

Language Ideology and Practices in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Universities mainly play an important role in serving the national languages and demonstrating their supremacy in the country and at the same time universities strive to compete with the universities of the world. Between the preservation of the national language and the tendency to internationalize the university, a group of linguistic ideologies is formed, which is expected to be contradictory between some or between ideologies and practices. This paper investigates the linguistic ideology of academics in medical colleges at King Abdulaziz University, because of the important role of ideology in shaping education policies. This paper also investigates the practices of academics, and data was collected through interviews with the aim of revealing language ideologies, while I used a questionnaire to monitor language practices.

The results revealed that academics have a pragmatic ideology as a reason for preferring to use English, for example: participating in conferences and publishing scientific papers in English. The results also revealed the existence of positive practices regarding the use of Arabic in communicating with students, and the study revealed the existence of positive practices towards Arabic regarding the use of Arabic references in teaching students and suggesting Arabic references to students if available.

Keywords: language ideology, language practices, higher education, language policy, education policy

1. Introduction

The Saudi language policy reflects an ideology about the Arabic language and its ability to meet all needs and in all fields (Al Mahmoud, 2020). The education policy in Saudi Arabia requires the use of Arabic at all levels of education, but there are exceptions for some disciplines, such as medicine; Medicine is taught in all Saudi universities in English (Al-Qawsi, 2015). Therefore, we are facing a contradiction between policies and practices. The missing link that this paper attempts to reveal is "ideologies", as this paper investigates in detail the reality of practices.

Franz Boas (1911) described linguistic ideology in the context of his talk about behaviour, culture and language as (the set of disturbing and misleading factors from secondary explanations), and Irvine (1989) defined it (The culture (or subculture) system of ideas about social and linguistic relationship, together with their loading of moral and political interests).

The importance of research in linguistic ideology comes from its impact on language policies. Language ideology are not neutral and their role must be considered in the formation and enactment of language politics (Canese, 2018). On the other hand, language ideologies have an important impact on patterns of language use (Leglise & Migge, 2015).

In this paper, I have sought to examine language ideology in addition to language practices. The primary difference between ideology and practices is thus that ideology about what ought or ought not to happen, while practices are what actually happen (Kristina, 2014).

2. Literature Review

There are some research papers on the problem of teaching science in English in the Arab countries. Among these studies is the study of (Ismail, 2001) which aimed to record the attitudes of faculty members at the Faculty of Medicine at King Faisal University in Dammam towards the Arabization of medical education. The researcher used the descriptive survey method. The most important results of this study: 46% of respondents support the Arabization of medical education, while 54 % reject the Arabization of medical education. And the study of

(Al-Jarf, 2004) which aimed to know the attitudes of young people towards the use of Arabic in university education, and it used the ethnographic and quantitative approach together. The study showed a negative attitude among young people towards the use of Arabic in university education. Among the related studies, is the study of (Fajal, 2009) in which the students' understanding of the scientific content in Arabic and English was recorded, according to the students' impressions. The results showed that 77.56% of the students understood the scientific content in Arabic more than in English.

In the study of (Sabour, Dowidar & Qandil, 2010) which aimed to know the language obstacles and attitudes towards the Arabization of medicine, the study sample included (400) students and (150) members of the teaching staff. The most important results of this study are that 56.3% of the students do not see teaching in English as an obstacle, in contrast 44.5% of the faculty members see teaching in English as an obstacle in the first year only. The study revealed some of the students' language practices; As 44.8% translate the terms into Arabic, and 70.6% prefer to practice taking the clinical history in Arabic.

Among these studies, too, Hassanein's study (2013), which aimed to study the relationship between the language of instruction and students' identities using the descriptive analytical method. The results showed that there were high statistically significant differences for students who learn in their mother tongue and their association with their national identity. And Bin Huwais' study (2016), which aimed to record the attitudes of medical students at Al-Yamamah University towards the use of Arabic in teaching medicine, and the results showed the presence of negative attitudes towards teaching medicine in Arabic.

