Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural Identity

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in primary international schools on the children's first language (L1) and cultural identity. More specifically, the study sought to determine whether using EMI has effects on Saudi school students. Furthermore, it sh owed how to preserve our children's L1 and cultural identity by enhancing the learning that uses the learners' L1 as a medium of instruction. The study sample consisted of 40 individuals, with 20 secondary and intermediate female students whose primary education was carried out in private international schools and 20 parents of children studying in international schools. The study used a questionnaire as a means of data collection. It used a mixed-methods design, and the data were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, while qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The study results showed that the participants understood the importance of learning English as a global language. In addition, it identified that using EMI in primary international schools affects the children's L1 and their cultural identity; some of the parents suggested that English language learning had had some negative consequences on their children's Arabic language.

Key words: English medium instruction; Private international schools; Bilingual education; Mother tongue; Cultural identity.

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INTRODUCTION

English has been the world's common language for many decades. Today, it is not only used as the lingua franca, but it must be learned for accessing unique educational and employment opportunities. English is considered a global language that enables people to communicate on an international level. In fact, the accelerated invasion of English is due to its importance in business, communication technology and sciences. There are many positive aspects of having a global language like English, and it plays important roles in many parts of society. However, English also has negative features. For instance, many researchers have indicated that English may affect other languages, including Arabic. Concerns about the negative effects of English and its ability to endanger other languages have been discussed by many scholars in the field (Fillmore, 1991; Pennycook, 1994).

In the last decade, many private schools have been established to meet the social demands for proficiency in English, and the importance of English has meant that this language has become the medium of instruction in most private schools. At the same time, the Arabic language faces many problems, such as the shortage of Arabic classes. The low priority given to Arabic in private international schools has led to students' low proficiency in Arabic. In fact, despite the positive influences of using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at early ages, there are negative influences, as EMI can affect children's first language (L1) and cultural identity, and it can endanger other languages. Thus, there is a need for increased awareness about language loss (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011). This study aims to explore the possible

Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary
International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural
Identity

effects of using EMI in primary international schools on the children's L1 and cultural identity. The findings seek to raise awareness concerning the consequences of focussing on English and neglecting Arabic.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a review of the literature on English and its effects on children's mother tongue and cultural identity. It is divided into three subsections related to the main topic, as follows: 1) the effects of English as a medium of instruction on children's mother tongue at early ages of education; 2) relationship between language and cultural identity, as well as the effects of English use on children's cultural identity; and 3) enhancing learning in the mother tongue to preserve one's own language and cultural identity.

1.1 The Effects of English as a Medium of Instruction on Children's Mother Tongue at Early Ages of Education

In recent years, the number of international schools has increased substantially in Saudi Arabia. Nearly all private international schools utilise English as the language of instruction for most subjects, while Arabic is used for Arabic-language instruction, such as in Islamic and social studies. According to Hayden and Thompson (2008), an international school can be defined as a school that offers education through any language other than that of the host country. The growth of English use has led most private international schools to employ English as the primary language of instruction in Saudi Arabia. These schools provide bilingual education.

The notion of bilingualism has been discussed in different ways through several interpretations: Some theories indicate that, to be bilingual, a person must demonstrate the same level of competence in two languages. Grosjean's (Fielding, 2015) related, simple definition of bilingualism is the use of two languages regularly. However, according to Cummins (Hanani, 2009), it is extremely important to distinguish between two types of bilingualism – additive and subtractive – in bilingual education. Additive bilingualism occurs when the first language and culture continue to be developed while the second language is learned; in contrast, subtractive bilingualism occurs when the second language is learned at the expense of the first (Hanani, 2009).

In Saudi Arabia, most international schools use subtractive bilingualism, since English is used as a medium of instruction for most subjects, and little attention is paid to Arabic language subjects. In these schools, Arabic-language teaching is given low priority, and it is not given its proper position as the national language in Saudi Arabia. As a result, Mourani (Hanani, 2009) claimed, Arab students are losing their interest in learning Arabic. For this reason, many studies assert the importance of using an additive-bilingualism approach to improve the students' mother tongue in the primary levels of education, thereby preserving their cultural identity and facilitating second-language learning (Baker, 2001; Cummins, as cited in Hanani, 2009).

