly. Then the participants filled a short demographic survey (Kvale, 2007). The in-depth interview was guided by a set of relevant themes based on the theoretical framework (see Appendix C). Every interview was audio-taped and transcribed verbatim (See Appendix E). The transcripts were then sent to the interviewees for their verification and feedback.

Sample: This study used a convenience sample method of snowball sampling technique, wherein existing participants referred other parents among their acquaintances until data saturation point was reached (Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017). The inclusion criteria encompassed parents who have children attending this school and learning AAL, of Heritage (of Arab or Islamic background) and Non-Heritage (Non-Arab or Islamic background) background. Thus, six parents volunteered to participate in the interviews.

B. Data Analysis

This study implemented discourse analysis as a strategy to ensure a high-quality analysis (Kohlbacher, 2006). Discourse analysis assumes that reality is socially constructed, and meaning is fluid, which aligns with the interpretivist paradigm. While the interviews were ongoing, the researcher wrote notes which complemented the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2012). The conducted discourse analysis applied Creswell's method as "following steps from the specific to the general and as involving multiple levels of analysis" (2014, p. 196). During the analysis, a number of recurring themes were organized into tentative categories and assigned a list of codes. The codes were later categorized under the list of key themes. Initial themes that did not offer related information to the key themes were eliminated. The final write-up is highly descriptive in nature (Glesne, 2011).

C. Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The scope of the current study is limited to one site only, a private school in Dubai, and a small sample size of volunteer parents. Therefore, generalization is not expected. Also, this study represents a partial and limited insight into the issue at hand, since conducting a full-fledged research will entail a holistic approach that takes into consideration the school leaders', teachers, and students vantage points. It is argued that a triangulation of theoretical frameworks, vantage points, and data sources, will yield better and richer findings.

Also, investigating multiple cases with larger number of participants could reveal a wider range of attitudes. However, this will need more time, finances and resources to be fully conducted. Moreover, the fact that the sample consisted of mothers only, since fathers' participation in the study was not possible (they were unavailable or did not volunteer), this unavoidable bias and imbalance in parents' voice is thus acknowledged as a limitation. Finally, though the interviews as data collection method afford valuable data, the views and presence of the researcher might have caused bias. Additionally, not all people are efficient communicators who can be articulate in their expressions. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study will provide rich in-depth understanding and will reveal meaningful insights as primary nucleus for future studies in the field of SLA, AL, parental attitudes/involvement, and for Dubai and/or the UAE context in particular.

As for ethical considerations, this study included informed consent forms for the volunteering participants to sign (see appendix C) (Habibis, 2013). Moreover, the researcher practiced bracketing preconceived notions and biases, by using mindfulness, reflective and reflexive techniques.

D. Trustworthiness of the Data, Site, and Sample

This study applied Guba and Lincoln's (1994) techniques to confirm the 'trustworthiness' of the study, which include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

- Confirmability is assured by keeping an accurate and careful record of contacts, interviews, notes, and provide 'a chain of evidence' (Yin cited in Mertens, 1998).
- Dependability is confirmed by purposive sampling and the protection of informants' confidentiality.
- To ensure the credibility of this study, triangulation of the theoretical frameworks was applied, and the tentative interpretations of data were communicated to the participants, thus refined depending on their feedback (Silverman, 2013).
- Transferability of research is guaranteed by providing a thick description of concepts -revealed from the data.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interviews with the parents revealed some converging and diverging attitudes towards the implementation of AAL 'Policy', some of these attitudes aligned with the literature as it will be shown in this section. In addition, the demographic table of parents' profile is presented in Appendix D. The findings of this research are bifurcated into two key themes as they relate to the theoretical underpinnings and the literature review: 'Parental Attitudes' and 'Challenges'.

While all parents concurred on the importance of AAL and approved of its implementation with no contestation, they confirmed that they never knew of the 2017 MoE Framework and it was never communicated to them. However, all of them were content with the progress level of their children learning AL in school, which contradicts the local literature, media articles, and KHDA inspection report of 'Acceptable'. In fact, some parents who learnt Arabic conveyed that

their children exceeded them in their knowledge of the language. Parent 1 confessed that her kids superseded her in their knowledge of AL. Yet, given that AAL was ranked 'Acceptable' and having content parents, could imply that the lack of having a reference point (AAL framework) to benchmark the progress of students' learning, keeps parents pleased with whatever attainment is achieved by their children. As a result, there is a need to investigate if the school is following the framework or not, and a need to address the gap in communication between the school and the parents while taking into consideration the criticality of setting up specific goals or targets for expat students learning AAL. Future research investigating this angle would unravel more insights.