Study of (Al-kahtany, Faruk, and Alzumor, 2016) The study examined the feasibility of using English as a language of instruction in higher education in Saudi Arabia by describing the attitudes of teachers and students towards the English language and evaluating their perception of the potential of Arabic to replace English. The study also aimed to assess the effect of linguistic dominance in choosing English as a medium of instruction. The study used the quantitative method in collecting data on a randomly selected sample of teachers and students. The results of the study showed the difficulty of choosing between Arabic and English. We cannot ignore the tremendous growth of English in the field of scientific knowledge, politics and economics.

Among these studies; A longitudinal study carried out by (Alfehaid, 2018.) The study aimed to explore the experiences of students and teachers in using English as a medium of instruction. The data was collected during two separate time periods of the academic year 2017-2018 using three research tools: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and class notes. The results showed that the vast majority of students and teachers support the use of English as a medium of instruction. The teachers confirmed that they have English proficiency and do not face difficulties in using it as an educational medium. With regard to students, they recorded difficulties in learning disciplinary content in English, and these difficulties were represented in: low levels of lecture comprehension, conflict with academic writing due to limited vocabulary, grammar and poor spelling, and problems in understanding the exam questions.

Study of (Alshahrani, 2019) The study aimed to reveal the attitudes of academics in medical colleges in two Saudi universities belonging to demographically different regions. King Abdulaziz University in the western region, where there are Saudis of non-Arab races, and King Khalid University in the south of Saudi Arabia, an area that represents ethnic and linguistic purity. This diversity appeared in the characteristics of the participants; Where participants from King Abdulaziz University recorded the presence of mother languages other than Arabic for themselves or their parents. The study used the ethnographic method in revealing the epistemological attitude due to their deep and complex nature, and thus recording them requires discussion, dialogue and understanding from both sides. It used the quantitative approach to reveal the behavioral and emotional attitude towards Arabic, in addition to the attitudes towards the prestige of Arabic. The study revealed the dominance of the participants' pragmatic motives, as well as a lack of interest in issues of identity, national language, and culture. On the other hand, the study revealed that the participants need to use Arabic even in the classroom. With regard to emotional attitudes and attitudes towards the prestige of language, the study showed positive attitudes towards both.

Study of (Alshahrani, 2020) The study aimed to monitor the linguistic landscape in Saudi medical colleges, a semiotic study in which linguistic signs were photographed, classified and analyzed, including documents of meetings and decisions. In addition to the ethnographic approach to collecting data on oral discourse practices in classes and meetings. The study revealed that there is a dual language landscape across the health colleges, but it follows certain patterns; The scientific summaries of the papers affixed to the walls are in English, while the signs for the regulations and instructions are in Arabic. With regard to communication between teachers and students, English has dominated formal contexts, while Arabic is commonly used in informal contexts. As for

academics in meetings and events, it is in Arabic, in addition to documents that were written in Arabic, including the agenda of meetings, administrative correspondence, and educational and administrative documents.

3. Aims

This study seeks to reveal the linguistic ideology of academics at the Faculty of Medicine at King Abdulaziz University towards the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction instead of English. The study also aimed to monitor the reality of the language practices of the study sample. This is through a mixed research approach in which qualitative data were collected in addition to quantitative data in order to form a clear perception about what the participants believe and what they actually do.

4. Research Questions

What is the linguistic ideology of academics in medical schools at King Abdulaziz University towards the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction instead of English?

What are the language practices of the study sample regarding the use of Arabic in communication and as a medium of instruction instead of English?

5. Methodology

This study falls within the scope of mixed research. I used the ethnographic method in collecting qualitative data about the participants' language ideology towards the use of Arabic instead of English as a medium of instruction. I have used the ethnographic method in this type of data; Because of the complex nature of the ideology, which requires me to sit down and debate with the participants. With regard to language practices, I used the quantitative approach by distributing electronic questionnaires to the participants, and they answered them and disclosed their language practices.

