

A critical examination of the significance of Arabic in realizing an Arab identity: The perspectives of Arab youth at an English medium university in the United Arab Emirates

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Abstract

In the past few years in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) there has been an overwhelming focus on the use of English at all levels of education, in both public and private schools. In addition, the UAE has given English a fairly central role in both the educational sphere and within society. This rapid spread of English has caused concern among members of the general public, some political figures, and the media. Much of the concern with the spread of English is that the language is taking away from young people's attachment to and fluency in Arabic. In addition, there is a major concern that any loss of Arabic is tantamount to a loss of Arab identity.

The discourse of Arabic as an identity marker needs to be assessed in order to determine the validity of these concerns. In order to evaluate this discourse, this study examines how students, who are native speakers of Arabic, perceive their Arab identity. This is done in two ways: first, by asking them to articulate their perceptions about their own Arab identities, and secondly by asking them to discuss their use of both languages. The study asks the students directly what they believe marks their Arab identity.

The research for this thesis took place at an American curriculum, English medium university in the UAE. The data for the study was collected in two ways, through a questionnaire that 304 Arabic speaking students completed, followed by semi-structured interviews with 12 of those students.

The findings of this study reveal that Arab youth living in the UAE have a complex Arab identity which is made up of a variety of markers or affiliations. Most participants were unable to state definitively that Arabic was the main marker of their Arab identity, or even a major marker. In a world of globalization and global English, these Arab youth have found another language in which to communicate. They see both Arabic and English as resources for facilitating communication, and do not see a strict bond between Arabic and an Arab identity. The participants view their identity as fluid and display agency in their understanding of their Arab identity and in how they use both languages. The

results reveal that there is some concern with a loss of Arabic literacy, but there seems to be very little concern about any loss of Arab identity. Overall the findings show that researching Arab identity is a complicated process, and the responses that are garnered show how complex this process is in the UAE.

Based on these findings, it is argued that in this particular setting within the UAE, Arabic is not looked upon as an identity marker. However, due to the paucity of research directly interrogating Arabic and Arab identity construction in the Arab world, this study recommends that further studies be carried out in other institutions of higher education in the UAE, where students may not be as proficient in English, and in other Arab nations where English is perhaps not as firmly entrenched.

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List of Tables and Figures

Figure 2.1	Map of the Arab world	20
Table 4.1	Summary of the data collection activities	72
Table 4.2	Number of students participating in first stage of the study	73
Table 4.3	Nationalities of those completing the questionnaire	74
Table 4.4	Number of students participating in second stage of the study	74
Table 4.5	Interview participants	75
Table 4.6	Structure of the questionnaire	78
Table 4.7	Research questions/themes and corresponding questionnaire items	80
Table 5.1	Participants' views on identity	101
Table 5.2	Participants' perceptions of their own culture	101
Table 5.3	Participants' perceptions of belonging to Arab and western culture	101
Table 5.4	Participants' views on pre-chosen identity markers	103
Table 5.5	Themes resulting from my thematic analysis	104
Table 5.6	Participants' views on Arabic as an identity marker	106
Table 5.7	Participants' perceptions of Arabic as a defining feature of an Arab	106
Table 5.8	Participants' consideration of other identity markers	107
Table 5.9	Participants' responses to language use with friends	109
Table 5.10	Participants' responses to language use with parents	109
Table 5.11	Participants' responses to language use with siblings	109
Table 5.12	Participants' perceptions on using English for their studies	110
Table 5.13	Participants' responses to the language they use at university	111
Table 5.14	Participants' responses to the language for reading newspapers	111

Table 5.15	Participants' perceptions of which language they think better in	112
Table 5.16	Participants' perceptions of language which expresses their feelings	112
Table 5.17	Participants' perceptions of their most expressive language	113
Table 5.18	Globalization is harmful to Arab identity	114
Table 5.19	Globalization is harmful to the Arabic language	115
Table 5.20	Speaking English has affected my attitude towards Arab culture	115
Table 5.21	Speaking English makes me feel distant from Arab culture	115
Table 5.22	Speaking English makes it difficult to maintain an Arab identity	116
Table 5.23	Speaking English has affected the way I relate to my family	117
Table 5.24	I have concerns that I speak English more than Arabic	117
Table 5.25	Speaking English will give me better opportunities for the future	119
Table 5.26	Speaking English has affected my interpretation of world events	119
Table 5.27	Speaking English has affected my attitude towards western culture	119
Table 6.1	Markers of an Arab identity	123

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	4
List of Tables and Figures	5
Chapter 1. Introduction to the Study	11
1.0 Introduction	11
1.1 Rationale for the study	12
1.2 Aims of the study	15
1.3 Significance of the study	15
1.4 Organization of the study	18
Chapter 2. Background to the Study	19
2.0 Introduction	19
2.1 Towards a definition of an Arab identity	19
2.1.1 Who are the Arabs?	19
2.1.2 Arab identity as an ethno-regional identity	21
2.2 Arabic, Arab identity and global English	23
2.3 Arab identity and globalization: the case of the UAE	26
2.3.1 Language use in the UAE	27
2.3.2 Education and language policy in the UAE	28
2.3.3 Tertiary education in the UAE	30
2.4 Emirates American University (EAU)	31
2.5 Conclusion	33
Chapter 3. Literature Review	34
3.0 Introduction	34
3.1 Towards an understanding of identity: trends and debates in identity research	35
3.1.1 Different traditions within identity research	35
3.1.2 Identity in the field of applied linguistics	37
3.1.3 Debates about the relationship between language and identity construction	37
3.2 Theorizing the relationship between language and ethnic identity: competing perspectives	38
3.2.1 The Social Identity Theory perspective on the relationship between ethnicity and language	38
3.2.1.1 SIT and the concept of ethnolinguistic identity	40
3.2.1.2 Reflections on the contributions of SIT	40
3.2.2 Post-structuralist perspectives on identity construction	42
3.2.2.1 The impact of globalization on identity construction	42
3.2.2.2 The disconnect between language and ethnic identity	43
3.2.2.3 Discourse, power, and identity construction	46
3.2.2.4 Agency and identity construction	50
3.3 Implications on the relationship between identity and language	53
3.3.1 Factors influencing language choice	54
3.3.1.1 Local affiliations or domains	55

3.3.1.2	Situational	56
3.3.1.3	Investment and language choices	57
3.4	Emotions, language, and identity construction	60
3.5	The theoretical framework underpinning the study	60
3.6	Previous studies related to the research topic	62
3.7	Conclusion	64
 Chapter 4. Research Methodology		66
4.0	Introduction	66
4.1	Research questions	67
4.2	The design of the study	67
4.2.1	My ontological and epistemological stance	67
4.2.2	Methodological decision-making and the design of the study	69
4.3	The research site and participants	72
4.4	Data collection methods	76
4.4.1	Questionnaires: initial data collection method	76
4.4.1.1	Design of the questionnaire used in this study	76
4.4.1.2	Piloting the questionnaire	80
4.4.1.3	Gaining access to the research sample	81
4.4.1.4	Distribution of the questionnaires	82
4.4.1.5	Analysis of the quantitative data	83
4.4.2	Interviews: second data collection method	83
4.4.2.1	Design of the semi-structured interviews used in this study	84
4.4.2.2	Identifying the interview participants	85
4.4.2.3	Trialing the interview	86
4.4.2.4	Conducting the interviews	87
4.4.2.5	Personal observations and notes	88
4.4.2.6	Analysis of the qualitative data generated from the interviews and open-ended questionnaire data	89
4.4.2.6.1	Step 1: transcription	89
4.4.2.6.2	Step 2: coding	90
4.5	Ensuring data quality	91
4.5.1	My impact as a researcher on the data collection and analysis process	92
4.5.2	Ensuring credibility and trustworthiness	93
4.5.2.1	Research ethics	96
4.6	Limitations of the study design	98
 Chapter 5. Findings from the quantitative data		100
5.0	Introduction	100
5.1	What it means to be an Arab and what makes an Arab identity	100
5.1.1	The extent to which participants self-identify as Arabs	100
5.1.2	Participants' views on markers of an Arab identity	102
5.2	Views on the significance of the Arabic language as a marker of Arab identity	106
5.3	Using Arabic and English and any related concerns	108
5.3.1	Participants' language practices	108
5.3.2	Participants' perspectives on the impact of speaking English on an Arab identity	113

5.3.2.1	The extent to which English poses a threat to an Arab identity	114
5.3.2.2	Other perceptions on the impact of speaking English on the participants	118
5.4	Summary of chapter	120
Chapter 6. Findings from the qualitative data		121
6.0	Introduction	121
6.1	Participants' perspective on how far they consider themselves Arabs	122
6.1.1	Staking out the territory: the meaning of an Arab identity	123
6.1.2	Questioning the relevance of Arab identity as a construct	128
6.2	The Arabic language as a marker of Arab identity versus Arabic as a means of communication	133
6.3	Summary of identity markers and being Arab	137
6.4	Using Arabic and using English and Arabic	137
6.5	Language as sentiment	142
6.6	English as an opportunity versus English as a concern	147
	Opportunity	147
	Concerns about language loss	152
6.7	The effects of globalization	154
6.8	Summary	157
Chapter 7. Discussion and Implications		159
7.0	Introduction	159
7.1	Perceptions of Arabness and the place of Arabic	161
7.1.1	Non-Arab identity	162
7.2	Various markers of Arab identity	164
7.3	Arabic and Arab identity in the contemporary world	170
7.3.1	Diglossia	170
7.3.2	Migrants and hybridity	172
7.3.3	Influence of globalization	173
7.3.4	Role of global English	175
7.3.5	Education in the Arab world	176
7.4	Summary of Arabic language and identity	177
7.5	Uses of Arabic and English	178
7.5.1	Arabic and the family	180
7.5.2	Why English is used so much: concern or opportunity?	181
7.5.3	Concerns over use of English versus Arabic	183
7.6	Summary of chapter findings	185
7.7	Implications of the study for an understanding of the relationship between language and identity	186
Chapter 8. Conclusions and Recommendations		192
8.0	Introduction	192
8.1	Summary of the study	192
8.2	Contributions to knowledge	194
8.3	Recommendations	194
8.4	Personal reflections	195

Appendices	199
Appendix 1: Copy of the questionnaire	199
Appendix 2: Interview guide for individual interviews	203
Appendix 3: Vignettes of interviewees	205
Appendix 4: Original open codes	210
Appendix 5: Axial codes	232
Appendix 6: Sample coded interview transcript	234
Appendix 7: Consent form	249
Appendix 8: Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval from UAE	251
Appendix 9: Ethical approval form from Exeter	259
References	265

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The study reported in this thesis is positioned within a growing body of literature which is interested in examining the relationship between language, identity and the increasing globalization that is a feature of life in the 21st century. Specifically, for reasons I will elaborate on below, it is interested to examine the strength of the relationship between Arabic and an Arab identity in the context of increasing globalization among young people in the Middle East who are regular users of English.