Parental Attitudes

Attitudes towards learning languages in general: all parents were either bilingual or plurilingual and reflected a positive position towards learning languages, which supports previous research. The rationale was accorded by Parents 1, 2, 4, 6 as to better understand and respect other cultures and broaden one's thinking from an early age. On the other hand, Parent 3 mentioned 'social life and interactions' and Parent 5 stated 'travel' as reasons to learn AAL. Consequently, attitudes towards learning AL in Dubai were highly favourable, and the reasons provided were cultural understanding, religious motivations, and career opportunities. Parent 1 highlighted: *"I think it's important to speak the language of the land we live in. Out of respect for the country and the people. It breaks down barriers and warms people of different cultures to the Arab world."* While Parent 3 mentioned better prospects in career opportunities, Parent 2 stated 'understanding the Qur'an' as a crucial motivator for her and her daughters to learn AL. Accordingly, these motivations mirror the ones provided by parents in the parallel and local studies.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: parents perceived Arabic culture to be hospitable, welcoming, embracing, and tolerant. They expressed that they love the food, songs, and the way Arabs dress. This reflects a very limited understanding of culture versus a deeper understanding of Arab traditions, heritage and values. Despite this positive general perception, they all agreed that Dubai does not fully reflect Arabic culture. *"It feels like you are living in Europe"*, Parent 4 -who is of Lebanese origin- articulated. *"It's a home away from home"*, Parent 1 -who is a British national- expressed. Parent 5 agreed that every expat lives in a bubble of their own culture and described Dubai residents as a 'honeycomb', *"we are one, but still separated"* as if every expat is living in their own 'cell'. This could reflect a lack of interculturality, and some disinterest in learning about the local culture, history, people, and possibly the local language. This implies that AAL needs to encompass engaging parents with their children in deep culture learning to meet the UAE National Agenda Vision and AAL aims.

Attitudes towards Arab people: some parents revealed that they made friends with Arabs and locals. They described Arab people as kind, helpful, hospitable, ambitious, and emotional. Parent 5 confessed that she has very limited interaction with locals, yet she feels that her son's generation is learning more about local culture than hers and mentioned the example of 'Hag-Al Laila' celebration. It can, therefore, be suggested that AAL is successfully presenting some cultural elements to expat children, and providing culture learning opportunities, which in turn meets the aim of this language 'policy'.

Attitudes towards Arabic language: most parents disagreed with the perception of Arabic being a difficult language to learn. Parent 4 compared Arabic to Mandarin: *"how come people can start learning Mandarin and not Arabic! If the will is there, you can learn anything."* Yet, Parent 2 explained that *"because we are of Pakistani background, and we know Urdu, I believe this does help us in learning Arabic easily. A better advantage. So, for a non-Muslim it might be harder. So, I can understand why some would perceive it that way."* In contrast, Parent 6 found it very difficult to learn as she explains, *"I think it's very difficult, in writing, joining the letters and script right to left, even pronunciation. It is very different to Russian."*

In addition, parents' **perceptions of language status** showed a consensus; they all regarded English as the language of prestige and utility. Parent 1 expressed her frustration for not being able to practice her Arabic and pinpointed that *"the Arabic language day was a new thing for me. School should know and mark the occasion and celebrate it to embrace Arabic language, but nothing."* Parent 2 elaborated *"I don't feel there is a necessity to learn it"*. Also, Parent 5 mentioned *"even when you read the recruitment pages in Dubai, you see that Arabic is preferred but English is mandatory."* There are similarities between these perceptions of Arabic being in a lower status -relative to English within the context of Dubai- and those described by Taha-Thomure (2008). A possible explanation for this might not only be the lack of serious governmental action plans that can raise and revive AL but also the bottom-up action. Parent 5 denoted *"learning a language is not the MoE, KHDA, schools' responsibility, it is the nation's responsibility.... You have to start from grassroots level, you can't start from tree tops. It won't really work!"*. This links to Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital notion and language status, as Arabs are resorting to learn and speak English for prestige. This highlights a need for a possible future study that solely examines the status of Arabic in Dubai context by applying Bourdieu's theory.