In fact, language loss occurs gradually when children communicate with a language other than their native tongue. In the private international schools in Saudi Arabia, since English is used as a medium of instruction, the role of the mother tongue has diminished. At an early age, a child's L1 is easily damaged or lost. Badry (Hanani, 2009) showed that, if the mother tongue is not used for different functions, it will disappear. Moreover, a study conducted by Fillmore (1991) revealed that early exposure to English leads to the loss of the native language. Since English is the main international language, some families tend to value an English-speaking international school for their children because it is seen as a means of gaining a competitive edge; this will help the children prepare for university studies and develop better fluency in English, thereby increasing their opportunities for future employment. Some parents speak English with their children at home because they want their children to use English successfully in the future.

The preference for EMI gives the impression that Arabic is not the appropriate language of instruction. Unfortunately, this viewpoint is eventually transferred to the children, who perceive that English is the language needed for a successful future (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011). Extensive research has been conducted on EMI at the early stages of education. However, most of the previous studies have showed that, despite the positive effects that come with English, there are some negative effects on the languages and cultures of nations around the world. Linguists like Brock-Uten (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011) have asserted that the best way to learn a foreign language is to first have an excellent command of one's first language. It is also problematic for children to learn a second language before developing their first language, as they have not yet fully acquired their first language, and it will be affected by contact with another language, such as English (Fillmore, 1991). If students do not develop their native language at an early age, there is little chance they will preserve it. Many university-level students who attended private international schools from a young age complain of difficulties with Arabic. In fact, the little attention given to Arabic in private international schools leads to the loss of the students' native language (Al-Issa, 2006).

Many studies have examined the effects of learning English at an early age on children's native language. Most have indicated that a greater use of English results in less use of the native language, indicating that the native language can be displaced by English, thereby resulting in the loss of the children's native language (Fillmore, 1991).

1.2 The Relationship Between Language and Cultural Identity, and the Effects of English Use on Children's Cultural Identities

There are many concerns regarding global English, and one of these is the issue of identity. Languages represent identities and are used to categorise the people who speak them. People differ from each other according to the language they speak. In fact, speaking one language gives a feeling of belonging to a specific group or nation. People acquire their languages naturally or formally in their studies, and the links between their languages and identities can be strengthened or weakened by the formal language used in schools as a medium of instruction (Byram, 2006). Numerous scholars have discussed this issue and indicated that language and identity are inseparable (Atay & Ece, 2009; Byram, 2006; Fielding, 2015).

The relationship between language and identity suggests that English can have a negative impact on Saudi students' identities. Identity is essentially the summary of all our individual traits, characteristics and dispositions (Edward, 2009). Similarly, Joseph (2004) defined identity as the 'deeper, intangible something that constitutes who one really is' (p. 1). According to Al-Issa and Dahan (2011), 'one's identity includes a social identity, which would include those groups the person associates with and any ethnic group one is a part of' (p. 12). Since language and identity are inseparable, if one of them is threatened, the other will also be threatened (Hopkyns, 2014).

Much research has been conducted on EMI at the early stages of education, and most of these studies have revealed that EMI has some negative effects on the students' identities, especially at the primary level (Beka, 2016; Hopkyns, 2014). Studies conducted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) revealed that most students who were learning in EMI felt that English had a negative effect on their identity (Badry, n.d.; Hanani, 2015).

1.3 Enhancing Learning in the Mother Tongue to Preserve One's Language and Identity

The native language is an essential part of human life. It is considered a vehicle for passing down a language and cultural identity from one generation to another. Learning in the mother tongue helps people to develop confidence and construct their identity. However, when learning in a foreign language that is not their mother tongue, pupils experience difficulties in education. In fact, all international forums, such as UNESCO and Education for All (EFA), have stressed that children, especially those at the primary level, must learn by using their mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Martinet (cited in Khan, 2014) defined the mother tongue as 'the language through which one comes to know the world' (p. 148). There is a relationship between the language a person speaks and his or her cultural identity. The language preserves all the cultural riches associated with the language; the destruction of the language results in the destruction of human innovations and their creativity (Khan, 2014). In contrast, language – especially the mother tongue – is an aspect of individual cultural identity.

According to some previous studies (Badry, 2011; Hopkyns, 2014; Tatjana, 2014), language constitutes an important aspect of human cultural identity. An individual's cultural identity and personality are reflected in language. According to UNESCO (Khan, 2014, p.149), this relationship supports how the mother tongue enhances the child's cultural values. UNESCO encourages education using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. Many researchers are encouraging policymakers to consider the importance of designing mother-tongue instruction and avoiding using foreign-language instruction in the early primary-school years. The mother tongue is vitally important in education, as 'the medium of instruction is the most powerful means of maintaining and revitalising a language and culture' (Al-Bakri, 2013, p. 9).

