

# Linguistic Identities in the Arab Gulf States

Waves of Change

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First published 2022

ISBN: 978-0-367-71173-3 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-367-71171-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-14963-7 (ebk)

## **1 Arabic vis-à-vis English in the Gulf**

Bridging the ideological divide

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003149637-3

This chapter is funded by Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates



**Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

# 1 Arabic vis-à-vis English in the Gulf

## Bridging the ideological divide

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Language policy and planning (LPP) in the Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is frequently changing and constantly under the microscope. LPP is concerned with how languages are used, when, for what purpose and by whom (Grin, 2003), as well as the values and rights associated with those languages (Stemper & King, 2017). LPP research involves understanding the development of both top-down and bottom-up language policies in public domains such as cafés (Cook, 2021), on public signage (Hopkyns & van den Hoven, 2021), in official spaces such as courts, or in educational contexts relating to the Medium of Instruction (MOI). Rajagopalan (2013) reminds us that, rather than language policy being a set of official and finite rules governing language use, policies often stem from discussions about languages intended to create actions of public interest as well as from daily language use.

The metaphor of *linguistic ecologies* is often used in LPP research (Stemper & King, 2017) to refer to language practice, language use, or language on the ground (Spolsky, 2004). It is recognized that language is connected to multiple overlapping and intersecting ‘real world contextual variables’ (Finardi et al., 2021, p. 56) which include social, political, and ideological factors. In this sense, language policy is influenced by an often dynamic and complex mix of discourse, circumstances, forces, currents, and beliefs which flow or jar in accordance with the geopolitical spheres in which they are embedded.

In addition to geopolitical factors influencing language policy, global phenomena such as *globalization* and *internationalization* also play a critical role. *Globalization* refers to the increase in the movement of people, information and products, as well as an increased number of contact zones between people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Albrow & King, 1990). *Internationalization* involves an increased mobility of students and faculty in higher education and the adoption of English-medium instruction (EMI) in what Collini (2012) names ‘global multiversities’. As Finardi et al. (2021) point out, ‘the conceptual link between globalization and internationalization is so close that it is hard to know whether internationalization is an agent of

globalization or a result' (p. 54). However, the two concepts differ in relation to language policy. While the former is relatively uncontrolled, the latter is proactive, planned and moulded by 'conscious action' (Wächter, 2000, p. 9). A combined result of globalization and internationalization is the increase of English globally across multiple domains.

LPP, especially related to EMI, has been investigated in various contexts globally, as evident in a number of recent books solely focusing on this topic (Block & Khan, 2021; Macaro, 2018; Paulsrud et al., 2021). In addition, 2019 saw the launch of the *Journal of English-Medium Instruction* (JEMI) and the Routledge series on Studies in English-Medium Instruction. Despite this global surge of interest in LPP, Gulf contexts are notably underrepresented in the literature, and Gulf-based scholars are conspicuously absent from the editorial boards of key LPP journals such as *JEMI*, *Language Policy*, and *Current Issues in Language Planning*. As issues surrounding LPP vary according to cultural, sociolinguistic, and geopolitical factors, the Gulf context warrants further investigation, especially given the prominent role English plays in this multilingual region.

Previous Gulf LPP research has investigated initiatives such as Emiratization, Saudization and Omanization, which, among other objectives, aim to develop local citizens' English proficiency in order to replace foreign workers with Gulf nationals (Al Issa, 2020; Al-Shaiba, 2014; Sandiford, 2013). Gulf LPP research has also explored linguistic inclusivity on public signage (Ahmed, 2021; Buckingham, 2015; Hopkyns, 2020b; Hopkyns & van den Hoven, 2021) and family language policy (O'Neill, 2017; Said, 2011a; Taha-Thomure, 2019). Gulf EMI research has mainly focused on stakeholder perspectives (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Hopkyns, 2020a) and challenges (Abou-El-Kheir & MacLeod, 2017; Al-Bakri, 2013; Mouhanna, 2016; Rogier, 2012).