Parents' Background 'Heritage and Non-Heritage': contrary to the existing literature, parents' background showed very little noteworthy effect on their attitudes towards AL, people and culture (See Appendix D). Whether HL or NHL parents, they all reflected a positive view and employed their available resources (effort, time and money) to better engage their children in their AAL learning journeys. For instance, Parent 1, who belongs to a Pakistani Muslim heritage, and Parent 6 who is Russian NH, both started learning Arabic to help their children in their learning. In the same vein, Parent 2 -who is a Canadian of Pakistani Muslim origin- described living in Dubai as a motivator to learn

Arabic, which is the same reason mentioned by Parent 5, who is a non-Muslim Canadian. Further detailed research is needed to examine the factor of parents' background on their attitudes towards learning Arabic in Dubai as it also links to Bourdieu's linguistic capital theory.

Parents' role in supporting AAL: parents perceive their role as encouraging their kids to learn by helping them do their homework, reading with them when/if they can, communicating with teachers, and giving their feedback. This finding is in agreement with the definition of active parental influence and supports previous studies.

Challenges

This discourse analysis identified some challenges to achieve the aim of AAL 'policy' as elicited from parents' perspectives in Dubai context (a bottom-up approach). These challenges relate to contextual and subjective factors. The contextual factors include:

- the lack of conducive environment to practice Arabic,
- lack of interaction with locals,
- Arabic speaking friends' preference to speak in English,
- lack of pragmatic need in the workforce.

On the other hand, the subjective factors comprise: the value given to learning and speaking Arabic and how it is being perceived. Further research, which takes these variables into account, will need to be undertaken.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has shown that all parents expressed an overall positive attitude towards the AAL implementation in this school and reflected their support for an initiative to offer Arabic classes to expat parents so they would be able to support their children in learning the language while in school and enhance their cultural understanding of the place they reside and work in. However, all parents were unaware of the AAL Framework and some were surprised of the non-existence of an AAL policy. There was also a consensus amongst them on the need to engage expat parents and students in Arabic immersion experiences with the local culture. Therefore, addressing the gap in language policies related to AAL will require a comprehensive action plan and crucial policy decisions. Hence, an explicit language policy that recognizes the benefits of encouraging the learning of AL among expats "would likely complement government strategies to protect and promote Arabic since it would create a far greater number of competent Arabic language speakers" (Calafato & Tang, 2019, p. 28). The implications of this study and its findings are presented as recommendations':

A need for an AAL policy: Devise an explicit policy for AAL, with clear goals and tools to enhance its implementation as it reflects the significance of AL and commitment of the government. This policy should be positioned within the overarching UAE National Agenda 2021 and is envisioned to include the following components:

- *Communication:* Schools to follow the MoE Framework and communicate it to parents.
- *Culture and language:* Curriculum developers to fine-tune AAL curriculum for expatriate students and embed deep local culture learning experiences to make it authentic.
- *Parents engagement:* Create parent education programs that explain the value of Arabic or and demonstrate ways to help children learn AAL and succeed in school. Engage Arab and local parents in assisting expat parents to learn more about the culture and AL by devising interactive cultural programs based on volunteerism or community service program. Offer immersion experiences and interactions with local culture as it should also be part of the curriculum.
- *Arabic Language National Initiative:* Government to offer free beginner Arabic classes to all expat parents at school premises. Schools should be awarded for doing so and parents' achievements should be highlighted and celebrated in the local media.

APPENDIX A. KHDA CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN DUBAI FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2018/2019: ARABIC AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

Curriculum_Requirements_for_Private_Schools_in_Dubai_Eng.pdf 2 / 3

Guidelines on Arabic subject:

ARABIC												
Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Arabic as a first language (For those who are registered in the school/KHDA under an Arab passport)	6 lessons per week			5 lessons per week			4 lessons per week					
Arabic as an Additional Language (For those who are registered in the school/KHDA under any other nationality)	4 lessons per week						Optional					

- Arab students are expected to follow the standards set in the National Curriculum Document for Arabic first language and use the MoE prescribed textbooks as the main resource in their curriculum.
- Non-Arab students are expected to follow the curriculum standards and expectations set in the 2017/2018 MoE framework for Arabic as an additional language.
- The offering of Arabic in the Early Years is not mandatory but encouraged. It is expected that schools that choose to do so will follow the standards and expectations of the MoE for Arabic in this phase of the school.