Children's home culture and native language are maintained by learning in their mother tongue. Moreover, children will have a fixed sense of their own cultural identity. Another benefit is that learning by one's native language promotes the general cognitive development that is needed to understand and learn a second language more easily. According to Chuo and Walter (Beka, 2016), the use of the mother tongue in Cameroon has led to children performing better in most subjects, including math and English, compared with children who have been taught exclusively in English.

When schools teach in a language other than that of the children, it is considered a violation of good pedagogical principles, and they may be guilty of cultural imposition (Khan, 2014). However, given the effects of EMI, educators encourage the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. It is advised that children should start their primary education through their L1 because this leads to successful communication between the students and their teachers, thereby avoiding misunderstandings of concepts and meanings (Jernuadd, as cited in Beka, 2016; Rubin & Bamgbose, 1976).

In the Gulf area, there has been little research on the possibility of English influencing the Arabic language (Hanani, 2009). Thus, based on the considerations mentioned above, the study aims to fill this gap in the present research by studying the effect of English on students who were enrolled in schools using EMI at the primary levels. More specifically, the study aims to identify the consequences of using EMI on Saudi primary school students' L1 and cultural identity. In addition, it emphasises the importance of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at an early age. Therefore, this study aims to address the following questions:

• What are consequences of using EMI on students at an early age of learning?

Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary
International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural
Identity

• How can we preserve our children's L1 and cultural identity in Saudi Arabia?

2. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology uses qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. This method enabled me to use questionnaires with both closed- and open-ended questions. The study consisted of a questionnaire as the means of data collection and analysis. The students' questionnaire consisted only of closed- ended questions while parents' questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions. By using questionnaires, I was able to ask about many different issues related to the research questions. The questionnaire helped me to cover most aspects of the study, such as the participants attitudes toward EMI, effects of using EMI on students' L1 and cultural identity, participants' attitudes toward the importance of mother tongue as a medium of instruction and its role in preserving students' L1 and cultural identity. In addition, the parents' questionnaire contained two open-ended questions to obtain additional information related to the research questions.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and the results are demonstrated in summary tables. The items' mean scores were calculated, and the statistical analysis calculated was carried out using SPSS software. The study benefited from the work of Hanani (2009).

2.1 Study Participants

There were 40 participants, including 20 female students and 20 mothers. The criteria for selecting the students was that they were aged 14–16 years, exhibited intermediate English proficiency and had been studying English since primary school (see Table 1).

In addition, Parents were required to have a child who had had EMI instruction in primary school. They can illustrate the effects of using EMI on their children such as their Arabic language; I also wanted to elicit their attitudes toward EMI, as parents can have a strong effect on their children's preference for English over Arabic.

The students and parents were all from Arabic-speaking families. The students were asked to state their number of years of study at private school, and the results showed that they had attended such schools for 2–11 years. Most students had studied in an international private school for at least 7 years, and only two did not respond (see Table 2). The students and parents received the questionnaires from the schools' principles. In contrast, the parents who completed questionnaires were native speakers of Arabic, and most were bilingual speakers (see Table 3). Furthermore, most were well-educated people with high-status occupations, such as teachers and doctors.

Table 1
Description of the Student Sample According to Student Age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
9	2	5.0	5.0	5.0
10	4	10.0	10.0	15.0
11	12	30.0	30.0	45.0
12	7	17.5	17.5	62.5
13	3	7.5	7.5	70.0
14	2	5.0	5.0	75.0
15	6	15.0	15.0	90.0
16	4	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Table 2
Description of Student Sample According to Years of English Study

Years	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No response	2	10.0	10.0	10.0
2 years	1	5.0	5.0	15.0
6 years	3	15.0	15.0	30.0
7 years	8	40.0	40.0	70.0
9 years	2	10.0	10.0	80.0
10 years	3	15.0	15.0	95.0
11 years	1	5.0	5.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

Table 3
Description of Parent Sample Concerning Speaking English Language

Parents who speak English	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Both parents speak English	11	55.0	55.0	55.0
Neither parent speaks English	4	20.0	20.0	75.0
Only the mother speaks English	3	15.0	15.0	90.0
Only the father speaks English	2	10.0	10.0	100.0
Total	20	100.0	100.0	

2.2 Study Design

The study included questionnaires as the method of data collection. Two different questionnaires designed. One was a students' questionnaire, and the other was a parents' questionnaire. Both were given to the students from Abha International School. The questionnaires helped me to

obtain some answers about the effect of EMI (independent variable) on children's L1 and cultural identity (dependent variables) at an early age of education.