Globalization, a process entailing the increasing flow of capital, products, information, ideas, and people around the world (Appadurai, 1996) resulting in the intensification of worldwide social relations (Giddens, 1991), is seen as significant for scholars with an interest in identity construction and language practices due to the ways in which it 'unsettles' established ways of thinking about these things. As Delanty (2003 cited in Block, 2007) has pointed out, for example, the increasingly interconnected nature of 21st century life means that some of the traditional reference points for the self, such as culture and nationality, have become unstuck. The ramifications of this for individuals, nation states, and the building of a global community, is attracting a great deal of interest from scholars and a number of different and competing interpretations of the impact of globalization are evident in the literature. While there are those who argue that globalization poses a threat to local ways of life, and according to Najjar (2005) nearly all Arabs agree that globalization equals "Americanization," and should be resisted, others argue it is a transformative process leading to new social and cultural practices, and as such, affords new opportunities for identity construction (Ritzer, 1996; Robertson, 1992).

With respect to the impact of globalization on language practices around the globe, it is interesting to note that alongside the increasing multilingualism in many societies worldwide is a growing plurilingualism, or the ability for increasing numbers of individuals to hold a degree of competence in more than

one language, something which some applied linguists argue should be encouraged and celebrated (see for example, Marshall & Moore, 2013, p. 474). However, alongside this, it is also the case that for a variety of economic, historical, and political reasons that English has established itself as a global lingua franca, and as such it is viewed as an important form of linguistic capital in an increasingly globalized world (Canagarajah, 2006, 2007; Prodromou, 2008). As a result, educational policy makers in the vast majority of countries worldwide see increasing access to English as central to building a 21st century workforce. In recent years, a special term, global English, has been increasingly used to describe the way in which English is used by growing numbers of people worldwide (see for example Crystal, 2003; Jenkins 2007). The increasing use of English worldwide and the promotion of this by governments is fueling growing concerns about heritage language loss in a number of countries. For many, perceptions of perceived language loss generate strong emotional feelings, not least because it is often assumed to be one of the more visible signs of cultural or ethnic identity (Joseph, 2004). Thus, in some contexts language loss is seen to be closely linked to a loss of identity as well. This conjoining of language loss and identity loss has, in recent years, assumed a dominant place in discussions of language and identity construction in the context of global English in the Arab world, as I will discuss below, and it is an interest in subjecting some of the assumptions about the relationship between these things that formed my motivation for undertaking the study reported in this thesis.

1.1 Rationale for the study

In the Arab world, comprising more than twenty countries across North Africa, the Levant, and the Gulf States, Arabic is widely regarded to be a highly significant, if not the most significant marker of an Arab identity (see Ahmed, 2010; Al Mutawa, 2008), and Arab states have used their common language as a bond that gives them a shared identity. However, it is also the case that, as elsewhere in the world, in this region, English is widely recognized as important in order to participate in the global market place, and efforts to ensure that young people develop this form of global capital has driven the push towards an increasingly English medium education (EMI) in the region, particularly at the higher education stage. Given the perceived strength of the relationship

between Arabic and being an Arab, the emphasis on global English as manifested through EMI policies is raising concerns (see for example, Abed, 2007; Zughoul, 2003; Najjar, 2005).

In the UAE and other Gulf countries, where a large percentage of the population are expatriates, there are a number of additional factors which can be seen to further fuel this sense of Arabic and Arab identity as being threatened by global English. On the one hand, this is because English is one of the major means of communication between an enormously linguistically and culturally diverse population and second, because the standard of written Arabic in particular is perceived to have fallen markedly (see for example, Benkharafa, 2013; Issa, 2013a; Troudi, 2007).

The discourse of Arab identity and Arabic is a powerful one, and I myself was convinced that this was a problem (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2007, 2011). However, I now believe it is important to tease out the real concerns in the region about language loss from the assumption that this loss is damaging Arab identity. While language preservation is undoubtedly important, as it is part of the heritage of Arab people, in a plurilingual world, I believe that the use of other languages does not necessarily signal a problem or crisis of ethnic identity. Indeed, as someone who teaches at an EMI university in the UAE, I do not observe Arab youth to be particularly conflicted by their use of English. In terms of myself, as someone who grew up bi-culturally (Arab-American) and resided in both an Arab country and the US during my formative years, I have always identified myself as Arab, at least in part, and yet I am not fluent in Arabic. While this is a position I am comfortable with, the assumed tight relationship between Arabic and being an Arab, prevalent in the UAE, is one which frames me as a non-Arab. I believe that teasing out the relationship between language and Arab identity, as the study I will report in this thesis attempts to do, will be illuminating for others like me, who claim dual heritage, as well as of value for those with a research interest or other investment in deepening an understanding of the relationship between language and identity.

A great deal has been written about the growth and spread of English and its impact on local languages and identities. However, within the field of applied

linguistics, much of the work that has been written about global English and its impact on local languages and cultures has focused on ideological or political concerns about the spread of English and placed discussions at the level of educational decision-making and language policy (see for example, Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Phillipson, 1998, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000, 2001) rather than grounding this in empirical research directed at an understanding of the lived realities of global English from the perspectives of those who use it on a daily basis. While there is an emerging literature which seeks to uncover the voices of those who are now surrounded by global English in the Arab world and elsewhere, these tend to prioritize attitudes and experiences of global English without linking this back to people's attitudes and experiences of their own ontological characteristics, namely the ways they self-identify with or claim a sense of belonging to a particular group. Thus, I believe that in order to interrogate the relationship between Arabic, Arab identity, and globalization, it is crucial to inquire into how far and in what ways people feel themselves to be Arabs, as well as to understand if the emphasis on global English, evident through widespread EMI, is of any major concern to them; this is central to the aims of my study as detailed below.

In the UAE, where I live and work, nearly every week finds an article devoted to the problem of education in the country, usually tied to EMI. As was noted in one UAE newspaper, *The National*, debates concerning the role of Arabic as an identity shaper are "often laden with emotion" (*National* Editorial, 2011), and taking a more pragmatic stance, by examining people's experiences, I seek to counterbalance this emotionality with some concrete data. I do so with an open mind rather than merely assuming that because globalization may be increasing the use of English among many people that this is necessarily a threat to Arab identity.

I have chosen, as the subjects of my study, young people engaged in EMI education at the university where I work. The youth of any country are most affected by innovation and globalization. Young people are digitally connected and represent the future. Arab youth in the UAE have been exposed to EMI, and they are interested in the pop culture brought through English and globalization. Consequently they represent a sample that has been affected by

global English and globalization; in fact, they were intentionally chosen because they have been touched by both phenomena. The purpose of the study reported in this thesis is to explore how Arab university students, residing in one Middle Eastern country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), who study in English and speak English fluently, feel about their Arab identity and the extent to which their language practices (i.e. use of English) are seen to compromise this. Therefore, this study sets out to understand and open up a dialogue with young people who identify as Arabs, but who are fluent and active users of English, to determine how firmly they cling to the discourse of Arabic as an identity marker as held by the older generations of Arabs.

1.2 Aims of the study

On the basis of the above, the study I am reporting in this thesis had as its central interest an understanding of the nature of the relationship between Arabic and the concept of an Arab identity. Its point of departure was an intention to subject a prevailing discourse in the Middle East to critical scrutiny, one that views increased exposure and use of English as resulting in the loss of Arabic and because of this posing a threat to Arab identity itself. To do this, the study aims:

- To establish the perceived strength of the relationship between Arabic and Arab identity for the young people who took part in the study.
- To consider whether using English in their studies and in other aspects of their daily lives was perceived to be a threat to an Arab identity.

By establishing these things through an empirical inquiry I believe that a more informed understanding of the relationship between Arab identity and language can be revealed and that the information generated can be used to provide a more robust understanding of what the effects of English and English language policy, such as EMI are on young Arabs.

1.3 Significance of the study

There are a number of potential significances to this study. Firstly, carrying out this study will help shed light on whether young people, who self-identify as first language Arabic speakers and whose educational lives in the UAE are interlocked with global English, feel their sense of themselves as Arabs is

under threat. Although the findings of this study will be unable to respond to those concerns articulated by theorists who caution against English as a non-neutral and political language, it can help provide important alternative perspectives on the ways in which language impacts identity. To date there are very few studies which have examined the impact of global English on language use and Arab identity. Furthermore, among these there are none, to the best of my knowledge, that foreground the importance of understanding how participants understand themselves as Arabs and the significance of Arabic to this as an important vantage point to examine the ways in which they view the impact of global English on their lives. I see this stance as central to my interest in interrogating and potentially contesting and contributing to a transformation of the current emphasis on global English as responsible for any loss of language and/or sense of Arab belonging.

Thus, this study goes beyond what others in the Arab world might theorize about language and identity, by adding that dimension which looks at what Arab youth say about their language and identity and how they report their use of both languages. The contributions of young Arabs to this discussion are immense. Currently the only voices expounding upon the discourse of Arabic are the older generations, the more religious figures in society, and those who still believe in Arab nationalism, as championed in the 1950s. Arab youth today are different, as evidenced by the Arab Spring. This is a new generation of Arabs, unwilling to wait for change, opting instead to step forward and enact change. Although there was no Arab Spring in the UAE, participants in this study came from countries which continue to live through the Arab Spring, and we are dealing with a changed set of people in this age group. Arab youth today are an eclectic mix. Arabs of all ages have felt and lived the changes; however, none so much as the Arab youth who are currently revealing their ability to be more proactive regarding their nations and the languages they use to be heard in a global world. Certainly, many hold traditional values; however, they have been influenced by global English and globalization and therefore they are excellent candidates to help understand more fully today's views on the relationship between language and identity. In addition, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2 below, the UAE attracts Arabs from all over the Arab world, making it possible to capture a complex and diverse group of young

people's perspectives on their language choices and the relationship between these and their sense of themselves as Arabs. It is this which makes the region an excellent research laboratory for getting an overview of Arab students' reactions and understandings of their Arab identities

A second way in which this study is significant is because it addresses the need for more insight into the topic of language and identity in societies that have been under-represented in the literature and seldom examined, despite English being widely used within those countries. This study explores the link between language and identity among participants in Kachru's (1992) Outer Circle. Kachru (1992) views the sociolinguistic profile of English as encompassing three concentric circles. The Inner Circle represents the traditional bases of English: USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The Outer Circle represents "the institutionalized non-native varieties (ESL) in the regions which have typically passed through extended periods of colonization" (p. 356), and the Expanding Circle is where English is used mainly in EFL contexts. The UAE is part of the Outer Circle since English is used more as a second language than a foreign language, and is as, if not more, necessary for communication in daily life than Arabic. While studies have been carried out in Expanding Circle countries, where ESL is a remedial course, or in East Asia in post-colonial societies like Hong Kong and Malaysia (Goldstein, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996; Nero, 1997; Peirce, 1995), studies which focus on people's perspectives on language and identity in Outer Circle countries are limited in number, and, as mentioned above, there has been little research done on the impact of global English on the identities of EFL speakers in the Arab world. Although arguably, the situation in the UAE and other Gulf States creates a unique kind of relationship between globalization, language, and identity construction, examining these processes through an investigation of young people's perspectives in the region, can add some important insights into how these three things interface. This, in turn, can contribute to the developing understanding of these three issues among applied linguists and others with an interest in interrogating the relationship between these things and a consideration of their implications for language policy, language preservation, and plurilingualism.