APPENDIX B. THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION 2017 FRAMEWORK FOR LEARNING ARABIC AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE



Framework for Learning Arabic as an Additional Language

Introduction

Over the years, the United Arab Emirates has accorded much attention to Arabic language. The UAE leaders have promoted the learning and using of Arabic language as they consider it a fundamental pillar of the Emirates national identity, its people's history and its deep-rooted traditions.

This framework represents an important step toward fulfilling the needs of learners of Arabic as an additional language. It is also consistent with UAE's National Agenda for 2021 with regards to the priority of improving the learning of Arabic language.

This framework focuses on enabling non-Arabic speakers who are learning Arabic to communicate in real life situations inside and outside school. This framework is based on the standards set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and based on international principles and expectations applied in the teaching of foreign languages to non-native speakers. The framework is also adapted to meet the UAE's aspirations in the teaching and learning of Arabic in a manner that suits the learners' capabilities and their learning environment. All private schools that do not adopt the Ministry of Education curriculum are expected to apply this framework.

This framework illustrates the levels expected to be achieved by the learner in each of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). It links the achievement of these levels to the number of years spent in studying Arabic, regardless of the learner's current grade.

This framework identifies three main fields for each level: general outcomes, language proficiency levels and performance indicators in each of the four language skills during the nine years of studying Arabic as an additional language.

The most distinguishing element of this framework is that it details the progress in language proficiency according to three key parameters: functions (to ask, inquire, narrate or describe), context and content (personal, social or general issues), and type and level of text (word, phrase, sentence or paragraph).

Accordingly, this framework constitutes an umbrella for learning Arabic as an additional language in private schools in the UAE and it is in line with the Ministry of Education requirements.

We hope this framework will contribute to encouraging schools and teachers to prepare and execute advanced study plans which include clear and practical tasks and activities, inside and outside the classroom, in line with the expectations of this framework.

APPENDIX C. PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS AAL: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

About the Study Consent Form

Dear Parent,

Dear parent,

I am conducting a research related to the implementation of Arabic as an additional language in schools.

You are invited to participate in a short interview that tries to explore parents' perspective. Your participation in this study is voluntary; however, it is very important for us to learn your opinions.

Your responses will be strictly confidential, and anonymity is safeguarded. The data from this research will be coded and reported only as a whole. Pseudo names will be used and your privacy will be of paramount importance. If you have questions at any time about the procedures, you may contact me at xxxxxx or by email at xyz@hijkl

Finally, I thank you very much for taking the time and effort to participate in this interview.

Signature: -----

In-depth semi-structured case study interview questions

1- Preliminary questions: The Parent Profile

- Sex: M/F
- What is your nationality?
- What is your mother tongue?
- What is your ethnic or heritage background (Arab/Muslim)? your parents?

- What other languages do you speak? What level?

- Other languages you can
 - Speak -----
 - Understand -----
 - Read -----
 - Write -----
- Have you studied Arabic before? In school? Private lessons? Islamic school? On your own?
- How long have you been learning Arabic?

Child/ren Profile

- How many children do you have studying in this school?
- What years are they in?
- Gender? m/f
- How many years have they been learning Arabic?
- Do they enjoy their AAL lessons?
- Why /why not?

Attitudes measurement questions (adapted from Gardner and Lambert's Attitudinal Construct)

Parents' Awareness of MoE Framework for AAL

- Are you aware of the 2017 MoE framework for AAL in schools?

Parent's Attitudes towards learning languages in general

- What do you think of learning languages other than English? (Value second language learning)

Parents' Attitudes towards the TL culture

- What do you think of Arabic culture?

Parents' Attitudes towards the speakers of TL

- What do you think of Arab people/speakers?

Parents' Attitudes towards the TL itself

- Living in Dubai, do you think learning Arabic is an asset? For you or your child? And why?
- In your opinion, in what ways learning Arabic language will assist you in **intercultural communication/understanding** of this region 'GCC' 'Arab World' 'Muslim World'/self-actualization/achievement ..

Parents' Perceived Difficulty of Arabic Language

- Some people perceive Arabic as a **difficult/complex language** to learn? What do you think? How to overcome this difficulty?

Parents' Perceived Roles and Involvement in AAL

- Are you learning Arabic with your child?

Are you helping your child in learning the language/ reading/ in doing their homework?