2.3 Data-Collection Procedure

The main tool utilised for data collection in this study was a questionnaire. I designed two questionnaires, one for students and the other for parents. The students' questionnaire consisted of 4 demographic questions and 32 questions related to the aims of the study. The responses for the 32 questions were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) Strongly disagree to (5) Strongly agree. I wrote the questionnaire in Arabic language to obtain more accurate answers and avoid misunderstanding of the questions. I tried to write the questions in language that was as easy and precise as possible to elicit the responses that would be useful in addressing my research questions. I wanted to know the participants' awareness of the importance of learning English, the consequences of EMI, their view on whether English may affect their L1 and cultural identity and their perspectives on maintaining the Arabic language. The parents' questionnaire consisted of 12 questions. Both questionnaires had closed-ended statements, but only the parents' questionnaire contained open-ended questions. The instruments had good reliability coefficients, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Reliability Coefficient for the Instruments

Instrument	Dimension	Reliability coefficient
Parents' questionnaire	D1	0.77
	D2	0.802
	Total	0.830
Students' questionnaire	D1	0.871
	D2	0.890
	D3	0.901
	Total	0.932

2.4 Procedure

The instrument for this research was a questionnaire written in Arabic to avoid misunderstanding, as the participants were Arabic native speakers. To distribute the questionnaires to the participants, I contacted the head of the English Department at King Khalid University to ask for the permission. In addition, I contacted the school manager to request permission to distribute the questionnaires to the students, which she granted. I met with the school manager, presenting copies of the questionnaire and the permission from my university. I described the study's purpose to her. Then, the students received the questionnaire from the principal, and the parents' questionnaire was sent home via their children at the primary level. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary. I collected the questionnaires 1 week after the date of distribution.

3. RESULTS

This study aimed to determine the effects of using EMI on the students at Abha International School, especially the consequences of using English on the students' Arabic language and cultural identity. Furthermore, the study aimed at investigating the parents' perceptions of EMI. The results elicited from the questions were gathered under three themes: 1) the importance of learning English, 2) language use preference between students' mother tongue and English and 3) ways of learning and preserving Arabic. The answers to the quantitative questions were analysed using statistical descriptive analysis; the qualitative questions on the parents' questionnaire were analysed using content analysis.

3.1 Results of the Descriptive Questions on the Students' Questionnaire

The first set of statements aimed to investigate the students' attitudes toward the importance of English

Table 5
Perceptions of the Importance of Learning English

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
1	4	5	4.80	.410
2	4	5	4.75	444

The first statements on the students' questionnaire were *'The English language is very important in our global world'* and *'The English language will provide me with many different educational and job opportunities in the future'*. These items aimed to investigate the students perceptions concerning the importance of learning English as a global language. The students indicated high agreement with both statements, with a mean of 4.80 out of 5 for statement 1 and 4.75 for statement 2. In addition, the same statement on the parents' questionnaire (statement 1, section 3) indicated that the parents had a high level of awareness concerning the importance of learning English, with a mean of 4.75 out of 5. In the qualitative question, *'What are the positive aspects of learning English?'*, all the parents expressed their positive attitudes toward their children learning English. One parent stated, *'Learning English language is necessary for our children. It is the language of the age, and it provides our children with many future educational and employment chances'*. From the answers, it seems that there was a strong agreement between the participants, and they realised the importance of learning English.

The second set of statements investigated the students' linguistic competence in their mother tongue and English.

Table 6
Students' linguistic competence in Arabic and English

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
3	1	5	3.15	1.040
4	1	5	3.45	1.050
5	3	5	3.30	.801
6	3	5	4.25	.716
7	1	5	3.50	1.051

Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary
International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural
Identity

Statement 3, *'I speak English with my parents, sisters and brothers'*, and statement 4, *'I speak English with my friends at school'*, revealed moderate agreement among the students, with means of 3.15 and 3.45, respectively. Statement 5, *'I speak Arabic with my parents, sisters and brothers'*, revealed that students spoke Arabic with their families, with a mean of 4.30. The parents speak to their children in Arabic language to safeguard their Arabic language. One suggested this in her answer to the qualitative question, *'In your opinion, what can we do to preserve our children's Arabic language?'*, responding, *'We can maintain our children's Arabic language by speaking Arabic with them'*. Another parent stated, *'We can preserve their Arabic language by using Arabic as a means of communication at home'*. From statements 3, 4 and 5, it is clear that students preferred to speak Arabic with their families. For statement 6, *'I speak Arabic when I want to express my feelings'*, the students' responses indicated strong agreement that they used Arabic when they wanted to express their feelings, with a mean of 4.25. Moreover, for statement 7, *'I speak English when I want to express my feelings'*, the students revealed strong agreement that they used English when they wanted to express their feelings, with a mean of 3.50. According to the results, students prefer to express their feelings in Arabic language more than English language.