What is notably missing from Gulf LPP research is a deeper exploration of language ideologies and the role of the symbolic power that lies beneath language policies and the resultant effects on identities. Scholars such as Hillman et al. (2021) have recognized this gap in the literature and called for investigations into how bottom-up and top-down language policies in the Gulf interact with larger language ideologies and global discourses. This chapter, in turn, aims to help bridge this gap by exploring how language ideologies interact with LPP, drawing on Irvine and Gal's (2000) theories of the semiotic formation of language ideologies together with Bourdieu's (1991) theory of language and symbolic power. By critically examining the inter-relatedness of language ideologies, symbolic power, and policies concerning the region's two dominant languages of Arabic and English, the resultant complexities in Gulf linguistic identities are examined. This chapter also fills a gap in the literature by suggesting concrete ways in which to bridge ideological divisions through glocalization and translanguaging practice, with the goal of strengthening authentic identities in the Gulf.

## **Linguistic ecology of the Gulf: The growing presence of English**

When forming the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981, the six countries of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had the mutual objective of formulating ‘similar policies in the fields of religion, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, and administration’ (Macaro, 2018, p. 64). Although neither ‘language’ nor ‘education’ is mentioned explicitly in the above shared policy goals, the GCC countries share family resemblances in terms of language-in-education policies and the dominance of Arabic and English in their linguistic landscapes.

While Arabic is the official language of the GCC countries, English is the *de facto* lingua franca (Alharbi, 2017). Due to the region’s diverse demographics, many other languages are also present in various speech communities. Multilingualism in the region is closely tied to globalization, and global businesses using English are omnipresent. Even with Gulf-based companies such as Saudi Aramco and Saudi Airlines, English is the language used to train employees (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014) and English is also widely used online, especially on social media (Dashti, 2015). Multilingualism has especially mushroomed in the Gulf as a result of the region-specific ‘culture of fast-paced change’ (Hopkyns, 2020a). Due to the relatively recent discovery of oil and other natural resources, Gulf societies have undergone rapid transformations on multiple levels. With urbanization rates of over 90%, the resource-rich countries of the Gulf comprise the most urbanized region in the world (Ewers & Dicce, 2016). In the space of decades, a frenzy of development has occurred in the economies of finance, real estate, retail and hospitality alongside dramatic changes to infrastructure and education. Such fast-paced development has necessitated the import of a large expatriate population working in these new sectors. The UAE and Qatar have the highest numbers of expatriates at just under 90% in both nations, and Oman and Saudi Arabia have the lowest percentages at approximately 45% and 33% respectively (GLMM, 2016). Although the Gulf’s multilingual population collectively speak over 100 different languages, Arabic and English are given textual priority in public spaces (Blum, 2014; Buckingham, 2015; Hopkyns & van den Hoven, 2021). Bilingual signage is often skewed slightly in favour of English (Ahmed, 2021; Hopkyns, 2021) despite Arabization efforts in place to ‘clean up the linguistic landscape’ such as Qatar’s Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning issuing fines for signage without the presence of Arabic (Said, 2011b). In major Gulf cities, English is also more often heard verbally than Arabic or peripheral languages (Randall & Samimi, 2010), which is in part due to the unusually large expatriate communities using English as a lingua franca and English’s status as a global language.

The omnipresence of English in public domains is paired with full or partial EMI being a characteristic of the GCC countries’ schooling, especially in tertiary institutions (Al-Issa, 2020; Hillman et al., 2019; Hopkyns, 2020a).

Mahboob and Elyas (2017) point out that, especially post-9/11, the Gulf countries have been affected by internationalization. Transnational political and economic pressure (Elyas & Picard, 2013) for Gulf countries to use EMI and imported Western curricula has led to an increase of English in education as well as the mass hiring of teachers and faculties from overseas (Gallagher, 2019). This is particularly apparent in the multitude of ‘international’ branch campuses across the Gulf such as New York University Abu Dhabi, Exeter University Dubai, and Georgetown University Doha. Such branch campuses predominantly originate from Anglophone countries and often directly transfer faculties from the home base campus. Such a phenomenon has led to the suggestion that the words ‘international’ and ‘internationalization’ are merely euphemisms for ‘English’ and ‘Englishization’ or ‘Americanization’ (Block & Khan, 2021).