- Is your child getting help (out of school tutoring) to learn Arabic? (it reflects how much they are investing in it/interested).

- Have you thought/considered learning Arabic/joining Arabic courses?

- Where, when, how, how have your attitudes changed (if they did) after learning some Arabic?

Parents Perspectives on Suggested Policy Recommendations

- What do you think about this statement: "There should be a governmental initiative to offer Arabic language courses to expatriate parents for free or at a nominal cost?"

- Would you encourage your family, friends, others to learn Arabic in Dubai? Why?

- What do you suggest to improve the implementation of AAL in schools?

APPENDIX D. PARENTS' PROFILE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Parent no	Gender	Nationality	Heritage Background	Parent 1 st Language	Kids in school	Other languages	Learnt Arabic	Kids like/dislike Arabic because...
1	F	British	Pakistani-Muslim	English	4	Urdu	For a year	Like the teacher – enjoys languages
2	F	Canadian	Pakistani-Muslim	English	2	Urdu	No	One daughter likes the teacher, the other doesn't
3	F	American	Indian- Non-Muslim	Hindi	1	English	For three months	Loves the teacher
4	F	American	Lebanese-Arab-Non-Muslim	Arabic	3	English, French	In school=13 years	Son likes the teacher, Daughter doesn't
5	F	Canadian	Indian	Kutchi	1	English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marthi	Studied Arabic in the UAE from grade 1-8	Lessons are engaging and relevant to son's interests
6	F	Russian	Non-Arab Non-Muslim	Russian	2	English	Is learning Arabic now	Teacher is good

APPENDIX E. TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

Transcribed Interviews

Parent 1 Profile

- British mother of three
- First language is English
- Pakistani Muslim heritage
- Speaks Urdu (moderately fluent and stronger in spoken language)
- Have learnt Arabic in Dubai for a year as private lessons paid by her (1 hour per week)
 - Year 2= daughter, Year 4 and 5= two sons
 - Daughters spent 1.5 years learning Arabic
 - Boys = spent 2.5 years learning Arabic
 - Kids enjoy learning AAL at school = because they like their teacher/ My daughter enjoys languages.
 - Framework for learning AAL was not communicated but school sent curriculum guidelines and objectives
 - No tutor
 - No newsletters on AAL or communicated progression in Arabic

Parent's Attitudes towards learning languages in general: "I think that it's very important to be able to speak a language other than English because the world is becoming such a smaller place. Even though English is a universal language, I live in an Arab country I think it's important to speak the language of the land we live in. Arabic is still the language of the people and the land. A lot of things are lost in translation so in order to understand the rich heritage and culture that the Arab world has to offer, it is crucial to be able to understand the language that those traditions are conveyed in. One should be able to attempt and try to learn the language of the place they visit let alone live there for a while, it helps in better understanding the place and people to integrate better."

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: "I love Arabic culture as it is hospitable and do love the way they dress, their clothes and food, yet in this British school environment you rarely see it (Arabic culture) reflected. You can see it from the parents who are Arab or Emirati. I am a British Muslim and I have an interest in the Muslim world and I have travelled to some Arab countries so I am aware of Arab culture as I have a close network of friends from different Arab denominations and so I understand a bit of the culture. I know that the children sing the national anthem in the morning, to give you an example, the Arabic language day was a new thing for me. School should know and mark the occasion and celebrate it to embrace Arabic language, but nothing. It was not celebrated and parents were not aware of it! So the culture is very passive, I feel, Arabic culture doesn't shine through in school because it is a British school that the children go to. So it's understandable that they embrace the British/Western culture but I think there should be a balance of teachers who come from the Arab world and the UK so as to have a fusion of the best of UK education yet have a real sense of Arab culture."

"You know, I come from the UK and I cannot say that I could necessarily feel that this is a different environment from the UK. It is an Emirati or Arab culture in a transient place here and feel Arab culture is expressed in a mild way. Mildly so, in my opinion."

Attitudes towards Arabic speakers: "Arab people are very nice. We've never had a problem in the UAE. Arab people are very welcoming and kind and helpful. We have Arabic speaking friends from all over the globe."

Attitudes towards Arabic language: "Living in Dubai, I think learning Arabic is an asset to learn especially for new comers." It is the native language here, so to avoid being lost in translation and to have a true feel and understanding and really really get a feel of the language as its an integral part of it. So out of respect for the country and its people. Of course it should be a requirement to learn it just at a basic level at the very least. It breaks down barriers and warms people of different cultures to the Arab world."