5.1 Study Sample Selection

The study sample was selected from the category of academics from the faculties of medicine: dentistry, human medicine, and applied medical sciences. The sample was chosen randomly, and the sample represents all health colleges and all different academic degrees, in addition to the diversity in the mother tongues of the participants or their parents.

5.2 Characteristics of the Study Participants

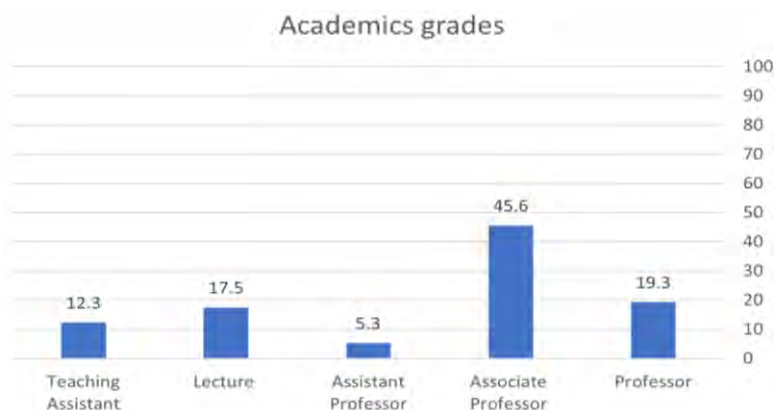


Figure 1. Distribution of the sample members by academic degree

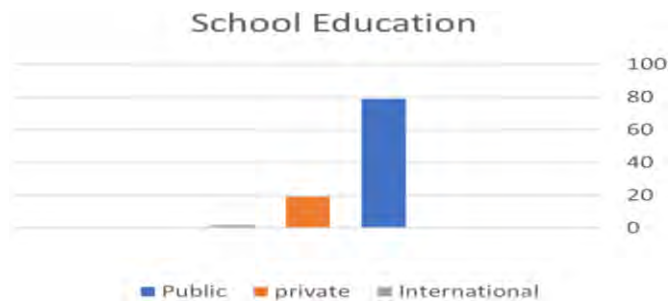


Figure 2. Distribution of sample members by type of school education

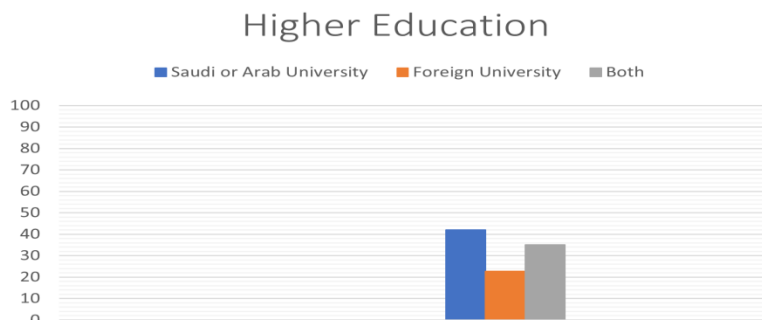


Figure 3. Distribution of sample members by type of higher education

According to Freud (1960) parental attitudes influence children's attitudes. Therefore, I was keen to know the linguistic situation of the parents of the participants in terms of mother tongue and in terms of speaking a foreign language besides the mother tongue, considering the classic link between language and identity.

Language status of the participant's parents



Figure 4. Distribution of the sample members according to the language of the parents

6. Data Collection

6.1 Interviews

According to Blommaert (2006), “the notion of language ideologies grew out of Sapirian and Whorfian linguistic anthropology”. Therefore, I use the ethnographic approach in revealing the ideologies of the participants, and I conducted the interviews with (20) of participants, which lasted for a minimum of 56 minutes, in which the discussion axes were extensively discussed, with questions being asked alternately between the researcher and the participant in order to investigate and fully investigate the beliefs of the participants. I also recorded these interviews phonetically.

6.2 Questionnaire

With the aim of investigating language practices, and because many of them are difficult to observe by observation, I conducted a questionnaire to which (57) members of the faculty of medical colleges at King Abdulaziz University responded.