English in education is often framed as a positive development fuelled by global and local neoliberal goals and expectations. Especially in wealthy developing nations such as Singapore and the Gulf states, EMI is ideologically connected to building linguistic and cultural capital (Foucault, 2008) and is seen as a form of commodification directly connected to economic success (Sharma & Phyak, 2017). De Costa et al. (2020) describe such neoliberal discourse as ‘linguistic entrepreneurship’, whereby the learning of languages (usually English) is framed as a moral obligation or ‘responsibility as a good citizen’ (De Costa et al., 2020, p. 3). Together with neoliberal mindsets being stimulated collectively by national agendas, individuals may also have independently adopted or internalized such goals of entrepreneurial self-development for themselves as ‘neoliberal subjects’ (De Costa et al., 2020), in which a key ingredient is high English proficiency.

In contrast, the less desirable effects of internationalization have not gone unnoticed. Concerns about the attrition of local languages and cultures have been voiced through the use of warfare metaphors such as ‘neoliberal terror’ (Lipman, 2004) and ‘neoliberalism’s war on higher education’ (Giroux 2014). In the Gulf, such concerns centre around Arabic being pushed out of both the public and educational domain, English acting as an academic gatekeeper, an increased cognitive load for students, loss of creativity, and a reduced sense of belonging (Hillman & Ocampo Eibenschutz, 2018; Hopkyns 2020a, 2020b; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015; Carroll et al., 2017). Although Arabic is one of the world’s ‘hypercentral’ (De Swaan, 2001) languages and the fourth language of the United Nations, in the Gulf context the combined ubiquity of English in public domains and in the educational sphere have caused some to view Arabic as a ‘minority language’ (Eisele, 2017, p. 309). In the following section we explore the complex and interwoven relationship of language ideologies, symbolic power, and identities.

### **Semiotic formation of language ideologies and symbolic power**

Ideologies can be defined as positioned and partial visions of the world, relying on comparison and perspective. Ideologies exploit differences in

expressive features, linguistic or otherwise, to construct convincing stereotypes of people, spaces, and activities (Gal & Irvine, 2019). Language ideologies specifically refer to beliefs about languages and speakers of languages that are often below people's awareness, with the sources of such language ideologies often going unnoticed or unexamined. Often, the sources of such ideologies are societal, historical, and media-related. As Irvine and Gal (2000) state, 'there is no view from nowhere: no gaze that is not positioned' (p. 36). In post-colonial contexts, for example, symbolism around colonial languages and local languages remains deeply embedded in analytical frameworks (Irvine & Gal, 2000). In recent decades, globalization and internationalization have also impacted positions on languages. A further dynamic affecting ideologies in the Gulf context are *fatwas* (Alharbi, 2020), which are 'published opinions or decisions regarding religious doctrine or law made by a recognized authority' (Glasse, 1989, p. 125). *Fatwas* change over time and cover a wide range of topics including language learning, where both pro-English and anti-English sentiments exist (Alharbi, 2020). Additional sources of influence include children's storybooks (Gallagher & Bataineh, 2019) and media, where the representations of languages and the social groups attached to them can shape ideologies.

Ideologies are formed through symbolism or the semiotic process of assigning meaning to signs. Symbolism can be roughly understood as a 'stand-for' type of projection. Language symbolism projects what happens in the social world onto language, so languages and language varieties become symbols that stand for social agents, groups, and institutions, and intra- and inter-language relations become symbols that represent degrees of power. As Kroskrity (2004) states, language symbolism ideologizes language to drive it out of the seemingly value-neutral linguistic world and into the bog of socio-political complications.