Significance of AL: "Dubai has a good mix of Arab and modern cultures, it is a home away from home, its very safe and very welcoming, everything you need you will find here, it's a very dynamic place to be at, and coming here for the experience of learning the language I believe you will enjoy the experience."

Perceived difficulty of the language: "I don't think that Arabic is very difficult or complex language. As a person who comes from a background where my mother tongue is English...you can take any language like Chinese or Arabic where you haven't seen the letters before, seeing the word written in Arabic form can be very very daunting. But having studied Arabic for a year, and you know, I am not someone who is very strong in languages I don't think it is as difficult as people would have you believe."

"To overcome this perception of difficulty I recommend having a good teacher and going with a positive attitude that you wanted to learn. Have a time plan with targets, know what your expectations are and have goals and stick to them."

Perceived Parents' Roles: "I learnt Arabic from my children and with them in a very limited sense, so I do know how important it is for parents to be involved in their learning any language. In Arabic, I feel it is very repetitive in terms of what they learn in class is exactly the same that is given for homework. So in terms of knowing where they are or what they are able to do, if it is a recall task, yes, I can help."

Improvements and suggestions: "The homework does not ask them to apply what they learn in different contexts or situations or personalize it or develop it in any way."

"We try and read together, so they read out loud, I think my children, most of the have superseded me in their understanding of the language and I think they know the meaning of many words, which is nice to see"

"My kids have no Arabic tutor because of time constraints and financial constraints" "Truth to be told, that would be something nice."

"I think that is an amazing idea" "I would have endorsed something like that if it had been available. It is surprising that it hasn't been offered. It is brilliant. I hope they would endorse something like that." "I do think there is a policy gap here. When people come to the UK for residency, it is now made compulsory to have a grasp of English language. It is important to know the language to try and fit into the society you live in. And on the same level, when people come here (Dubai) there should be an expectation that expats have some sort of a desire to learn the language and there should be help or encouragement for people who do. It should be a policy."

"I think there should be more of an active engagement from the school with the parents. There should be reading programs put in place. Just like in English, their books are levelled and you can trace how they're progressing. Parents can read with their child. So there should be an Arabic reading program."

In Arabic B, there should be more assemblies, plays, recitals that demonstrate the children's language learning in different scenarios and contexts. It would be crucial to make their learning vivid and memorable and fun.

I think that homework should be not so repetitive, it should be an opportunity for the child to develop the skills that they have learnt in class. And also to kind of show the teacher and the parent and the child how to further enhance comprehension. You go from learning sentences to reaching a level where you have a proper conversation.

I think incentives in schools such as prizes, awards and competitions may motivate parents to take learning Arabic more seriously and solidify it in all schools in Dubai.

Parent 2 Profile

- Canadian mother of two
- First language is English
- Pakistani Muslim heritage
- Mother tongue is Urdu
- Have not studied Arabic
 - Year 2= daughter, Year 3= daughter
 - Daughters= spent 3-4 years learning Arabic
 - Younger one really enjoys learning AAL at school = because she likes the teacher/ Older one is a bit behind because she didn't like last year's teacher
 - Framework for learning AAL was not communicated

Parent's Attitudes towards learning languages in general: "It is very important. We're globally connected. It's important for the kids these to speak another language to connect with other people. It's an investment as well, for your career and for your job. Knowing more than one language to get to know the culture of other people. It helps in learning more about your native language in matter of grammar and vocabulary. It helps you build your mother tongue."

It helps with creativity and broadens your perspective and connect to other people. Instead of being in a bubble. Even for me, you know, moving to this country, it has opened my mind that a lot of people speak Arabic. So I try to pick up the words and I do have many Arab friends. If I wasn't then I'd be within my group of people and my language without knowing how other people are and how they live. It affects us a lot when we learn more about them and it opens you up more as a person."

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: I was brought up abroad and here, it is very different over here. People here are more peaceful and loving. You feel safer here. Being brought up in Canada and wearing the Hijab, you meet people who are racist. Here, I feel comfortable wearing my scarf and my long shirt. People don't look at you in a weird way. Being in a Muslim country, and as a Muslim myself, you feel like at ease and a sense of relief."