6.2.1 Questionnaire Construction

The five-point Likert scale was used to obtain the responses of the sample members according to the following degrees of agreement: (strongly agree - agree - neutral - disagree - strongly disagree) and then Express this scale quantitatively, by giving each of the previous phrases a score, according to the following: Strongly agree(5), agree (4) , neutral (3) , disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1). To determine the length of the five-point Likert scale categories, the range was calculated by subtracting the upper bound from the lower bound (5-1 = 4) and then dividing the result by the largest value in the scale (4 ÷ 5 = 0.80) and then adding this value to the lowest value in the scale (1) To determine the upper limit of this category, and thus the length of the categories became as shown in the following table:

Table 1. Questionnaire Structure

Category	Category Limits	
	From	To
1 Strongly agree	5	4.21
2 agree	4.20	3.41
3 neutral	3.40	2.64
4 disagree	2.60	1.81
5 strongly disagree	1.80	1.00

6.2.2 Validity and Reliability

In order to achieve validity and reliability in the research tools; I prepared the interview questions and questionnaire axes, which were judged by (22) arbitrators from a different number of universities, including: Saudi universities, Gulf universities, Arab universities, those who belong to these disciplines: Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Health Sciences. I made a survey visit to the research site and conducted a number of test interviews with the aim of modifying and making sure that the interview questions were ready before starting to use them. As for the stability of the questionnaire tool, the stability of the study tool was ensured by Using the stability coefficient Alpha Cronbach's "Cronbach's Alpha (α)" and table No. (1) shows the values of the stability coefficients of Alpha Cronbach for each axis of the resolution.

Table 2. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire

scale axis	number of phrases	Axle stability
Language Practices	11	0,9326

7. Data Analysis

In order to analyze the interview data, I listened to the recordings and transcribed the data into forms; Each participant has a special form. I coded the data that was recorded on the forms to extract the frequencies, and I used the descriptive discourse analysis method for the texts that were extracted from the audio recordings, and then the results. and to analyze the collected data by questionnaire many appropriate statistical methods were used using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Then the following statistical measures were calculated:

1. frequencies and percentages; To determine the participants' responses to the axes statements included in the study tool.
2. Weighted Mean; To identify the responses of the sample members to each phrase, which is useful for arranging the phrases according to the highest weighted arithmetic average.
3. arithmetic mean; To find out how high or low the responses of the study sample members and the arrangement of the axes according to the highest arithmetic mean.
4. standard deviation; To identify the extent of responses of the study members to each statement, and it also shows the dispersion in the responses of the sample members to each statement; The closer its value is to zero, the more focused the responses and the lower their dispersion.

8. Results

8.1 Qualitative Data Results

8.1.1 Language Ideology towards Arabic as an Ancient Language

Arabic is one of the ancient languages of the world, and the status of Arabic as an ancient language can be seen as an advantage and as a disadvantage; Considering Arabic as an ancient language can motivate us to use it in scientific contexts with the aim of preserving it and demonstrating its vitality. On the other hand, there can be an ideology that the old language equals the dead language, or that it should die, or at least not be used in universities.

Looking at the results of the study, there was a positive ideology towards Arabic as an ancient language; Where 70% of the participants reported that Arabic is an ancient language that has lived through long periods of time and is still able to continue and express knowledge in academic contexts, while the study monitored a negative ideology towards Arabic as an ancient language by 20%, and therefore it is unable to renew and develop with the development of knowledge.

8.1.2 The Arabic Language between the Romantic and Scientific Function:

Due to the dependence of Saudi universities on English in health and applied colleges, the Arabic language has been associated with the College of Arts, and therefore it may be linked in the minds of many as a strong language in literature and arts, such as novels and stories. But not in medicine and science in general.

Not all of the participants recorded their position on this issue, as 30 percent said that Arabic is entirely a literary language and not suitable for science, and 20 percent said that Arabic is somewhat specific to literature. On the other hand, 10% of the participants said that Arabic combines the literary and scientific style in a balanced way, compared to 10% who said that Arabic is stronger in the scientific style than in the literary style. Finally, 5% of the participants said that they do not have an attitude towards style in Arabic.