Irvine and Gal (2000) identify three semiotic processes by which language ideologies are formed: *Iconization*, *fractal recursivity*, and *erasure*. *Iconization* involves linguistic features that index social groups, which could be historical, contingent, or conventional. Such features are seen as iconic representations of a group's inherent essence. Here, *indexicality* (Silverstein 2003; Eckert 2008) is employed whereby signs point to (or index) an object within the context it occurs. *Indexicality* naturalizes the correlation and co-occurrence of the linguistic and the sociopolitical, so the former can 'stand for' the latter. In this sense, ideologies of linguistic purity and monolingualism often imagine languages as corresponding with essentialized representations of social groups (Irvine & Gal, 2000). Here, stereotypes and biases result where English speakers are put into one box and Arabic speakers into another. *Fractal recursivity* involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level (Irvine & Gal, 2000) – for example, a perception of a large group being applied to an individual within the group and vice versa. Here, differentiation through comparison results in essentialized assumptions. If a speaker of a language is inconsistent with the ideological scheme one has of the language, *erasure* often takes place. Here, a social group

or language is seen as homogeneous with its internal variation disregarded. In this sense, a person or linguistic aspect which does not fit into a ‘neat box’ may be rendered invisible. Through the semiotic formations of ideologies, we can see that, rather than languages being purely functional and neutral, they are deeply embedded in symbolism influenced by geopolitics, global forces, media, and other sources such as *fatwas*, storybooks and personal experiences. Languages, in this sense, are more than languages; they become symbolic of lives, cultures, and identities.

Bourdieu’s (1977, 1991) theory of symbolic power is also relevant to language ideologies, LPP, and resultant identities in the Gulf context. Bourdieu (1991) stresses the social and political influence on languages, arguing that the value and meaning of speech is determined in part by the value ascribed to the person who speaks it. Access to language can influence access to social capital in terms of educational and employment opportunities (Heller, 2008), which results in a reciprocal relationship between a certain language and the power it symbolically possesses. Norton (2014) points out that the ascribed identities of both individuals and groups can affect access to language use and learning. Social pressure can place obligations on speakers of less symbolically powerful languages to conform to expectations associated with more powerful languages. For example, with English commonly symbolized as ‘an icon of modernization’ (Hopkyns, 2020a), considerable power is attributed to knowing and mastering English. Bourdieu (1991) names such pressure to acquire linguistic social capital as *symbolic violence*, which can result in ‘harm to a person’s symbolic self’ (Kramersch, 2021, p. 216) in terms of sense of belonging and identity. In the following section, we turn to look at language ideologies in relation to Arabic and English, and we discuss the implications of language symbolism on Gulf LPP and linguistic identities.

### **Symbolic representation of Arabic and English**

Previous studies in the Gulf have found binary and divisive language ideologies surrounding the regions’ two dominant languages: Arabic and English. In Hopkyns’ (2020a) study with 100 Emirati university students, 12 Emirati primary school teachers, and 52 expatriate faculty members, participants were asked to name words or phrases they associated with Arabic and English and then asked to reflect on what the languages symbolized. Findings revealed that the most common word associated with Arabic was *religion* and related words such as ‘*Quran, Islam, Muslim, pray, Mosque, Prophet Mohamed, Mecca*’ (p. 114). *Religion* was closely followed by *culture, tradition, and customs*, then *history* and *heritage*. For Emirati participants, Arabic also symbolized domestic life and the local region, as indicated by the words *family, friends, home, Middle East, Gulf* and *desert*. Feelings of ownership were seen by word associations such as ‘*my, first, mother tongue language*’ (p. 115). English, in contrast, was connected with public spheres and the wider world as indicated by the word associations *global, international, education/*

*jobs, internet, entertainment, communication, travel, and public life (hospitals, shops, restaurants)*. In contrast to Arabic, and despite the many roles English plays in Emiratis' lives, it was not seen as 'their' language. Rather, English was associated with '*Western, British, American, Western places or artifacts*' (p. 107). Arabic, in this sense, was closely tied to identity whereas English was positioned as a foreign or 'other' language.