The third set of statements investigated the possible consequences of EMI.

Table 7
Effects of Using English on the Students' Mother Tongue

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
8	1	5	3.15	1.040
9	1	5	3.45	1.050
10	3	5	3.30	.801

For statement 8, *'Speaking only English affects my Arabic'*, the students revealed that English could affect their Arabic language if they spoke English only, with a mean of 3.6. For statement 9, *'If I do not speak Arabic language, my grasp of Arabic will disappear'*, the students indicated that their command of Arabic would disappear if they only spoke English, with a mean of 3.05; this revealed that the students had a level of awareness concerning language loss. Statement 10, *'There is no danger that I will lose my Arabic'*, illustrated low agreement among the students, with a mean of 2.10. A few students indicated that there was no risk of losing the Arabic language, but the majority disagreed with this view, indicating that most of the students had a high level of awareness regarding the importance of one's native language.

The fourth set of statements was formulated to investigate students' language use preference between Arabic and English.

Table 8
Students' Language Use Preference Between Their Mother Tongue and English and the Effect of English Language on Their Arabic Language

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
11	2	5	4.45	.759
12	1	5	2.59	1.146
13	2	5	4.30	.923
14	3	5	4.35	.745
15	1	5	3.50	.946

For statement 11, *'My parents encourage me to speak in English'*, the results revealed that the students were encouraged by their parents to talk in English, with a mean of 4.45. The next statement, *'I prefer writing in Arabic'*, indicated that the students preferred writing in Arabic with a mean of 2.59, while in statement 13, *'I prefer writing in English'*, indicated that the students preferred writing in English with a mean of 4.30. Statement 14, *'I prefer English classes'*, revealed that the students liked their English classes, with a mean of 4.35. In contrast, the students prefer Arabic language classes with a mean of 3.50, as in statement 15, *I prefer Arabic classes*. The findings showed that the students were encouraged by their parents to talk in English to increase their English proficiency (as shown in Table 11 below). In addition, most of the students preferred English classes and writing in English to Arabic classes and writing in Arabic. This reveals that, in international private schools, Arabic classes are not extremely motivating, and thus, most of the students prefer English classes, which increase their English skills like writing; as a result, most of them prefer to write in English. In fact, 'when there is no motivation to learn one's first language, the probability to be proficient in it is low' (Hanani, 2009, p.73). Moreover, if students do not develop their skills in Arabic language during their formative years and high school, there is no assurance that they will retain the Arabic language and its grammar (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011, p. 8). One parent emphasised this point, stating, *'My children have some problems in Arabic language skills, such as writing and reading'*.

The fifth set of statements aimed to investigate the possibility that English affects students' Arabic culture.

Table 9
Effects of English on Arabic culture

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
16	3	5	4.35	.813
17	1	5	3.50	.946
18	2	5	4.20	.1.152
19	1	5	3.60	1.188
20	2	5	3.95	1.050
21	1	5	3.65	1.137
22	1	5	3.95	1.099
23	2	5	3.45	.826
24	1	5	3.30	1.218
25	1	5	2.95	1.234

For Statement 16, *'I prefer reading in English'*, the findings revealed that most of the students preferred reading in English, with a mean of 4.35; the students indicated that they preferred English books or stories. In contrast, for statement 17, *'I prefer reading in Arabic'*, the students indicated that they preferred reading in Arabic with a mean of 3.50. The findings may indicate that students are not as motivated to read in Arabic as English in schools. This suggests that Arabic is marginalized in private school. Statement 18, *'I prefer watching English channels'*, indicated agreement among the students with a mean of 4.20. Statement 19, *'I prefer watching Arabic channels'*, revealed that students preferred watching Arabic channels with a mean of 3.60. Reading in English and watching English channels more than Arabic enhances students' exposure to English culture, and hence, possibly accepting its ideas or lifestyle. As Hopkyns (2014) noted, 'emptying English of its ideological and cultural kernel is easier said than done' (p. 13). This emphasises the point that English can affect students' Arabic culture, since cultural influences are associated with the English language.