8.1.3 Justifications for Not Using Arabic as a Medium of Instruction in Medical Schools

75% of the respondents stated that the main reason for not using the Arabic language in teaching medicine is the need to communicate with the scientific community. Communication with the scientific community takes several forms: scholarships to study medicine in Europe, America, and Australia, reading research papers published in English, publishing in indexed scientific journals, and participating in foreign scientific conferences, especially in England, Canada and America. 10% said that the reason for the health colleges' dependence on the English language is that the first group of academics were not Arabs, but of Indian and American nationalities, and these (non-Arab) academics set education policies in health colleges. And 5% of them considered that the reason was the lack of interest in health colleges in developing the Arabic language, and 5% said that the reason was the inability of the Arabic language to play the role of teaching medicine in universities, and 5% said that the reason was the financial cost that universities would bear if they wanted to switch to using Arabic in medical education, for example, the cost of a translation project.

8.1.4 The Language of Education and Identity

70% of the respondents stated that the use of Arabic will increase the students' belonging to their language and society, and that they have already noticed this; When the student enters the Faculty of Medicine, they have positive attitudes and a high affiliation with their language and society, and then this affiliation decreases with the passage of time and with the transition from one academic level to another. They believe that the reason for this is the students' long practice of English and the association of the English language (in their minds) with science. While 5% reported that the relationship exists, but it does not necessarily affect the students' affiliations, and the matter varies from one student to another, and 5% reported that they do not care whether there is a relationship or not. 20% expressed their belief that there is no relationship between the use of language in education and the identity of students.

8.1.5 The main question: What do you think about teaching medicine in Arabic?

Table 3. Responses of the sample members to the main question

the answer	the number	Justifications
Supporter	3	- Students should learn in their mother tongue - The scientific progress of the country is achieved in the mother tongue
relatively supportive	2	Students understand the information in their native language more but they will face problems if they want to communicate with the scientific community
unsupportive very Difficult	7 6	The Arabic language is not used in the medical field - English is the language of science - The need to communicate with the scientific community in English - Saudi academics in Saudi universities have studied in English and it is difficult for them to communicate information without English - Arabic language deficiency - Difficulty of the Arabic language - Financial cost - Difficulty translating all scientific sources
Important, but needs study	1	Creativity is only in the mother tongue, but the issue needs a complete and thoughtful project
not important	1	The Arabic language is not used in the medical field

8.2 Quantitative Data Results

The quantitative methods in this research aim to reveal the linguistic practices of faculty members in health colleges, and the results are as follows:

Table 4. Quantitative results

phrases	Frequency percentage	degree of approval					Arithmetic mean	standard deviation
		Strongly Agree	Agree	neutral	disagree	Strongly Disagree		
1- I use the Arabic to communicate with students via SMS	F %	27 47.4	18 31.6	5 8.8	4 7.0	3 5.3	4.09	1.154
2- I use the Arabic to communicate with colleagues via SMS	F %	21 36.8	22 38.6	9 15.8	4 7.0	1 1.8	4.02	0.991
3- I use the Arabic to communicate with students via e-mail	F %	23 40.4	12 21.1	10 17.5	10 17.5	2 3.5	3.77	1.254
4- I use Arabic to communicate with colleagues via e-mail	F %	18 31.6	19 33.3	9 15.8	10 17.5	1 1.8	3.75	1.138
5- I use Arabic when speaking with students outside the classroom or laboratory	F %	21 36.8	18 31.6	4 7.0	6 10.5	8 14.0	3.67	1.431
6- I use Arabic to speak with students in the classroom or laboratory	F %	18 31.6	17 29.8	10 17.5	8 14.0	4 7.0	3.65	1.261
7- I only use English to pronounce the term	F %	17 29.8	16 28.1	7 12.3	14 24.6	3 5.3	3.53	1.297
8- I use Arabic to explain scientific ideas during the lecture	F %	12 21.1	17 29.8	10 17.5	15 26.3	3 5.3	3.35	1.232
9- I suggest that students make use of a specialized Arabic reference, if available	F %	17 29.8	6 10.5	11 19.3	10 17.5	13 22.8	3.07	1.557
10- I use an Arabic reference in teaching medicine if it exists	F %	12 21.1	9 15.8	10 17.5	12 21.1	14 24.6	2.88	1.489
11- I write drafts in Arabic and then translate them into English in making research papers	F %	11 19.3	9 15.8	8 14.0	14 24.6	15 26.3	2.77	1.488