Finally, the study results have the potential to make a specific contribution to understanding the roles of Arabic and English in education that can inform the work of policy makers, decision makers, and educators in the UAE and the wider Arab world. The findings, from this empirically grounded study, can provide a useful counterpoint to the existing rhetoric on language and Arab identity construction, and as such can contribute to the building of a more informed understanding of the extent to which English medium instruction should be viewed as a concern afforded by the insights into the impact of global English on these young people that the study offers.

1.4 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is made up of eight chapters. This first chapter presents the rationale for this study, why it is important, and its potential significance. Chapter 2 provides background information to the study. It considers the nature of Arab identity and the different debates about the significance of Arabic to this. It also provides information regarding the UAE, the country where this study took place, focusing primarily on language practices and educational language policies, and introduces the university where the participants in my inquiry are students. Chapter 3 reviews relevant literature on identity theory, the relationship between language and identity, and draws upon this to create the theoretical framework that orientated me to my inquiry and the study design. Chapter 4 details my ontological and epistemological stance, the particularities of the interpretative research design I adopted, and data collection and analysis procedures. It also addresses the issue of trustworthiness in interpretative research, with reference to my positionality vis-à-vis the participants, and important ethical considerations. In chapters 5 and 6, I present the research findings. Chapter 7 offers a discussion of these in light of my theoretical framework and my research questions, and considers some of the implications of these for understanding the relationship between language choice and ethnic identity, on the one hand, and language policymakers on the other. Finally, in chapter 8, I conclude the thesis by considering the major contributions of the study, recommendations for future research, and reflection on my own research journey in undertaking this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

Background to the study

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides background information on the issues regarding language and identity in the Arab world generally, and the UAE, the setting for the research study reported in this thesis, specifically. It starts by considering what is meant by an Arab identity and considers why Arabic has come to occupy a central place in discussions of Arab identity. I will then discuss how in light of this, a rhetoric has grown up, one that occupies a dominant place in discussions of Arab identity, that the growth and spread of English use in the Arab world, one very obvious manifestation of globalization, is presenting a threat to the Arabic language, and by extension, Arab identity. I will then present a number of perspectives that can be seen to contest the centrality of Arabic to an Arab identity, and through this to question the extent that studying and using English is likely to damage Arab identity. In the second half of the chapter I will consider how these debates play out in the United Arab Emirates, the setting for this study and also introduce the Emirates American University (a pseudonym and hereafter referred to as the EAU), from which the participants for this study were drawn.

2.1 Towards a definition of an Arab identity

2.1.1 Who are the Arabs?

Those people, who are considered Arabs, and who often self-identify as Arabs, are people who live in or who claim a link to a vast swathe of land that extends from Morocco in the west to Oman in the east. They cover territory known as North Africa, The Levant and the Gulf States, of which the UAE is one member. Within this area, are 22 separate countries as illustrated in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Map of the Arab World
Comoros Islands not shown
(Ottaway, 2010, p. 52)

There is enormous diversity in the customs and cultural practices among the people who live in these different countries. There is not one type of Arab, there are many. Arabs cover the gamut from Bedouins who still live and thrive in the deserts, holding on to traditional livelihoods and values, to the young people of Beirut, who live as though they are in the “Paris of the Middle East.” Some Arabs come from financially poor African nations, such as Sudan, while others are UAE locals, many of whom are extremely wealthy. In between are the middle class Arabs from any number of Arab nations, in addition to young Arabs whose parents are from two different Arab nations.

From the above, it can be seen that the concept of an Arab identity is one that intersects with but transcends cultural practices and other differences at a national or local regional level. Thus, many definitions of Arabs stress their “strong sense of a common identity and destiny” (Ottaway, 2010, p. 50) as primarily one that is grounded in shared religious and linguistic practices (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008). However, in others (see for example Carmichael, 1967; Rogan, 2009; Ennaji, 2010) it is a shared language; Arabic is seen as a central unifying force among Arabs. Central to efforts to understand an Arab identity is a vision of one Arab nation, which resides in a view of common descent which is itself seen to be the result of ethnic tribes settling in newly acquired territories in the Levant and eventually North Africa during the time of

the Umayyad Caliphate (Nayernouri, 2011, p.144), and it is in this context that Islamic practices and Arabic, the language of these tribes, took root.

These ideas continue to feed a belief amongst Arabs that they have always been united despite the fact that the Ottoman Turks ruled the Arabs for centuries and kept them divided and according to Carmichael (1967) during that time there was no real awareness of being united as a group. A sense of an Arab identity is seen to first emerge in the Arab Revolt (1916-1918) led by the emir of Mecca against the Ottomans, which allowed the Arabs to once again dream of an Arab nation reunited (Ottaway, 2010, p. 50). Nevertheless, following World War I the Arabs saw their unification dashed by the breakup of the Ottoman Empire and its division into mandates under the French and British. They spent the following decades trying to end European control. In 1945, as they emerged from European rule and started to form new nation states, a developing pan-Arabism took hold and the League of Arab States was formed, informally known as the Arab League, consisting of “all countries in which (a dialect of) Arabic is the spoken language of the majority” (Rauch & Kostyshak, 2009, p. 165). By 1947, with the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, they had a new bond, the struggle against Israel (Ottaway, 2010), but despite that and the pan-Arab movement, Arabs have not made any headway in uniting themselves. Since the death of Sadat, an influential Egyptian president, in 1981 the Arab world has “struggled to find its ideological bearings” (Ottaway, 2010, p. 53), and the former ideologies of Arab nationalism, socialism, and pan-Arabism have disappeared from discussion and are no longer seen as relevant. However, in the context of globalization and global English in particular, a number of people have started once more to view Arab identity as significant and to see the encroachment of global English as part of the wider globalization project in the 21st century to present a threat to Arab identity, demonstrating how Arabic is being singled out as the emblem of an Arab identity.

2.1.2 Arab identity as an ethno-regional identity

From the account above, and my reading around the topic of social identity groupings, I believe that Arab identity is best seen as an ethnic identity (or more specifically an ethno-regional identity), but one that is socially constructed

and part of the consciousness of people in the Middle East rather than necessarily real.

Weber (1961 cited in May, 2008, p. 27) is one of a number of writers who highlight that ethnic group membership is quite strongly a “*belief* in a common descent.” Moreover, although ethnicity can feel very primal it “rests more on social rather than biological underpinnings” (Dorian, 2010, p. 89). This means that ethnic identities are a response to social conditions as much as they are a feeling or belief. As May (2008) points out they do not simply represent some “inner psychological state, rather, they are social, cultural, and political forms of life – material ways of being in the modern world” (p. 10). An additional observation regarding the concept ethnic identity is, as with many other identity categories, that it is premised on a concept of ethnicity that is itself a socially constructed understanding of descent and heritage rather than a real and factual understanding of groups that share descent and culture. As we saw with respect to an Arab identity above, Arab identity is a form of identity that has been invoked for different purposes at different times to suit different ends and through this its ‘real’ status has passed into the collective imagination of what it means to be an Arab. As Bourdieu (1991, cited in Joseph, 2004, p.13) noted, regional and ethnic identities essentialise what are arbitrary divisions among people and in this sense are not ‘real’ but once established they exist as mental representations, which means that they can feel every bit as real as if they were grounded in something natural.

My reading has also informed my understanding of the challenges of demarcating ethnic identity and establishing this as discreet from other forms of social identity categories. It is important to consider this given my interest in examining the ways participants in my study self-identify as Arabs and to be able to recognize how, for example, the use of culture and religion can be seen to stand as potential references for Arab identity. Since ethnicity is often seen as closely connected to other key identities notably language, nationality, religious, and cultural, individuals will often struggle to identify themselves purely on the basis of ethnicity as they do not see it as an “all-encompassing force” (Spolsky, 2010, p. 176). Thus, while efforts are made in the literature to distinguish between different types of social grouping identities, these often

blend into each other. With regard to cultural identity, for example, as Samovar and Porter (2003) highlight this results from “the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, social hierarchies, religions, notions of time, roles, spatial relationships, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving” (p. 8). From this it can be assumed that cultural practices over time become part of how a people come to understand themselves and this feeds into their sense of a common descent or ethnicity. With regard to nationality, Parekh (2008) highlights this as a political rather than cultural or ethnic grouping yet, in reality ethnic or cultural identities can also be seen as politicized and deployed for political ends as well. In fact, most Arabs define themselves by their nationality (Humphreys, 1999). Given that it is not always easy to see clear cut distinctions between ethnic, cultural/religious, and national identities to name but a few, and given that these intersect in complex ways, to claim an Arab identity as an ethnic identity is, following Fenton (2010) to acknowledge that it is best understood as “a broad and loosely denoting area of interest” (p. 5).

2.2 Arabic, Arab identity and global English

As mentioned above, Arabic has been foregrounded in discussions of Arab identity in recent years, leading to a view in some quarters that global English is posing a threat to Arab identity. However, there is a growing questioning of the role of Arabic in the construction of an Arab identity from a number of scholars which has laid the groundwork for thinking about the relationship between Arabic and Arab identity in a different way, which is stimulating for those, such as myself, who want to consider the impact of global English on Arab identity construction with a more open mind. Both of these competing perspectives will be considered below.