Statement 20, *'Learning in the English language positively affects my attitudes toward foreign culture'*, revealed that the students had positive attitudes toward the foreign culture, with a mean of 3.95. Statement 21, *'English as a global language has affected the Arabic culture of Saudi society'*, elicited strong agreement among the students, with a mean of 3.65. However, statement 22, *'The English language does not affect my Arabic culture'*, indicated that the students did not perceive learning English as affecting their Arabic culture, with a mean of 3.59.

As shown in Table 9, statement 23, *'It is difficult to empty English of foreign culture'*, revealed that students realised that the language and culture are interrelated, exhibiting a mean of 3.45. Statement 24, *'Using the English language as a medium of instruction will affect the culture of the next generation'*, illustrated strong agreement among the students, with a mean of 3.30. Statement 25, *'English as a global language does not lead to the abandonment of traditional customs and culture and following the foreign culture'*, revealed moderate agreement among the students, with a mean of 2.95 out of 5.

The seventh set of statements elicited ways of preserving the Arabic language (see Table 10).

Table 10
Approaches for preserving the Arabic language and culture

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
26	2	5	3.95	.826
27	2	5	3.85	.875
28	2	5	4.00	1.124
29	1	5	3.55	1.146
30	1	5	4.25	1.118
31	1	5	3.20	1.196

For statement 26, *'The school's curriculum plays an important role in preserving Arabic culture'*, the responses revealed strong agreement among the students, with a mean of 3.95. Statement 27, *'Persevering and using Arabic is my responsibility'*, revealed that students were aware that they were accountable in preserving their mother tongue, with a mean of 3.85. For statement 28, *'I am proud of my mother tongue and I am not ashamed of using it'*, the findings showed strong agreement among the students, with a mean of 4.00. Statement 29*, 'Learning Arabic language does not receive much attention in private schools'*, also indicated a strong agreement among students, with a mean score of 3.55. Statement 30, *'There are more English classes than Arabic classes'*, revealed a strong agreement, with a mean score of 4.25. Students reported their preference for increasing Arabic classes in private schools in statement 31, *'I would prefer to increase the Arabic instruction in private international schools'*, with a mean of 3.20. The findings from the previous statements suggest ways of preserving students' Arabic language use and Arabic culture, such as focussing on learning Arabic subjects, reinforcing the students' ownership of their Arabic language and culture, paying more attention to Arabic learning and increasing the number of Arabic classes in private school.

3.2 Results of the Descriptive Qualitative and Quantitative Questions in the Parents' Questionnaire

The first set of statements in the parents' questionnaire was formulated to investigate the students' linguistic competence from the parents' perspective.

Table 11
Students' Linguistic Competence in Both Languages (Arabic and English)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Degree of language proficiency	Arabic	10	50.0	50.0	50.0
	English	10	50.0	50.0	100.0
Language used in expressing feelings and ideas	Arabic	11	55.0	55.0	55.0
	English	9	45.0	45.0	100.0
Parents' encouragement of language use	Arabic	7	35.0	35.0	35.0
	English	13	65.0	65.0	100.0

Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary
International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural
Identity

As shown in Table 11, statement 1, *'My children are more proficient in Arabic'*, indicated that 50% of the parents thought their children were more proficient in Arabic, while the other 50% responded that their children were more proficient in English. For statement 2, 55% of the parents indicated that their children preferred to express their feelings in Arabic, while 45% indicated that their children preferred to express their feelings in English; the results were compatible with the students'

responses, which showed that they preferred to express their ideas and feelings in Arabic over English. Statement 3 showed that 35% of the parents encouraged their children to speak Arabic, while 65% encouraged their children to speak English, suggesting that the parents wanted to increase their children's competence in English.

The second statement aimed at investigating the parents' awareness regarding the importance of learning English.

Table 12
Parents' Attitudes Toward the Importance of Learning English Language

Statements	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Level of effecting
The importance of learning English	4	5	4.75	.444	Very strong

The statement revealed that almost all the parents realised the importance of their children learning English, as English is considered the global language. In addition, they indicated that it is extremely important for their children to learn English at the primary level to become proficient in English. One parent expressed her attitude toward the importance and positive influence of learning English, saying, *'Speaking more than one language provides a lot of experiences and allows us to know other cultures around us; English also enable us to impose our Arab presence by expressing our ideologies and beliefs*

to others, since English is the global language'. Another parent stated, *'Learning English helps our children to search and benefit from foreign research, as most science and research on the internet is written in English'*. A third parent remarked, *'English is considered the language of the age, and it will provide our children with the best job opportunities'*.