Similarly, in Findlow's (2006) UAE-based study, Emirati university students exhibited distinct worldviews in relation to Arabic and English, with Arabic representing *cultural authenticity, localism, tradition, emotions, and religion*, and English representing *modernity, internationalism, business, material status, and secularism* (p. 25). Arabic was seen by some students as a language of the past, with a romantic image of nostalgia reminiscent of past glories (Findlow 2006). Al-Issa and Dahan (2011) also found that Arabic was seen to represent a less modern part of Arabs' lives. In previous studies mentioned above (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Findlow, 2006; Hopkyns, 2020a), the lack of overlapping associations between Arabic and English indicates binary symbolism and polarized language ideologies. We can see the semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure functioning to divide the languages into different spaces (domestic/public sphere) as well as influencing differing degrees of ownership. Although, in reality, there are many exceptions to such firm divisions (such as Arabic speakers living in the UK, Arabic used in education, or English used in home settings), such instances tend to be 'erased' or neaten to fit definite binary categories.

Previous studies on the symbolism of English and Arabic also revealed English as having considerable symbolic power in the region. In Hopkyns' (2020a) study, Emirati participants saw English as symbolizing *the future and development*, as well as being *useful, necessary, and powerful*. The association between English and power was also found in Troudi and Jendli's (2011) study with Emirati university students, where English in education was said to represent 'power and success, modernism, liberalism, freedom, and equality' (p. 26). Dashti (2015) found that English was seen as the most prestigious language among all of those spoken in Kuwait, such as Kuwaiti Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic, with English symbolizing a 'highly educated and socially respected' language (p. 31).

Conflicting symbolism relating to English has also been revealed in previous studies. Some Emirati university students and schoolteachers in Hopkyns' (2020a) study viewed English as *easy, interesting, and enjoyable*, while others saw English as a subtractive force as indicated by the words '*imposed, affect society and influence*' (p. 107). Such conflicting symbolism surrounding English was also found in Alharbi's (2020) analysis of Saudi Arabian *fatwas* which contained two main ideological overarching frames: Anti-English and pro-English. Historical events have also impacted ideologies around English. For example, in Kuwait, Dashti (2015) found that the allied forces' liberation of the nation in 1991 had a great influence on the positive emotional feelings Kuwaitis have towards British and American people, and this



was consequently reflected in their attitudes towards the English language. Here, we see indexicality applied by associating a group of people with language. Conflicting language ideologies are also frequently voiced in Gulf newspapers where neoliberalism connected with English is pushed forward in some headlines and warned against in others (Hopkyns, 2016). The way in which Arabic and English tend to be positioned against each other in public discourse and the media, in a metaphorical battle for power and dominance, has arguably caused divisive ideologies to flourish.

### **Bridging the ideological divide**

In a circular and interwoven manner, divisive language ideologies feed into language policies such as EMI and English-only classroom environments and vice versa. Here, English is seen as ideologically symbolizing education, and, at the same time, education is physically dominated by English, meaning that educational policies and ideologies are in lockstep. Issues arise when language ideologies clash with the linguistic ecology or language practice of a region. For example, although the mixing of Arabic and English through translanguaging practice (Canagarajah, 2013) is ordinary and commonplace in the multilingual Gulf states (Hopkyns et al., 2018, 2021), attitudes towards such a practice are decidedly mixed, with the ideological separation of the languages resulting in language purity beliefs centred around ‘parallel monolingualism’ (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In this sense, Arabic and English are frequently seen as incompatible in the same space due to the polarized values attached (Hopkyns et al., 2021). As Calafato and Tang (2019, p. 135) state, often Gulf students believe that multilingualism should operate within a domain-specific framework, where English is used outside the home and Arabic inside.