As was also mentioned earlier in the chapter, in the last few years the issue of Arabic as the major marker of an Arab identity has arisen in the Arab world. There are several reasons for this focus on Arabic; much of it comes from the spread of global English in tandem with globalization. As Arabs see more English pouring into their schools and universities, and through the media of television, films, internet, video games, and more, they feel that Arabic is

declining in usage and prestige. This has tended to result in governmental and Arabic media forums issuing edicts and statements about the importance of Arabic as the marker of an Arab identity (Ahmed, 2010; Al Hinai, 2012; Al Khan, 2013; Al Mutawa, 2008; Issa, 2013a; *National Editorial*, 2012). Furthermore, there are scholars who claim that the Arabic language is in decline due to globalization, colonialism, and the growing influence of English (Teaching Arabic needs push, 2013). These factors have led scholars to call for a movement to bring Arabic back, and as Benkharafa (2013) argues, this “revolutionary linguistic movement is needed to restore the Arabic identity” (p. 207). For those who fear the onslaught of English, the notion of Arabic equaling an Arab identity gives them a unifying factor. However, there are those who fail to see Arabic as an identity marker.

Those who do not see Arabic as the major marker of an Arab identity exist; however, their voices are lost in today’s apprehension about globalization and global English in the Arab world. However, there is historical evidence that Arabic was never actually a marker of an Arab identity. For example, historically the spread of the Arabic language was the most “concrete achievement of the Muslim conquests” (Carmichael, 1967, p. 1). And despite the fact that Arabs today like to assume that all Arabs can trace themselves back to the Prophet’s time; this is not the case. Furthermore, it was not Arabic that held Muslim Arabs together during the long period when Arabs were under Ottoman Turk rule; the language was used as a vernacular (Carmichael, 1967). The language’s reappearance having any sort of “projected national solidarity” did not show up again until the 1950s (Carmichael, 1967, p. 281). However, Humphreys (1999) argues that throughout the region, which is today called the Arab world, the inhabitants “knew they were Arabs in the sense that they spoke the Arabic language as their native tongue,” and Arabic was fundamental to Arab “cultural identity” (p. 65). But despite this fact, Humphreys goes on to admit that actual “mastery of Arabic” belonged to non-Arabs who learned the language from those Arabic speaking tribes who conquered them (p. 66). This occurred because the lingua franca of the Islamic world was Arabic. Therefore as Nayermouri notes, just as:

Latin was the language of science and culture in Europe during the Middle Ages, [...] Arabic was the language of science and culture in the

Islamic world and thus [...] the terms 'Arab science' or 'Arab medicine' are applied only to what was written in Arabic and has no other implications. Many of these scientific treatises were written by Iranians, Syrians, and Jews, and to a lesser extent by Greeks and only [a small number] were actually written by Arabs" (Brown, 1921 cited in Nayernouri, 2011).

In addition, prior to the search for Arab nationalism, even the renowned Egyptian author and academic Taha Hussein (1932) noted that Egypt was not ethnically Arab and that Arabic could not really be used as a criterion for forming a nation. Due to the wide variety of spoken Arabic in Arab countries, it is arguably impossible to consider Arabic as the sole unifying factor of Arabs. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the Arabic language is characterized by two varieties of the same language (Benkharafa, 2013), spread across a vast region. The immense physical distances separating Arab nations, and the differences within Arabic dialects "leads to a decrease in mutual intelligibility as geographical distance increases" (Elbeheri, Mafoudhi, & Everatt, 2009, p. 9). Arabs also live in countries which contain a variety of other second languages. Some Arab countries use French as an additional language, most notably in Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, and even Egypt, while large parts of North Africa are home to Berber speakers (Amazigh). It is this cultural and linguistic diversity of the population which continually adds to the complexity of the region (Ennaji, 2010, p. 421).

Furthermore, the only "pure" Arabic that exists is used mainly in written form. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is the one type of Arabic that all Arabs have access to, but it is rarely or never used in everyday conversations. MSA is used for writing, education, journalism, news casts, and at conferences or events. However, even in some of those situations people tend to speak their dialects. Therefore, it is the diglossic linguistic situation with Arabic which remains one of the main obstacles to MSA (Benkharafa, 2013), or Arabic as a unifying force of an Arab identity.

Since not all dialects are comprehensible to every Arab, for example Moroccan Arabic is notoriously difficult for other Arabs to comprehend due to the influence of Berber and French, there are often instances of communication breakdown. On the basis of the above, it will be apparent that Arabic cannot really be seen

as a unifying factor for all Arabs. Many would like to believe this, but the fact remains that no one actually speaks MSA, and according to Benkharafa (2013) since “MSA is not spoken in any Arabic speaking country, competence in MSA is restricted to people with a certain level of education” (p. 202). It is with this historical perspective in mind that the current study seeks to understand if the view of Arabic as an identity marker still holds amongst Arab youth, or if this is a vestige of the recent past invented to pull Arab nations together.

2.3 Arab identity and globalization: the case of the UAE

The UAE is one of a number of countries referred to as Gulf States. The Arabian Gulf, or Persian Gulf as it is called by some, has several nations surrounding it. On the western side of the Arabian Gulf are the oil rich Arab states including: the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain. Each varies from its neighbors; however, overall they are more alike than different. All these countries have Arabic as their native language, Islam as the state religion, experience extreme heat in terms of climate, have vast deserts, and base some of their economies on oil production and sales.

The UAE is made up of a “constellation of seven semi-autonomous city-states” (Ottaway, 2010, p. 61), which united in 1971; Abu Dhabi is the capital. The country covers an area of about 82,880 square kilometers, and has grown from a population of 180,000 when it first unified to nearly four million people by 2006 (King, 2008). This rapid growth came from the influx of international expatriates who arrived to fill the available positions following the oil boom.

The “UAE is the second largest Gulf Arab economy, and among the fastest-growing economies in the world;” furthermore, it has been ranked by *Forbes Magazine* as the sixth richest country in the world (Khan, 2012, p. 85), and the work opportunities this has generated has led to a large influx of foreign workers. The estimated total population of the UAE in 2012 was nine million. Of that, UAE nationals make up less than 20 percent. This has resulted in UAE nationals being a “minority in their country” (Badry, 2011, p. 90). The foreign workforce in the country is estimated at 90 percent of the working population (Al-Khoury, 2010). Of that population, nearly 66% speak a language other than Arabic.

In the Arab world, the UAE stands out as the nation that has made the most remarkable strides since oil was discovered in the late 1950s. In a little over 50 years, the UAE has become a nation of skyscrapers and luxury hotels, with a thriving tourist industry, and one of the highest standards of living in the world. There are extenuating factors that make the UAE stand out from its Arab neighbors. First, it has only been officially recognized as a nation for 43 years. Yet, within that short time it has achieved remarkable feats, as compared to other longer established countries in the region. In the Arab world, the UAE is looked upon as a flagship of success for its people, and also a country that is open and tolerant of the many nationalities, cultures, religions, and languages that reside within it. The UAE and other Gulf States are “sources for new thinking, visions, and initiatives, due to their competitive rulers” (Ottaway, 2010, p. 64).

Furthermore, the UAE strives to maintain its role as a maverick nation that crosses boundaries that make others take notice of it. It is pleased to have the biggest, tallest, most extraordinary architecture, buildings, racetracks, hotels, and more. However, as it attracts more attention, it must also ensure a workforce and a population that can get along with the world, in a language everyone understands, and that language is English. To maintain its current momentum, the UAE must guarantee that children educated within its borders develop a fluency in today’s lingua franca. And although this is a noble goal and a rational understanding of how to succeed in today’s globalized world, the question lately is ‘what about Arabic and Arabic’s measure as a marker of an Arab identity?’

2.3.1 Language use in the UAE

Arabic is the official language of the UAE, and until the current expansion of the economy and “influx of different nationalities and languages, Arabic was the lingua franca of the country” (Randall & Samimi, 2010, p. 43). Additionally, in the UAE constitution, only Arabic is mentioned (Gallagher, 2011). Yet despite this fact, the UAE does not have an “overt language policy” (Gallagher, 2011, p. 66). Arabic is important to the country as a way of “claiming ‘nation-statehood’ and ‘collective identities’” (Findlow, 2006, p. 24); but English is used a great

deal. Although English is supposed to be a foreign language in the UAE, it functions more as a second language. “Arabic is de jure the official language in the UAE, but many would argue that English has a de facto lingua franca status” (Randall & Samimi, 2010, p. 45). Official documents are required to be in Arabic in the public sector and government offices; however, “in almost all banks, businesses, hospitals, universities, and the private sector, English is the lingua franca of written documents” (Randall & Samimi, 2010, p. 45). And despite the fact that Graddol (2006) contends that Arabic is the fastest growing of all world languages, and “UNESCO statistics put it at roughly second [...] in terms of numbers of individuals reporting it as their first language” (Elbeheri, et al., 2009, p. 9), Randall and Samimi (2010) argue there is little evidence of such growth in the UAE. And since the nation is estimated to have over 200 nationalities residing in it and about 100 different languages spoken (Habboush, 2009), it is not surprising that English is a major lingua franca in the UAE, especially in Dubai and Abu Dhabi (Boyle, 2011; Constantine, 2007; McBeath, 2007).

The UAE’s incredible bounds forward in improving require it to look at every way the country can continue to grow and benefit. Due to the UAE’s need for outside employees in nearly every field, a common language is necessary. And although Arabic is spoken by Emiratis and Arab visitors and employees, there is no requirement for all foreign residents to learn it. Therefore global English became central in the expansion and transformation of the UAE, as many of the expatriates had already studied it. As in other Gulf countries, the language has been able to “penetrate a wide variety of domains across the [...] region” (Fussell, 2011, p. 26). It is within this context that today’s current tensions exist in the UAE with regard to the place of Arabic. Many Arabs continue to feel that their Arab identity hinges on Arabic, but they must contend with the government’s initiatives which promote English, both as a second language and in higher education. This is a complex situation which has promoters and detractors on both sides.

2.3.2 Education and language policy in the UAE

Prior to 1959 only boys attended schools in the region. At first there were Quranic schools where they learned to recite passages from the Quran. By

1912 new schools had been introduced which taught trade skills and some science. In 1959 schools opened for girls (King, 2008). Education today is extremely important for the UAE; it is free and compulsory for all Emirati boys and girls ages 6 to 15. Emiratis are encouraged to continue their educations and obtain university or technical training. The government tries to place locals into advanced positions, which are currently occupied by expatriates, and in order for locals to attain those positions, further education is imperative.