Attitudes towards Arabic speakers: I feel they are quite strong and bold. I've been raised in Canada and people there are very soft spoken with their hellos, please and thank you. I feel that when Arabs are talking to each other, it seems like they're shouting or fighting. So for me, getting used to that was a bit like, I actually realized that it is their style of talking."

Attitudes towards Arabic language: As a Muslim, I can read the Quran but I do not understand it. So we grew up listening to it in the background of our house. It's a beautiful language and since we moved here it was very important to me that my children do learn it. I haven't learnt it myself, but I would love to learn it. Finding the right time. So whatever my kids are learning I try to ask them and pick up the words like the fruits and vegetables and stuff."

Significance of AL: I think living anywhere in the Middle East requires people to learn Arabic. It is very important and it will help people understand the region. It is especially needed for our kids as to have a solid grounding in the language."

As for me, since I came here I found that not only English is used a lot in communication but Urdu and Hindi as well. I thought I could learn Arabic from my interactions with people here but no I didn't learn it because people are using English and more prominently, I feel Urdu and Hindi are being used too. That's why I do not feel it is a necessity to learn it. Especially that I am now a homemaker. If I wanted to go

back to work, it might be more motivating for me. Like my husband for instance, he took some classes in Arabic and you do come across Arab people and Arabic language. So it's important for him to be able to read and communicate. It is important for his job. The basics at least."

Perceived difficulty of the language: In my opinion, it is not a difficult language to learn. For instance, my daughter learnt it and she is finding well in it. I think the desire and interest in learning Arabic is important. It can be done. Yet, because we are of Pakistani background, and we know Urdu, I believe this does help us in learning Arabic easily. A better advantage. So for a non-Muslim it might be harder. So I can understand why some would perceive it that way."

Perceived Parents' Roles: I am learning Arabic with my daughters and I checked with the teacher regularly because I do not know if my daughters are doing it right? I have also considered hiring a tutor to improve my kids' learning."

I would definitely sign up for a language course. Coming here I was puzzled of where to go and what to learn, there are different dialects. If there was a course offered to parents, that would be great."

Improvements and suggestions: I think there is a gap in communicating what our children are learning especially that parents need to know what words were covered and what they mean. Having the worksheets will help us help our kids in learning at home."

Parent 3 Profile

- American mother of one daughter
- First language is English
- Indian Muslim heritage
- Mother tongue is Hindi
- Have studied Arabic for 3 months paid by her
 - One daughter in Year 2
 - Learnt Arabic for four years in school so far
 - She enjoys her Arabic lessons
 - She loves her teacher.
 - She is doing her Arabic homework and loves to do it
 - Parent is not aware of the framework for AAL

Parent's Attitudes towards learning languages in general: I love learning languages. Though I was brought up in the US, actually, I learnt to learn Hindi and a bit of French. I like Arabic songs and I listen to them, I do not always understand everything but I think it is important for our children to learn languages for their social life and interactions. When I was in Japan, no one spoke English and I had to understand. So it's very important to grasp a little from the language."

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: I love everything about Arabic culture. They are very nice. I have lots of Arab friends, Emirati too. And I enjoy the culture, very nice. That's why I'm here for the last twenty years now."

Attitudes towards Arabic speakers: Arab people are very helpful and kind-hearted. They try to correct your Arabic words and even in everything, they try to help. One day I remember that I needed help with my car and Arab people stopped to help me."

Attitudes towards Arabic language: I do not think Arabic is needed so much in Dubai. Arabs themselves speak English. If you can communicate then there is no problem. It would be good to learn about Arabic culture and everything about the people, the tradition, then yes, learning Arabic in Dubai is helpful.

Significance of AL: My daughter learning Arabic is going to help her in the future. You see, I myself have been living here for so long and do not speak the language. I know few words like salaam, *keef balak*, but that's it. I believe that my daughter speaking Arabic will make me so proud. She will be aware of the roots of Dubai and because she is brought up here. She keeps my head up high. There is no language barrier for new comers as everybody speaks English. If someone has the desire or interest in learning Arabic *culture* then they should learn it. It will help in getting better jobs and higher paid salaries.

Perceived difficulty of the language: Everything is possible to be learnt. I think it is about what I can and cannot do. If you want to do it, you will do it. If you're interested in doing something you will give it 100% of your effort. I'd encourage people to not see it this way. It is not *difficult* and it is a sweet language. I love Arabic songs and listening to Arabic.