Such a mismatch between practice and top-down policies influenced by dominant ideologies can result in discomfort, guilt, or ‘shame’ (see Hillman, this volume) around mixing languages. For example, O’Neill’s (2017) article, which is entitled ‘It’s not comfortable being who I am’, describes Emirati students’ discomfort at being in between two linguistic worlds. Similarly, Emirati university students have been described as ‘dancing in between’ languages, as well as experiencing mixed loyalties to different aspects of their bilingual selves according to social context (Hopkyns, 2020c). Post-structuralist approaches to identity recognize that identities are not fixed but rather dynamic, plural, multi-faceted, complex, and socially constructed (Norton, 2013). Through a post-structuralist lens, it is not possible or desirable to compartmentalize English-speaking and Arabic-speaking selves into neat domain-determined boxes without overlap. Such divisional ideologies clash with natural and authentic language use where bilinguals fluidly mix languages in ordinary and ‘unremarkable’ (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2014) everyday practice.

Neoliberal-driven LPP, which places an emphasis on prioritizing English in education and in public spheres, has led to many counter movements aimed

at boosting the presence of Arabic in the region (Taha-Thomure, 2019). Initiatives such as *BilArabi* (meaning: ‘In Arabic’) encourage the use of Arabic in society via reading, writing, and social media with the aim of ‘preserving’ Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) (Ramahi, 2017). In addition, the Arabic Language Charter, which was introduced in the UAE in 2012, concentrates on 13 items, ranging from ensuring Arabic is used as the official language of government services as well as for formal written communication, laws, and decrees, to encouraging private schools and language centres to offer Arabic classes for non-native learners (Taha-Thomure, 2019). Similarly, Saudi Arabia’s Education and Training Evaluation Commission (ETEC) has made plans to launch a global initiative for the accreditation of centres and programs to teach Arabic to non-native speakers with the aim of ‘reinforcing Saudi Arabia’s leadership role in preserving the Arabic language’ (Al Shammari, 2020).

Although such efforts are well intentioned and effective in raising the profile of Arabic in the region and internationally, such Arabic language initiatives tend to focus on preserving ‘pure’ MSA (Taha-Thomure, 2019) or positioning Arabic as a replacement or competitor in relation to English. While preserving a work of art or historical building may be achievable, ‘preserving’ anything as characteristically fluid and flexible as language is a very difficult task. Part of what drives the desire to ‘preserve’ local languages, as part of language purity missions, are feelings of a lack of control due to the rapid pace of globalization which affects the Gulf region arguably more dramatically than many other global contexts (Hopkyns, 2020a). However, we argue in this chapter that, by focusing on the ‘preservation’ of MSA, ideological divisions between English and Arabic are reinforced. We argue that a more effective and less divisional way forward is to support and endorse authentic glocal and translingual identities by encouraging a blurring of the boundaries between languages in multiple domains leading to language sustainability. As García (2011) states, ‘the concept of language sustainability is dynamic and future-orientated, rather than static and past-orientated’ (p. 7). Language sustainability can be achieved by recognizing the dynamic, changeable, and localized character of language use and by applying such views across domains. The final section of this chapter will provide concrete suggestions for ways in which LPP can move towards ‘language sustainability’ rather than focusing primarily on ‘language preservation’.

### **Conclusion: Strengthening glocal and translingual identities**

To move away from the current situation where ideological divides place Arabic and English as symbolic opposites, leading to conflicted local linguistic identities, we suggest two future policy directions: An increased focus on glocalization and the need for translingual identities to be legitimized across domains.

As Finardi et al. (2021) point out, a natural tension between local and global results in the need for a counterbalance. A counterbalance is found