Although education currently has a high profile in the UAE, this has not always been the case. Actually, the UAE was one of the last in the Gulf to set up an educational system. Until the middle of the last century, students were sent to Bahrain, Kuwait, or Qatar for schooling (Findlow, 2005). Currently the UAE government provides free education at the primary and secondary levels to UAE nationals, while private programs are available to serve both nationals and the large expatriate population (Coughlin, Mayers, & Wooldridge, 2009), many of whom are the participants in this study. As the number of expatriates climbed in the UAE, so too did the need for more schools. Since the availability of private schools expanded, both locals and foreign nationals had increased options for their children's educations. Many of these new private schools brought in a UK or US curriculum taught in English. These schools appealed to both Arabic-speaking parents and others.

Recently there have been discussions at the federal level about making "teaching in Arabic compulsory in the state universities" (Issa, 2013b, p. 1). In fact, some members of governmental agencies in the UAE argue that teaching in English is "a violation of the country's constitution" (Issa, 2013b, p. 1). Furthermore, "experts" warn that the deteriorating status of Arabic is having a negative effect on Emirati identity (Issa, 2013a). As May (2008) argues, we should not be surprised by the preoccupation with language and education because they are both "central to the formation and maintenance of modern nation-states" (p. 128). He goes on to say that "education and the language(s) legitimated in and through education play a key role in establishing and maintaining the subsequent cultural and linguistic shape of the nation-state" (p. 128).

The educational policies in the UAE are preparing students for a globalized world and the demands which that entail. Some suggest that what the UAE has imported, including international educators as ‘specialists,’ has resulted in “bringing in new curricula that contributed to instilling new and strange social values in younger generations” (Al Saayegh, 2008). Others are worried that the school curricula have failed to give Arabic the prestige and status it deserves as the nation’s mother tongue. Another problem is that the Ministry of Education has not clearly delineated its objectives for achieving bilingualism (Al-Issa, 2012). This, in turn, leads to reforms which “fail to adopt practices that value Arabic literacy and instill a sense of pride in Arabic as a modern language that can meet the challenges of globalization” (Badry, 2012, p. 3).

2.3.3 Tertiary education in the UAE

Despite its slow start in setting up an educational system, today higher education in the UAE is cited as the fastest growing in the Gulf, both in terms of numbers of students enrolled and the impact of technology in the classrooms (Findlow, 2005). Higher education has been “re-packaged in the context of a newly defined, specifically ‘national,’ culture that emphasizes its GCC connections over pan-Arab, pan-Islamic ones” (p. 298). This change moved away from the reliance on Egypt for reasserting Arab and Islamic traditions and an Arab collective identity towards a new direction, Emiratization, which is “increasingly colored with Americanization as the epitome of modernism and globalism,” which are both considered important as the country seeks to become a player on the world’s global stage (Findlow, 2005, p. 298). Moreover, the UAE government has been careful to keep higher education within its purview; perhaps due to concerns over the Arab historical tradition of universities tied to radical movements (Findlow, 2006).

The emphasis on global English in the UAE has been labeled by Findlow (2006) as “post-colonial educational bilingualism.” It is also seen as problematic by many because it is not always utilized in the positive way it could be, i.e., by encouraging additive bilingualism (see Al-Issa, 2012; Badry, 2012). Instead, and unfortunately, it has often led to English being used for serious issues such as business, engineering, medical sciences, and education, while Arabic

remains relegated to the home, for use in discussions about family, religion, and daily activities (see Al-Issa, 2012; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Troudi, 2007).

In order to continue to advance UAE society and infrastructure, education has been set to ensure that new standards are met (Findlow, 2006). This broad movement to push English in most universities has been at the heart of the current preoccupation and concern over Arabic and identity in the UAE (Troudi, 2007). As this move ensures that all young people become immersed in English at university, it is untenable to some, especially those who view English and globalization as “Americanization.” For them, this continual focus on English and the lessening of Arabic’s role in the classroom should not be tolerated (see Randall & Samimi, 2010; Troudi, 2007). There are even those who wish to bring Arabic back as the language of instruction in the UAE, seeing Arabic as an integral part of UAE identity (El Semary, Al Khaja, & Hamidou, 2012), and believing “students should be thoroughly versed in their native language” (Rugh, 2002, p. 402). Additionally, there have been calls to include a TOEFL-type test in Arabic as a prerequisite for entry into university, due to concern over the falling standards of Arabic (see El Shamaa, 2008).

Despite these concerns, the government of the UAE has the final say in such issues and it seeks to maintain a nation which is competitive on the global stage and for these reasons the government continues to support the expansion of English in the classroom, especially at the tertiary level. The following section will describe the setting for my study which constitutes one example of a university which provides an EMI education. The importance of these participants is their fluency in Arabic and English, which means they have more than one way of creating an Arab identity.

2.4 Emirates American University (EAU)

The Emirates American University is a non-profit, independent, coeducational university fashioned on the American model. The language of instruction is entirely in English and the curriculum is modeled on that of American universities. EAU is similar to many other private universities in the UAE. Its student body is made up of a variety of nationalities, which does differentiate it from public universities in the country, which are only open to Emirati students.

Although the other universities in the UAE teach their courses in English, their curriculum is still guided by the Ministry of Education of the UAE and their courses and how they are taught are not in line with EAU. One difference regarding EAU is the focus on a liberal arts education. This is specifically American in terms of higher education and it entails ensuring students are “well rounded.” This means that regardless of their major, all students must take some mathematics, science, history, economics, and language. Other institutions allow students to go directly into their majors without liberal arts courses; however, EAU, as an American institution, demands this of all students. Another specific difference found at EAU is the focus and time spent on writing in English. While the other institutions may have a writing course, EAU has an entire series of courses that every student must take and pass, regardless of their major. The university supports writing across the curriculum as an initiative which makes writing an important part of many classes. This consistent building on the students’ writing skills in English is definitely a distinguishing factor of the institution.

EAU has a student body that represents many nationalities, cultures, and languages. Every year hundreds of international students join the university. Nearly every Arab country is represented, with 43% of students coming from an Arab nation and 23% representing the UAE (EAU Institutional Research Board statistics). The highest numbers of Arab students come from Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, with the remainder of international students coming from Iran, India, Pakistan, and China. EAU is chosen by students and their families for its American curriculum and diversity. Furthermore, EAU gives applicants an alternative to traveling abroad for their education. The students at EAU are plurilingual and multicultural. Those who are Arabic speakers, the majority, tend to use English on a daily basis in encounters beyond the university. Therefore they are using English within the context of EMI and beyond regularly, and as such, they constitute a solid sample for the purposes of my inquiry. One important factor to note with regards to this group of students is that they are not representative of all Arab youth studying in the UAE. This group is non-representative in that their English language skills are very advanced, and they can be considered bilinguals in terms of their abilities

with both languages. Furthermore, they have all decided to study at an American curriculum, EMI institution, which shows that they are perhaps more international than the typical Arab students found at other universities in the UAE. These factors may have some bearing on my results, and I will account for that in my discussion on limitations of the study.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to define what is meant by an Arab identity and how it is that it has come to be and is still so closely associated with being able to speak Arabic. It is the perceived bond between language and regional or ethnic identity, which leads many in the Middle East to view global English as a threat to the maintenance of an Arab identity and to see falling standards in written Arabic, in particular, as attributable to one of the most visible manifestations of the impact of global English on the region. However, I have also highlighted the emergence of a counter view, one that questions the assumed strength of the relationship between using Arabic and being able to claim an Arab identity and as such demonstrated the opening up of a debate around this topic, one which I believe can offer new insights into the interplay between identity, language and globalization that this thesis is interested to explore. This chapter has highlighted an apparent ambivalence of some towards engaging with globalization, as a manifestation of life in the contemporary world, from certain quarters. It is with a view to expanding upon an understanding of this topic and generating empirical data that can contribute to the debates on this, that this study, with its focus on young people studying at one EMI university, undertook research into this topic.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework that underpinned my inquiry into the significance of Arabic to being able to claim an Arab identity from the perspective of Arab youth who are undergoing an English medium education. As I explained in chapter 2, an Arab identity can be loosely referred to as an ethnic identity, a regional sense of belonging for people in North Africa and the Middle East, one which intersects with other forms of social belonging such as nationality and religion and most notably culture, in complex ways. A number of questions have already been raised there about the nature of the relationship between this form of identity and language, and the purpose of this chapter is to contextualize these questions with reference to broader debates in the literature about the relationship between identity and language.

To do this, I will first provide an overview of the reasons for the growth of interest in identity research and the breadth and scope of studies as a way to position my own interest and focus on identity as a form of belonging or affiliation with a social group. I will also highlight the general significance of language to identity construction. Following on from this, I will consider different theoretical perspectives on the ways in which social identity is constructed and the ways in which language is seen as significant to this. I will elaborate on the ways in which I see a post-structuralist understanding of identity construction as one that can best account for the ways in which globalization is breaking down and transforming the way people understand their sense of belonging. It is also one that raises questions about the tight configuration between language and ethnic identity that underpins the concerns about global English and language and identity loss in the Arab world discussed in chapter 2 above. I will then consider the ways in which this post-structuralist turn has helped establish the concept of language choice in indexing and constructing identity and how this has helped build a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between identity and language, both in general and more specifically with regard to the ways in which ethnic identity can be constructed and signified with language.

In the final part of the chapter, I will present my theoretical framework, pulling together insights developed in this chapter and the preceding chapter, and demonstrate how these have informed the research questions that are to be addressed in my study. I will also position my study in light of the limited existing research literature and demonstrate the gap that the study seeks to address.

3.1 Towards an understanding of identity: trends and debates in identity research

Identity has become a term increasingly used by researchers across a wide variety of disciplines. Although not a new term, the growing use of this term over the last two decades can be seen to reflect an increasing awareness of the significance of self to understanding people's experiences and actions in the 21st century (see for example Bauman, 2001 cited in Block, 2007). Thus, while the use of the term identity rose to prominence in the work of the psychologist Eric Erikson in the 1950s and has continued to be seen as central to the understanding of self-concept within the field of psychology, it is the growing importance attached to identity by social theorists that has led to identity today being used among researchers of many persuasions.

3.1.1 Different traditions within identity research

Precisely because identity is used across a number of different disciplines, it is not really possible to come up with an all-encompassing definition of identity and indeed, a number of researchers use a variety of alternative terms to capture more precisely what they mean and to distinguish themselves from others who use the term. The terminology employed reflects a number of distinct traditions which are themselves aligned to different understandings of how identity is constructed. There are those who see it as a relatively stable sense of self across time and space, and others who see this as fluid, dynamic, and an interactional achievement. There are also those who see identity as more of an individual psychological achievement and others as a "common identification with a social category" and finally, those who use this term to define those parts of a "self which are made up of the meanings that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in contemporary society" (Stryker & Burke,

2000, p. 284). Today several words such as self, selfhood, position, personality, role, subject, subjectivity, and agent are often used by researchers in preference to the term identity (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006) to indicate their allegiance to these different understandings of identity.