Quantitative analysis of the data shows interesting results regarding the academics' practices. Most academics use Arabic in written communication with students and colleagues. Although English is the official language of instruction in health colleges, the results of language practices showed that 61.4% of academics use Arabic in classrooms and laboratories.

As an unexpected result, 57.9% of the participants recorded the practice of using the Arabic language in pronouncing the scientific term only, which means that they use Arabic as the main medium of instruction.

Although the policy of health colleges requires the use of English references only, 36.9 % of academics use Arabic references if available, while 17.5 % of respondents preferred not to tell the truth about their practice of the reference language they use in teaching.

9. Discussion

Looking at the results of qualitative data, we note the predominance of pragmatism as an ideology among the participants. Although the participants have positive attitudes towards Arabic as an ancient language with a historical narrative that does not belong to the Arabs alone, but to the whole world as a language that played an important civilized role in the human experience. In addition to the fact that many participants believe in the ability of Arabic to express science in the present era, but there are fears and doubts about the ability of Arabic to play this role among some of the participants. Based on these data, pragmatic motives seem to be the only justification for using English as a medium of instruction; Because it is the first language in science, and if we (as Saudis) want to be part of knowledge, we must use English, given the dominance of English in scientific and economic contexts.

As a result of the above, in addition to the official reliance of health colleges on English and the subsequent writing and publishing in English, these factors contributed to the formation of an ideology in 50% of the participants that Arabic is suitable for writing literature, arts and history, but not for writing and publishing scientific research.

We can explain the dominance of pragmatic motives in the use of English, and the emergence of pragmatic reasons in explaining the non-use of Arabic in medical education as a desire on the part of universities to raise the quality of their outputs and their contribution to scientific production worldwide. At the same time, this reflects a lack of awareness among academics of the main roles of national universities, which are the protection

and promotion of national languages.

Although many participants believe that the use of Arabic will increase the students' belonging to their homeland and language, they assert that it is a difficult and illogical decision at the present time, and this in itself reveals an ideology that prioritises pragmatism over identity and belonging.

Looking at the results of quantitative data, which aimed to reveal the language practices of academics, we find that they depend on Arabic in communication and in class discourse. Thus, there is a duality between the language ideology and practices of the participants. We can say that there is a gap between the theory; Which believes in the use of English in communication and medical education and between the application that revealed the use of Arabic in a way that exceeds English times and is equal to it other times

Although the practices of using Arabic in communication and teaching were recorded, 50.9 % of the participants said that they use English in writing notes and research drafts. In contrast, 35.1% denied this practice, and the behaviour of participants who use English in writing research drafts can be explained that due to teaching in English for long periods, it has become difficult to switch to Arabic, and this is a dangerous indicator with regard to the localisation of knowledge.

The practice of 35.1% of the participants in using Arabic in writing research drafts can be explained by looking at the determinants of higher education for the participants, which show that more than 40% of the participants completed their higher medical education in Saudi or Arab universities.

10. Conclusion

The study aimed to reveal the language ideology and practices of academics in medical colleges at King Abdulaziz University, through a mixed research methodology with the aim of forming a panoramic picture of the issue being researched.

The results showed that it is a very complex picture that affects many factors, the most important of which are; The linguistic status of English as a leading language in knowledge and economics In addition to the historical accumulation of excluding Arabic from scientific contexts, there are no attempts or institutional experiences in using Arabic as an educational medium in the health context. All this reinforces the pragmatic ideology of those affiliated with this academic and practical field, and weakens the strength of relevant elements such as identity and the preservation of the national language.

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