The third set of statements aimed at exploring the influences of learning English on the children's mother tongue from their parents' point of view

Table 13
Awareness of the Effects of Using English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) on the Mother Tongue

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Level of effecting
The effect of English on Arabic	1	5	3.40	1.188	Strong
The effect of English on the student's mother tongue fluency	2	5	3.80	.834	Strong
Fear of losing the mother tongue	1	5	2.95	1.356	Middle

Statement 2 revealed a strong agreement between parents that English affects their children's Arabic language, with a mean of 3.40. Statement 3 indicated that focussing on learning English could affect students' fluency in their mother tongue, with a mean score of 3.80. One parent expressed her attitude toward the effects of focussing on learning English on her children's grasp of Arabic, stating, *'My children do not know most Arabic terms'*. Another parent stated, *'Focussing on learning English and neglecting Arabic could make children consider Arabic as a second language'*. Moreover, a third parent stated, *'Focussing on the English language makes students more proficient in English than Arabic,*

and thus, they will not be able to read the Koran fluently'. Statement 4 revealed that the parents were not afraid that their children would lose their grasp of Arabic, with a mean of 2.95. This suggests that parents have a low level of awareness concerning language loss; this result is compatible with those for statement 9 on the students' questionnaire, which showed a moderate agreement among the participants. The results indicate that parents' attitudes can influence those of their children.

The fourth set of statements aimed to explore the role that Arabic subjects play in preserving Arabic language and culture.

Table 14
Parents' Understanding of the Role that Arabic Subjects Play in Maintaining Arabic Language and Culture

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Level of effect
The curriculum preserves the Arabic language	2	5	4.05	.826	Strong
School curricula preserve Arab culture	3	5	4.15	.745	Strong

Statement 5 revealed a strong agreement among the parents that Arabic subjects preserve the Arabic language, with a mean of 4.05. In addition, the parents realised that

Arabic subjects maintain the Arab culture, with a mean score of 4.15. The second open-ended question was stated as follows: *'From your point of view, how can we preserve*

our Arabic language?' Most of the parents reported that Arabic could be preserved by teaching children the Arabic language and increasing Arabic classes. One parent stated, *'We can preserve our children's Arabic language and culture by focussing on the Arabic language and increasing Arabic classes'.* Another stated, *'We can preserve our*

children's Arabic language and culture by increasing Koran classes and using competitions to encourage our children to learn and speak Arabic fluently'.

The fifth set of statements was aimed at investigating the effects of English language on children's Arabic culture, both now and in future generations.

Table 15
Effects of the English Language on Arabic Culture

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Level of effect
The effect of English on children's culture	1	5	2.90	1.334	Medium
English's influence on Arabic culture	1	5	3.60	1.095	Strong
The effect of English on Arabic culture in the future	1	5	3.05	1.317	Medium

Statement 7 revealed a moderate agreement among the parents, with a mean of 2.90; the parents reported that the English language does not affect their children's culture. Statement 8 indicated a strong agreement among the parents that English, as a global language, affects the culture of Arabic society, with a mean score 3.60. Statement 9 revealed a moderate agreement among parents that the English language could affect their children's Arabic culture in future, with a mean score of 3.05.

According to the previous tables and explanations, the following findings can be delineated:

• The participants' attitudes concerning the importance of learning English were positive;

• There were negative influences of using EMI on students' Arabic language and culture;

• Focussing on learning Arabic subjects will preserve students' use of the Arabic language and their Arabic culture;

• There is a need to pay more attention to learning Arabic in international private schools; and

• It is important to increase the number of Arabic classes in international private schools.

4. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the possible consequences of using EMI in private international schools. the study aimed to answer the research questions, including: 1) What are consequences of using EMI on students at an early age of learning? 2) How can we preserve our children's L1 and cultural identity in Saudi Arabia? The findings are summarised and discussed in the subsections below.

4.1 The Importance of English as a Global Language

The participants' attitudes and perceptions concerning the importance of learning English as a global language indicated strong agreement among them. They realised the important position that English now occupies in education and the job market. Considering the results related to the importance of English, the parents (mean of 4.75)

and students (mean 4.80) accepted that this language was important for them. This supports results from many studies in this field. For example, it agrees with the findings from Hopkyns' (2014, p. 10) study, which revealed that the participants realised the importance of English when it came to progressing in their studies and careers. In addition, Al-Bakri's (2013, p. 61) study investigated the participants' attitudes toward EMI; all the interviewed participants admitted the important role that English plays in global communication, development and employment. Similarly, Al-Jarf's (2008, p. 199) study examined the participants' attitudes toward English, and the findings showed that 96% of the participants admitted the importance of English language, since it is the language of science, technology and research.