One possible distinction in the way identity is understood is to distinguish between those who see this as more of an individual psychological construct and those who want to emphasize identity more as an act of social belonging, with those who assume the latter position seeing this as giving a greater significance to the social world in theorizing identity construction. To put this another way, a distinction can be drawn between those (mainly psychologists) who see identity as “something internal that persists through change;” and others (mainly sociologists) who view identity as “something which is shaped by the society in which the individual finds him/herself” (Gleason, 1983, p. 918). However, even among those who stress the need for a social theory of identity construction, different ways of representing and understanding belonging are promoted. For some, identity as a social phenomenon can best be described in terms of membership of the social groupings made available by society. In contrast, for others, identity is seen as more a project of individual sense-making out of multiple possible group affiliations, experiences, and interactions.

As explained in chapter 2, my understanding of Arab identity is that this is an ethnic identity, and since I view ethnic identity as essentially a social construct, I see myself as aligned with those who take the view that identity is socially constructed and an act of belonging. Research into ethnic identity, as with other research into social identity categories, has, as I will show, been dominated by the first of the two traditions outlined above; a more structural orientation towards construction of a social theory of identity; however, in recent years, the second tradition within social identity research, a post-structural understanding of identity construction, has started to generate new ways of understanding ethnic identity construction and, as a result, new understandings of the relationship between language and ethnic identity have emerged.

3.1.2 Identity in the field of applied linguistics

The term 'identity' has also acquired rising currency and capital in the research communities of applied linguists (Lin, 2008), not least because of the prominent place that language is often seen to play in identity construction as I will elaborate on below, and because of the ways in which this can impact on the ways in which individuals engage in the process of acquiring a second or additional language (Norton-Peirce, 1995; Saville-Troike, 2006). Despite the proliferation of alternative terms for identity outlined above, for applied linguists, myself included, the term identity is most commonly used. This may reflect the fact that the discipline of applied linguistics is a relative newcomer to the field of identity research, and these researchers do not feel the strong need to disassociate themselves from the term identity that underpins the quest for alternative terms that has been mostly fuelled by sociologists. Moreover, it may also reflect the view that, as prominent applied linguist David Block (2007a) observes, many of the terms such as 'subject positions,' and 'positioning' are used interchangeably with the term identity in the literature, and therefore the term identity is adequate. In the discipline of applied linguistics, the relationship between language and identity has, and continues to be, the focus of considerable research attention with much of this taking place within the field of sociolinguistics (Block, 2006, 2007a; Joseph, 2004).

3.1.3 Debates about the relationship between language and identity construction

Among those writing about language and identity, the relationship between these two things is not in dispute. In other words, there is universal acknowledgement that humans do construct their identities through the language(s) they use, and as such language is one of the means that can be used to signify their identity (Joseph, 2004; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997). As Joseph (2004) highlights, this is because language is a major semiotic form of representation of self to others. In addition, as Joseph (2010) has also emphasized, research on language attitudes shows that humans form "strong conceptions of each other's identities based on the way we speak" (p. 12). It is precisely the dual use of language, as both a resource to construct identity and to signify our identities to others, which makes the relationship between language and identity so complex. Teasing out the dual uses of language as a

resource for identity construction and as a signifier or way of indexing identity is of central interest in this thesis with its emphasis on the strength of the relationship that holds between Arabic and an Arab identity. While undoubtedly language is a major means through which identity is constructed, at issue is the extent to which an ethnic identity and language are mutually signifying (Pennycook, 2000).

3.2 Theorizing the relationship between language and ethnic identity: competing perspectives

As suggested above there are two major ways in which identity is viewed as socially constructed. In this section I will elaborate on these and how they configure the relationship between language and identity construction. I will start with a discussion of structuralist models of social identity and discuss Social Identity Theory, which has held a prominent place in discussions of ethnic identity among other social categories and which has assumed a tight relationship to hold between language and ethnic identity, enshrined in the concept of ethnolinguistic identity.

I will then move to consider, some alternative conceptualizations of identity construction offered by post-structuralist theorists which have allowed a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between language and identity to be articulated with implications for new ways of thinking about the relationship between language and ethnic identity and highlighting the ways in which there is not necessarily a one to one correlation between language identities and ethnic identities.

3.2.1 The Social Identity Theory perspective on the relationship between ethnicity and language

Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a theory which foregrounds social categories in a discussion of social groupings and sees membership in groups as the main means through which individuals obtain identity in social arenas. As I will explain it also assumes that language is not only a means through which membership is achieved but that it is also a major way in which group membership and affiliation is displayed or signified.

Social Identity Theory is underpinned by a structuralist view of the relationship between the social world and individuals within this, and it is useful to highlight here what some of the principles of a structuralist approach to understanding social reality imply. Structuralism, from a sociological point of view, can be seen as something which is “external to human action, [and] a source of constraint on free initiatives” (Giddens, 1999, p. 121). Structuralism has to do with “how societies should be conceptualized, and it views social systems as organized by sets of rules” (Giddens, 1999, p. 127). In effect, structuralism sees “individuals as fully moulded by society” (Elliott, 1999, p. 2). It “studies human culture by searching for patterns and then claims that individual phenomena are meaningful only in relation to other phenomena in a systematic structure” (Milner, 1991 cited in Crotty, 1998). As such, structuralism de-emphasizes the the importance of human choice and individual agency.

It was the social psychologist, Henri Tajfel, who gained notoriety in the area of social identity and pushed this theory forward. In his view, identity is social; it comes about through interactions and dealings with others. It cannot be viewed as something inherently personal that comes from within a person. Tajfel (1974) indicates that social identity derives from how an individual views his place as a member in a particular social group and the “emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 69).

Tajfel views the development of social identity through a social psychological process. His social identity theory focuses on the fact that individuals learn to recognize linguistic or protocol cues that make them part of group membership during group interactions. It is this comprehension of who an individual is, as a group member, which is the basis for SIT (Tajfel, 1981). His theory involves four major practices of social identity within a group context. These include: the categorization of the self through social interactions; the development of a consciousness of a social identity; the ability to compare oneself socially to others; and finally, a desire to be distinct from other groups. Tajfel looks at these processes in terms of how they help individuals determine their place within their social group. Social comparison allows the group members to evaluate their status vis-à-vis another group which is outside their social circle.

3.2.1.1 SIT and the concept of ethno-linguistic identity

The structuralist underpinnings of SIT are most evident in the categories of group membership that are of interest to SIT researchers. Smith (1990), for example, argues that identities are made up of the feelings of a group of people who share experiences, and from these, certain values and norms (p.179). Categories that are viewed as central to the formation and demarcation of groups (and thereby of individual identity since these are derived from group membership) are nation, ethnicity, culture, and language. For Tajfel (1978, 1981), “social contexts provide categories, which are reorganized through linguistic or behavioural cues” (McNamara, 1997, p. 562). Thus, for Tajfel and others who adopt SIT, language, as a primary means of communication, is seen as a particularly important component of social identity as it is a key means by which people signal those groups that they belong to, and it allows a group to distinguish itself and its members from other groups. Language, therefore, is seen as the central means through which other social identity categories such as national, ethnic, and cultural identity are shaped and formed.

Many scholars have found SIT to be informative in understanding language and identity, and informed by this have seen the relationship between ethnic identity and language as so strong as to lead them to conflate the two terms into a single term: ethno-linguistic identity (Block, 2007b). Giles and Johnson (1981, 1987) drew on Tajfel’s theory to develop their ethno-linguistic identity theory. That theory “focused on language as the salient marker of group membership and social identity” (Hansen & Liu, 1997, p. 568). Other sociolinguists, including Gumperz (1970) and Heller (1987, 1988), also emphasize language in their research on social identity. They view social identity and ethnicity to be “established and maintained through language” (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982, p. 7).

3.2.1.2 Reflections on the contribution of Social Identity Theory

The use of categories such as nationality, ethnicity, and culture in relation to identity construction popularized by SIT has come to be seen as increasingly problematic in recent years. This view, which “categorizes an individual’s behaviour into groups, and the groups into determined categories, denies the

individual and the dynamic nature of social identity” (Hansen & Liu, 1997, pp. 571-572). Many scholars believe that social identity cannot be categorized because it is dynamic, and those within a particular group are oriented by their position in relation to others (Hansen & Liu, 1997; Lawler, 2008; Lin, 2008; Riley, 2007; Skeggs, 2008) rather than merely by their belonging to a particular group.

Furthermore, the focus on the link between language and identity, as understood by SIT, has been criticized for essentializing that relationship (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). It also fails to acknowledge that we now must account for the “existence of identities acquired by choice” (Huddy, 2001, p. 137). Additionally, both language and ethnicity are “manipulable, performed and imagined, and are impacted by globalization and the local...” (Garcia, 2010, p. 521). Finally, although some SIT theorists (see for example Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987) try to take individual choices into account, their “categories remain too rigid and they attempt to cast very diverse people into narrow categories of ethnolinguistic identity” (Hansen & Liu, 1997, p. 571).

The problems with SIT outlined above draw attention to the need for alternative perspectives on identity construction and the relationship between this and language, both in general and more specifically, with regard to the relationship between an ethnic identity and language. As I will explain below, my readings have led me to identify post-structuralist understandings of identity as more aligned with the conditions for identity construction that increasing globalization presents in the 21st century. However, SIT has served as an important reference point to understanding the current concerns about the views on Arab identity and Arabic. As Joseph (2010) argues, language has “always been closely connected with the establishment of a national, ethnic, or religious identity” (p. 224). Given this and the fact, as observed in chapter 2 (see section 2.1.2), that even if these various categories, including language, are constructions rather than ‘real’, they are ones that can feel real to people and are ones that provide a ready-made way of talking about a sense of social belonging. In an inquiry into the relationship between language and ethnicity, it will therefore be likely that these categories will need to be foregrounded in discussions of these things.

3.2.2 Post-structuralist perspectives on identity construction

Post-structuralism looks at the concept of difference “in all its facets,” and furthermore “involves a radical questioning of otherness” (Lechte, 2008, p. 128). It rejects a deterministic flow from category to behaviour and stresses the significance of the individual agent in this process. Specifically it accepts the notion that no one-to-one relationship between symbol and object exists and it follows from this that there is no one-to-one relationship between, for example, nationality and identity or language use and identity.