Perceived Parents' Roles: I sit with my daughter every Friday and help her to do her homework and Arabic reading. I also google new words to help her. I consider my role as complete involvement and encouragement for her to learn the language. I'm learning with my child, she is teaching *me* and I do not think she needs tutoring. She exceeds me in her level of Arabic.

Improvements and suggestions

- It's very important to offer the courses for parents. They should be for free then they might enhance it and charge for it nominally.

Parent 4 Profile

- American mother of three: son in FS1 and twins= daughter and a son both in year 2
- Twins learnt Arabic in school for 2 years
- Lebanese heritage- non-Muslim
- Mother tongue of mother is *Arabic* but mother tongue of kids is English
- French is a third language
- Arabic was taught throughout the school years (13 years)
- Kids enjoy their Arabic lessons cause it's fun, play-based and son is so keen on learning Arabic that he was moved to Arabic for native speakers this year.
- Daughter doesn't like Arabic, learnt few words. She is still not able to form sentences. Could be the teacher or her own disinterest in learning languages
- Framework was not communicated

Parent's Attitudes towards learning languages in general: I think it is very important. I support learning languages in general and the more the merrier. I encourage my kids to learn French, English and Arabic, *later on* Spanish and Mandarin. Learning languages gives you a better understanding of culture, respecting other cultures, it helps in brain growth and intelligence and at younger ages, it will bring you broader thinking and analyses. Plus, the job opportunities, it gives you a leverage over others. In a world of competition, the more skills you have and the more languages you speak, the better chances you get.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: I think that Dubai is very global city. In terms of people there are so many nationalities living nicely together, respecting each other, you can see Asians, Europeans and Arabs. *Attire*, you see the conservative and the non-conservative and there is lots of tolerance. So Arabic heritage is not reflected unless

you go and visit places that reflect Arabic heritage and tradition and cultural sites. Other than that, you feel like you are living in Europe.

Attitudes towards Arabic speakers: Arab people are very hospitable, kind and emotional, fun to be with, very welcoming and embracing life. I see Arabs as people with open arms. Very ambitious. They're striving to build a better future for their kids. They are seekers of education and attainment. Very high tolerance too.

Attitudes towards Arabic language: I do think that Arabic is an asset for non-speakers. If you know one language 'English' and expect that people should communicate in that language only 'English', that's a drawback. Living in a place where there are so many people of different languages you should have more than one language. Being fanatic for only English without any other language is a drawback. If I own a *company* I'd seek people who know more than one language. Because this shows me ambition, modesty and hard work, having tolerance and respect for people. It reflects a lot. But if you just speak one language and you are not ready to understand or learn another language it reflects a limited mindset.

Significance of AL: I do believe that my kids learning Arabic at a high proficiency level not just basic understanding -as their heritage language- will be very important for their future. I am sure that governments will conserve and preserve the language and in the future my kids will feel they belong. Our kids have both worlds, the global output and aspiration but at the same time have a deep understanding of their roots and culture. This will not hinder their global outlook or belonging.

Perceived difficulty of the language: I think that whenever there is a will there's a way. This is just an excuse. I know for instance that in Russia, if you want to join the diplomatic field, you *have to* learn Arabic and become proficient in it. I also know of many English speakers who turn to learn Mandarin, which is not really an easy language to learn as it is far from the English script and pronunciation. So how come people can start learning Mandarin and not Arabic! If the will is there you can learn anything.

Perceived Parents' Roles: I am helping my daughter now in forming words using blocks with Arabic letters and I help her in writing the Arabic *script* so I give her a little push. Maybe at some point in time I will invest in a tutor especially if I do not have the time.

Improvements and suggestions

I am totally with the statement. Offering Arabic courses for expatriate parent ensures the seriousness of the government in preserving the language and making sure it reaches the people who are interested. I am sure that there's lots of people who are interested but they don't know where to go or what to learn or how to learn, maybe it is too expensive to pursue from language centers.

Definitely there should be a policy for AAL, I am surprised that there isn't! everything starts with a plan, you *can*, not just *haphazardly*. I know that a minimum should be a policy that encourages adaptations of levels and has supporting tools and programs whether abstract or concrete: toys, apps, *software*. To encourage reading in Arabic there should be more, rich books *and more* resources. I also think that teachers need to modernize their teaching methods to be more communicative and encouraging.

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