in the phenomenon of glocalization (Robertson, 1992) which refers to the intricate process in which ‘the global is brought into conjunction with the local, and the local is modified to accommodate the global (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 45). Glocalization involves the dislodging of languages from particular locales (Rubdy & Alsagoff, 2014) and the creation of ‘third spaces’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 4). Given that, in the Gulf, models of educational development reflect the ‘best coming from the West’ (Aydarova, 2012) position, it has been argued that local teachers, with their expertise and initiatives, are not easily able to contribute to the field. In cases where ‘native English speakers’ are seen as the best teachers in EMI contexts, the fallacy of native-speaker superiority is perpetuated and reinforced (Phillipson, 2009). This takes place at the expense of diversity, competence, and a major need for Gulf students to see successful role models represented through local English teachers. Rather than the current focus on hiring non-Arabic-speaking English teachers from Britain, Australia, and North America (BANA) together with using Western imported curricula, a move toward employing bilingual English-Arabic teachers and providing choice around the medium of instruction would strengthen glocal identities in educational spaces. The current symbolism of English as the possession of those from English-speaking countries and also as the language of education needs to be disrupted in favour of a less divisional view whereby English and Arabic are both seen as part of Gulf identities and knowledge production. An emphasis on glocalization involves not only the adaptation of English to fit local contexts, but also the adaptation of Arabic to reflect modern Gulf identities, which are influenced by multilingual ecologies. Here, Taha-Thomure (2019) stresses the need to embrace diglossia in Arabic as a strength rather than a weakness. Taha-Thomure (2019) goes on to argue that Arabic tends to be taught in a rigid way in schools where an emphasis on grammar and accuracy stifles students’ ability to use the language in innovative, playful, and creative ways. To support such flexibility, it is necessary to allow Arabic to bend and reshape itself in a similar way to English’s hydra-like nature. Greater flexibility around Arabic use would enliven Arabic rather than merely preserve a ‘discrete mono-language fixed in time’ (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2014, p. 84).

A second recommendation involves legitimizing translingual practice across domains. While translingual practice is a natural phenomenon in multilingual contexts, such a practice is often rejected in formal domains not only due to symbolic divisions of languages or linguistic purity ideologies but as a result of monolingual policies such as EMI supporting the use of one language only (Gramling, 2019). In informal spaces, translingual practice is often viewed as natural and comfortable, such as when chatting or texting (O’Neill, 2017), and the mixing of languages is also deemed appropriate and desirable on creative and amusing T-shirt designs and modern artwork (Hopkyns, 2021). However, current institutional multilingualism tends to support two pure languages

being used over translingual practice (Gramling, 2019). Stigma attached to mixing languages in EMI domains adds to divisional language ideologies. As Al-Bataineh (2020) points out, in the case of the UAE:

By making higher education available only in English, a powerful two-fold message is communicated to the learners and the community: the first explicitly affirms the strong ties between knowledge acquisition and English, making English a must-have language and the measure of success while the second implicitly suggests no obvious relationship between Arabic and knowledge acquisition, making Arabic dispensable and irrelevant to success.

(p. 12)

This process of inclusion and exclusion reflects the perceived symbolism and power relations associated with each language (Phillipson, 2009). If translingual practice were actively endorsed and validated in formal domains, such as in education, the increased presence of Arabic would counter domain loss, thus aiding language sustainability. In accordance with Cook's (1991) multicompetence model, translingual practice creates a lived experience and a social space for multilinguals to perform and transform their identity, attitudes, and values (Wei, 2015). Here, a natural fusion and harmony of languages which are part of Gulf linguistic identities would take place rather than a battle for dominance between ideologically separate languages. The 'traditional enumerative and classificatory view of multilingualism' (Lähteenmaki et al., 2011, p. 2) would subside to an emphasis on embracing authentic translingual identities.

This chapter has discussed the complex and interwoven relationship between language ideologies, symbolic power, LPP, and identities in the Gulf context. Based on findings from previous research, we have argued that divisive language ideologies place Arabic and English as symbolic opposites in the region, with Arabic associated with domestic and religious domains, and English representing the wider world and education. Such ideological divisions both contribute toward and are reinforced by neoliberal-driven language policies such as EMI. We have argued that divisive language ideologies and top-down policies conflict with linguistic ecologies in the region, where the mixing of languages is commonplace. The resultant effects on linguistic identities include feelings of guilt or discomfort mixing languages in what are seen as English-only or Arabic-only zones. We have suggested policy changes that emphasize glocalization and the endorsement of translingual identities across domains in order to strengthen authentic linguistic identities and bridge the current ideological divide. It is recognized that, rather like attempting to untie an intricate knot, unravelling dominant ideologies surrounding linguistic purism is a complex feat but an important one.

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