3.2.2.1 The impact of globalization on identity construction

Post-structuralist perspectives find appeal from those who want to consider the impact of globalization on identity construction in the 21st century. The rapid spread of globalization continues to challenge the previous notions of deterministic social structures, thereby giving more variety and options for individuals to draw upon to build their identity. In his book *Runaway World: How Globalization is Shaping our Lives*, Anthony Giddens (2000) reveals how growing global interdependence is directly effecting people’s everyday lives in terms of culture, traditions, family, and politics. Further, he maintains that “globalization is restructuring the ways in which we live in a very profound manner” (p. 22), because it allows people to come into contact with “others who think and live differently from themselves” (p. 23). Essentially, as Parekh (2008) argues, “globalization is leading to the pluralisation of every society” (p. 191). By way of the television, internet, or visiting tourists people get a chance to see how others live. In the past “cultural homogeneity was the norm” and people did not really know a great deal about other cultures and people. However, today “human plurality and diversity [...] is a pervasive and tenacious fact of daily life” (Parekh, p. 191).

Moreover, as Canagarajah (2006) points out, in our globalized world there are philosophical changes in how “communities and cultures are perceived” (p. 203). We can no longer look at identities as belonging to one language or culture, or communities being totally separated from contact with others. His belief is that these constructs “are losing their status as bounded and objective entities, and [...] must be recognized as fluid and hybrid in nature” (p. 203).

Many scholars currently point to the hybridity of cultures and identities and insist that in today's world we are seeing new combinations of languages, cultures, and identities as a consequence of the multicultural populations in contemporary nation-states (Scholte, 2000; see also Block, 2007a; Croucher, 2004; Hall & duGay, 1996; Maalouf, 2000; Pittam, 1999; Tomlinson, 1999). These scholars draw upon Bhabha's (1994) notions of hybridity and third space to describe how individuals can cultivate alternative identity choices in the globalized world. Furthermore, there is a desire for "authenticity and external recognition – i.e., finding one's true self and having it acknowledged by others" (Taylor, 1994, cited in Huddy, 2001, p. 138).

In the field of applied linguistics this sense of a turning point towards a more post-structuralist viewpoint can be illustrated with reference to a special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* (volume 31, number 3) in 1997, which was devoted to the subject of language and identity. In this volume it is possible to detect a shift towards this more performative understanding of language in constructing individual identities (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997; Schecter & Bayley, 1997), in contrast to earlier interest in language identity as signalling group membership and the emphasis on such things as speech community, ethnolinguistic identity, and register in sociolinguistics (Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987; Goldstein, 1995; Gumperz, 1970, 1982; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Heller, 1987, 1988). In the 18 years since the special issue appeared, the interest in language as a semiotic resource used by individuals to perform their identity has continued to grow. As Block (2010) argues, this signals a growing move to embrace post-structuralist understandings of identity construction as well as an increasing appreciation of the impact of globalization on individuals' identity construction processes, including on their language choices.

3.2.2.2 The disconnect between language and ethnic identity

I have built my theoretical framework on the theories of those who do not see a one-to-one correlation between language use and ethnic identity, or who might go further and say there is no relationship. For these theorists, globalization today stresses the fluid, dynamic, and fragmentary experience of space and locality and introduces metaphors of migration (Viswanathan, 2001) and border

crossing (Rampton, 2005) to describe the breaking down of discreet categories of membership and the idea of a stable relationship between language and ethnicity. From this perspective, while it is important to realize that the language or languages, with which a person grows up, will always be a factor in his/her identity construction (Stroinska, 2003), these languages are not definitively the marker of even a displaced person's identity. In other words, as Lin (2008) contends, globalization is shifting people across "national, cultural, and geographic borders" (p. 209), a specific language or place where someone grows up may or may not be what a particular person identifies with. Moreover, as Scholte (2000) argues, in this current era of globalization, deterritorialization has occurred, causing borders to no longer be mapped in terms of territorial places. These possibilities are opening up new and diverse social experiences which individuals can draw upon in constructing their identity. In other words, with the rapidity of globalization and the ease of travelling around the world, it has become less certain that people's languages and identities can remain fixed or that there is a strong correlation between language and ethnic identity. Therefore languages spoken within particular nations are changing, while new languages are brought in, such as English in the Arab world.

A central interest in my study, with its focus on the relationship between being an Arab and using the Arabic language, is to examine how "language practices might shape one's ethnic identity" (Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015, p. 235). In other words, to explore the degree of 'fit' between a particular language and ethnic identity and how far individuals are conceptualized as agentive in terms of the ways in which they construct their ethnic identity. From the post-structuralist position "ethnic identity is believed to be a highly subjective dimension that does not reflect externally derived social or political labels but instead corresponds to the individual's subjective positioning towards a group" (Trofimovich & Turuseva, 2015, p. 236).

To account for the shifting nature of an understanding of language in relation to identity, Block (2007b) highlights the increased reference to language identity rather than ethnolinguistic identity in the literature, which he describes as the "assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication" (p. 40). This allows us to recognize that while

language may be seen as a marker of ethnicity, it is also important to recognize that individuals may elect to use other languages to signal their affiliations to religion, ethnicity, and culture. In fact, depending on the interaction involved, cultural, national, or religious identity may be salient at one point, but not at another (Piller, 2000). In this sense language can also be viewed as a resource for identity presentation. In many situations language choices may be adopted to facilitate communication, that is behave more as a resource to facilitate identity construction and negotiation, such as, for example in situations where interlocutors are working across language and cultural divides. These factors signal that what it means to talk about language in relationship to identity has changed. It is not about group membership, i.e. Arabism, now it is more about language as a resource for constructing an identity. Furthermore, according to Eastman (1984), the language one uses is just a part of their ethnic identity, and therefore adopting or using another language would only have an effect on the language part of said identity, not the identity itself. She goes on to argue that “there is no need to worry about preserving ethnic identity, so long as the only change being made is in what language we use” (Eastman, 1984, p. 275). In effect, there “is no inevitable correspondence between language and ethnicity” (May, 2008, p. 129). Moreover, even though “language may invite us to unite, it does not compel us to do so” (Renan, 1990, cited in May, 2008, p. 129). In today’s rapidly expanding world, we can see that “language has been highlighted as a resource, indeed, a commodity” (Heller, 2010, p. 352), rather than a problem (Ruiz, 1984). This especially true for those who live in places where they can “straddle national, linguistic, cultural, and ethnic boundaries, while embracing multiple social and linguistic worlds” (Bailey, 2007, p. 34).

The new insights into the relationship between identity and language provided by post-structuralist perspectives are ones that are important for my inquiry into the ways in which Arab youth may feel able to claim Arab identities and not see this as in contradiction to studying and using English. Arabic, as a traditional language, is viewed as a “significant resource to one’s ethnic identity, both at the level of societal integration and social identification;” however, this does not “link a particular language inexorably with particular identities” (May, 2008, p. 134). These insights suggest that, potentially, a decision to use English is not necessarily eroding a sense of ethnic identity. For example, as May (2008)

argues, there will always be some people who regard a “particular language as a largely superficial marker of their identities, and will have no great sense of loss in abandoning it” (p. 135).

For post-structuralists there is no central idea that holds language and identity together, therefore, in their opinion language shifts and moves and makes meanings multiple (Pennycook, 2001). They propose a much more dynamic relationship between ethnicity and language than was previously accepted. For them the breaking down of stable categories of identity membership and the increase of choices afforded by globalization all point to the importance of the identity construction process as an agentive act of meaning making utilizing discourses. Post-structuralists do acknowledge that structures exist, in discourses, which play out in the social world.

3.2.2.3 Discourse, power and identity construction

The crucial notion which must be understood when discussing discourses is that we acknowledge that identities are not merely the result of group membership. The social world is better viewed, not as a set of structures, but rather as informed by a set of discourses which position people in different ways. These discourses eventually shape the version of reality that people experience, i.e., discursive realities. However, these discourses do not determine behavior, for example language use, because agency is also involved and people do make those determinations. Therefore, when we look at identity, we can view it as constructed by individuals against the backdrop of discursive realities.

The term discourse is used in the theories of 20th century philosophers and critics to point broadly to any means by which human meanings, beliefs, and values are communicated and replicated. Initially, the term was just about the basics of written or spoken text, but over the past 20 years in the social sciences many scholars have begun to espouse a new interpretation of discourse, which is much more comprehensive (Block, 2007b, p. 15).

There are several definitions for discourse found in the literature. Pennycook (1994) states that “discourses are organizations of knowledge and are always

linked to power; embedded in social institutions and produce ways of understanding...they are often realized through language” (pp. 127-128). For Paul du Gay (1996) discourse denotes a collection of declarations which “provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic” (p. 43). In this way the term refers to how knowledge is produced through language and represented, and it also “refers to the way that knowledge is institutionalized, influencing social practices and setting new practices into play” (p. 43). Language is the most obvious example of discourse. And while “meanings are produced within language, ‘meanings’ of self and others are produced within discourses” (Morgan, 2007, p. 952).

Meaning is also conveyed by clothing, gestures, images, and a wide variety of other nonverbal manifestations of discourse. Sometimes the term is used more narrowly to point out the meanings and values within a discrete area of human knowledge and activity, such as ‘gender discourse’ (Hall, 2004). According to Hyland (2012) when one engages in a community’s discourse it offers sanctuary for “individuals by making the world meaningful and populated by others who have similar understandings and ways of sharing ideas” (p. 11). Jaworski and Coupland (1999) define it as “language use relative to social, political, and cultural formations – it is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order, and shaping individuals’ interaction with society” (p. 3). Gee (1989) argues that discourses have fairly central roles in the delineation of social groups and in defining peoples’ identities. This is because a discourse is an “identity kit” that involves people “displaying their membership in a particular social group” (Gee, 1996, p. 128). Therefore we can look at individuals as belonging to a wide range of discursive fields which necessitate divergent means of comprehending “the world and experience” (Weedon, 2001). These social groups can also be based on nationality, religion, ethnicity, and culture (Gee, 1996). The discourse of Arabic, for example, is a frame of reference for Arabs, which allows them to reveal their membership as part of an Arab group. Being able to be part of a variety of discourses allows individuals to have an array of interpersonal encounters, leaving the possibility of many subjective positions.

Post-structuralists see identities as discursively constructed and fashioned, sometimes unknowingly, within and with reference to these discourses. Post-structuralism does not see these ideas of grouping and memberships as being absolute but as constructions manifesting particular interests of people who shape them. Thus, even what it means to be an Arab or British is not fixed but an interpretation of interested parties, in spite of feeling real to us. What is assumed to be a 'real' state of affairs or the status quo is an interpretation, and the relative 'position' of Arabs versus British people is representative of the socio-economic, historical, and political ways in which these two groups have been able to manoeuvre themselves into different positions of power.