4.2 Consequences of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Private International Schools

The participants' responses related to statements about the consequences of using English for Arabic language and culture indicated that the students had more of a rapport with English than Arabic; English had become their language of choice. According to the results, the students preferred English classes, writing in English and watching English channels compared with Arabic. Due to these preferences, the native language will decline because the students have a poor attitude toward Arabic. In addition, there are more English than Arabic classes in private international schools. This will lead to limited interactions with Arabic, and thus, students will lose the bond with their native language (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011); indeed, 'one of the most successful means of destroying or retarding a language has been, and remains, education' (Hanani, 1992, p. 11).

This study showed moderate agreement among the participants with the statement that English may affect students' Arabic culture. For example, their positive attitudes toward foreign culture were illustrated in statement 20 in the students' questionnaire, which showed agreement among students (mean of 3.95) that they have positive attitudes toward English culture. This supports the results from many other studies; for example,

Effect of Using English as a Medium of Instruction in Primary
International Schools on the Children's first language and Cultural
Identity

Hopkyns' (2014) study revealed that English, as a global language, affects Arabic culture. In that study, 57% of the students and 67% of the teachers indicated that English affected their Arabic culture. For both groups, the repeated examples of English's effects were their changing attitudes toward and acceptance of other cultures or changes in their lifestyle.

4.3 Ways of Preserving Students' First Language and Cultural Identity

The language of instruction plays a crucial role in maintaining one's language and culture. The results for the statement, *'Arabic subjects play an important role in preserving students' Arabic language and culture',* revealed strong agreement among the participants that teaching subjects in the mother tongue preserves students' use of their L1 and culture. To maintain students' use of Arabic language and culture, it is extremely important to reinforce learning of the mother tongue in private schools, increase the number of classes and make Arabic classes more interesting, as students should have a firm foundation in their mother tongue while learning a second language; otherwise, they will lose their linguistic competence in their mother tongue. This result supports Fillmore's (1991, p. 345) findings, which indicated the importance of focussing on learning the L1 when it came to handling the inevitable encounter with the English language.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study was designed to reveal the potential effects of EMI on students' L1 and cultural identities. In fact, most parents prefer to send their children to private international schools to make them proficient in English. Thus, this study discussed the bilingualism education provided in private international schools. Most international schools use EMI, while little attention is given to Arabic. This limited attention to the Arabic language in international schools results in a gradual loss of students' Arabic language use. In fact, international schools provide subtractive bilingualism, in which English is learned at the expense of Arabic language and culture. The results of this study explored some of the effects of using EMI on students' L1 and cultural identities. The open-ended questions indicated that some students' Arabic proficiency had been affected as a result of using EMI. Given these consequences, many scholars assert the importance of using the mother tongue at the primary levels of education. Thus, the study discussed the importance of learning in mother tongue, especially during early education, to ensure a solid foundation in students' mother tongue. In fact, there is need to address the issues related to the bilingual education provided in private

international schools. The Saudi Ministry of Education can accomplish this by adopting additive bilingualism to maintain students' L1 and cultural identity while they learn English and benefit from the advantages brought by this language. There should be a system that can preserve the balance of needs of both languages (Ebad, 2014). In addition, policymakers have a great responsibility to provide many good employment opportunities that require Arabic proficiency to encourage students to learn the Arabic language so that it will not be replaced by English language. They need to view Arabic as a national language in international schools, and it should be taught carefully. There should be attractive techniques and creative approaches to attract students to learn Arabic as effectively as English. From another perspective, parents play an important role in preserving their children's L1 and cultural identities; they should share the responsibility for encouraging their children to learn Arabic as their native language.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

My aspiration was to make large-scale study but one of the limitations that emerged in conducting this research and prevented me to make large scale study was related to the number of questionnaires that I collected. I had 40 students as participants in the study, but I collected only 20 completed questionnaires. In addition, 30 parents agreed to participate, but only 20 questionnaires were returned. Another limitation was related to the number of Saudi students attending international school is limited. Thus, the sample size was small. Finally, the study only investigated the topic with 40 Saudi participants; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to the wider population.

Further research is needed on this topic, and such studies can be conducted in other cities with higher numbers of international schools and Saudi students in them; this will allow more accurate, generalizable results to be obtained. In addition, another data-collection tool could be used, such as in-depth interviews with students and parents, to obtain more information that cannot be elicited from questionnaires. Moreover, another type of research that could be conducted relates to how the L1 contributes to successful second language learning.

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