Discursive construction not only operates at the level of ethnicity or other macro groupings, but is also a way to understand an individual identification process. A post-structuralist approach to identity as discursively constructed is one which understands this as a "socially constructed, on-going narrative an individual performs, interprets, and projects ...all in the company of others" (Block, 2006, p. 39). In other words, identity can be seen as the "outcome of previous experiences" or as the way individuals "position themselves in an act of discourse" (Ivanic, 1998 cited in Menard-Warwick, 2005, p. 264). In this way we see people as informed by not only what they meet in the world, but in the way they are positioned in the world in relation to what they have learned.

In Social Identity Theory Tajfel (1974, 1978c) says we get our identity from the groups we belong to. However, the post-structuralists argue that we must also look at power, because no matter what our role in society, it will affect how we are understood by society. Another illustration of power is central to Edward Said's (1978) thesis on 'Orientalism' wherein he clarifies that Orientalism is not just a succession of language guidelines, rather it is a discourse that controls the colonial Other. What Said is saying is that Orientalism is a discourse, a set of constructions about what the Arab world is like, which has been made by colonial people who have more power.

Additionally, Ahearn (2012) goes on to argue that "neither language itself nor the study of language can ever be entirely divorced from relations of power" (p. 273). Certain discourses are considered to have a higher status, according to

Gee (1992), and he maintains that “discourses are intimately related to the distribution of social power and hierarchical structure in society” (p. 112). By virtue of this fact, he reasons that those who control certain discourses can gain social wealth, such as “money, power, [and] status in society” (p. 112). These particular discourses are labeled “dominant discourses” by Gee (1989, p. 20), and those who can attain them are considered the “dominant groups of society” (p. 20). Essentially, what is important to keep in mind regarding the post-structuralist view of identity construction is the discursively constructed nature of reality. The world is shaped by discourse, and everything is discursively constructed. This discursively constructed nature of identity requires it to accommodate the theory of power. For Giddens, power has a dual meaning “it refers to the capacity to get things done characteristic of social action, and the ability to achieve one’s wishes, even against the desires of others” (Tucker, 1998, p. 82). Realities are discursively constructed and power and status have an effect on decisions people make. This is where we can see the role of power, and how identity is an outcome of the negotiation of power.

Due to the dominant role of English as a status language versus Arabic, students’ perceptions of power are relevant. The discourse in the Arab world is that English is disempowering Arabs and stripping them from their Arab identity, and they must protect themselves. But this thesis is disputing these stable ‘truths’ and arguing that through a post-structuralist lens we can see identity construction as fluid, dynamic, and negotiable. Post-structuralism pushes us to realize that the process of identity construction is making sense of multiple group memberships, which are constructed with others, but remain in the hands of the individual to negotiate his/her position. In other words, identity is not done to people or to a group, it is an agentic process. People don’t choose to have only one affiliation, they can choose to have multiple affiliations; they have the capacity to act.

These things highlight a need to understand agentic acts of identity construction as ultimately socially situated. For post-structuralists it is important to acknowledge that power relationships may well impact on language choices in certain situations as well, and that this is part of the negotiation and renegotiation of identity that takes place in everyday interactions (Joseph,

2010, p. 14). In other words, language choices may reflect efforts to claim particular identities or to challenge those imposed by others. Another important contribution of post-structuralist perspectives is the acceptance of the importance of power in the types of identities people can construct. On the one hand, it is interested to emphasize the way identities are constructed against a backdrop of discursive realities which imbue individuals with more or less power, but on the other, since post-structuralism does not view structures as determining one's identity, it suggests that the individual actually holds more 'power' than structuralists assume. And furthermore, individuals have agency and the capacity to act.

3.2.2.4 Agency and identity construction

When we discuss agency with regard to humans and their decisions, it is viewed as the capacity of human beings to make choices. Human agency entails the definitive claim that humans do, in fact, make decisions and enact them on the world. Ahearn (2001), a linguistic anthropologist, defines agency as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). Therefore, according to this limited definition "all action is socioculturally mediated, both in its production and in its interpretation" (p. 112). The term agency is often considered synonymous with either "free will" or "resistance" when one refers to the "sociocultural capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2012, p. 278). However, she believes that "treating agency as a synonym for free will ignores the social nature of agency and the pervasive influence of culture or human intentions, beliefs and actions" (Ahearn, 2001, p. 114). Furthermore, we should not consider agency to be synonymous with resistance, because it would then appear that agency only "includes those actions that resist the status quo," which is not the case (Ahearn, 2012, p. 279, see also Ahearn 2000). Agency can, of course, be oppositional, but that is only one of its forms (Ahearn, 2012).

Ahearn (2001, 2012) points to Anthony Giddens (1979) as one of the few scholars who does not consider agency to be the same as free will or resistance, and she considers him to be the central figure in the debate on agency and structure. Giddens consistently links agency to structure through his discussion of rules and resources. Central to Giddens' theory of structuration is the understanding that "people's actions are shaped (in both

constraining and enabling ways) by the very social structures that those actions then serve to reinforce or reconfigure” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 117).

The manner in which Giddens looks at actions and structures “emphasizes the intelligence of people in the context of a modern, reflexive world” (Tucker, 1998, p. 71). Giddens (1979), according to Tucker (1998), professes that we must conceptualize people as “knowledgeable agents who can justify their actions,” because individuals are, in fact, quite aware of the situations which affect them (pp. 75-76). Furthermore, he sees actions or agency, not as a “series of discrete acts combined together, but to a continuous flow of conduct” (Giddens, 1999, p. 55). Pennycook (2001) articulates that Giddens (1979) “uses the term structuration to capture the relation and the mutual interdependence of structure and agency” (p. 119). Therefore what “humans do, think, or say will always be affected by larger questions of social power” (p. 119). For Giddens (1984, cited in Tucker, 1998), structure and agency are linked because people are essentially involved with society. And it is due to this connection that he maintains that “people follow rules patterned in social structure; collective knowledge of social rules is the condition of social interaction” (Tucker, 1998, p. 81). Giddens does not view self-identity as a set of traits or observable characteristics. Instead, he sees it as a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self-identity has continuity - that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will - but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography (Giddens, 1991, p. 53).

Giddens’ analogy for helping us understand this interplay between structure and agency is by giving language as an example. When people speak a language they are expected to follow the rules and conventions of said language; when they don’t, others react quite strongly. This helps us understand that agency may give people freedom, but the social rules surrounding human interactions will always come into play and set some boundaries.

Individual agency can manifest in the decision to use particular registers or where individuals’ linguistic repertoires comprise more than one language, the

possibility to display their identity through different linguistic norms than those assumed to reflect their ethnicity. This shift in perspective is one that has gradually been making its mark on sociolinguistics research and applied linguistics more broadly. While in sociolinguistics the notion of ethnolinguistic identity is still often assumed to be the point of departure for research (Blommaert, 2005), the early work of identity began to move into the sociolinguistic realm following Labov's (1963) study of phonological patterns in Massachusetts, USA (Joseph, 2010; Llamas & Watt, 2010). At that point there was a growing appreciation that "language users are not passive" but rather are agentive and individuals are free to negotiate and renegotiate who they are (Llamas & Watt, 2010, p. 2).

The concept of agency in identity construction believes that there are many factors which influence an identity and each person has a personal determination in what that identity will be at any given time. Some scholars have referred to this as 'voice' (Canagarajah, 2004). For Canagarajah (2004) voice works as an indicator of a person's agency in speech through language. He goes on to argue that this mainly "rhetorically constructed manifestation of selfhood has to be negotiated in relation to our historically defined identities (such as race, ethnicity, and nationality), our institutional roles" such as being a student, teacher, or staff member, and ideological subjectivity, this is where individuals stand "according to discourses such as good student, responsible teacher, authoritative native-speaker, which embody values according to the dominant ideologies in the society" (p. 267). Canagarajah further contends that it is at the "level of voice that [individuals] gain agency to negotiate these categories of the self [...], and find forms of coherence and power that suit their interests" (2004, p. 268).

Post-structuralism sees agency as decisions which we make in relation to what we find in the social world. Agency today can no longer be simplified or divided into black and white. Instead there is room for individuals to make choices and have the capacity to act within the world in which they find themselves. Post-structuralism allows us to go back to the individuals and see how they negotiate their place in the world, through agency. Agency is seen as a socially constructed capacity to act or to take control. Individuals are agentive and they

are “constantly in search of new linguistic resources which allow them to [...] produce new identities” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 27). The environment and identity affiliations can, of course, constrain individuals; however, they cannot control what people can or will do.

Furthermore, post-structuralism also highlights a need to understand agentic acts of identity construction as ultimately socially situated. In other words, the particular setting in which we are engaged in an act of identification will exert its influence on our identification processes. And this is because “identity is produced and reproduced during social interaction, constantly situated in the local context” (Lauring, 2008, p. 349). This means that individuals will be engaged in a process of assembling an identity out of their various group memberships to align with the perceived demands or requirements of a particular setting. This may lead them to attempt to seek to background certain meta-group categories, found in SIT, such as ethnicity, or nationality and to take up more setting specific identity positions such as student or teacher, for example. However, what we elect to do will also accommodate who we are talking to and what we are trying to achieve. Therefore our representations need to be seen as ultimately responsive to the perceived requirements and demands of a given setting. And we need to understand that people choose a language, not “due to their identity, but instead, they perform their identity using language” (Pennycook, 2000). As I will elaborate, the post-structuralist articulation of the relationship between language and identity is one that describes a looser connection between language and ethnicity and argues that language be viewed more as a resource for individual meaning-making and identity construction, which is carried out through choice.

3.3 Implications on the relationship between identity and language

In line with the move to examine what Block (2007b) calls ‘language identity,’ something which reflects individual agency in social worlds, is an interest in establishing frameworks to better understand the choices that individuals make. In this section, I will consider the current attempts to conceptualize choice in the literature. Various types of individuals have been studied including: second language learners (Block, 2007b), bilinguals through code-switching (Auer,

2005; Garcia, 2009; Heller, 2007; Myers-Scotton, 1999; Wei, 2007), border crossers (Rampton, 2005), and translinguals (Canagarajah, 2013).

3.3.1 Factors influencing language choice

What is of particular note in the literature regarding choice is the sheer variety of rationales for why people choose one language over another. It is no longer just about ethnicity, but also includes situation and affiliation, which comprises those more immediate social categories such as family, school, and emotional attachment. For this particular study, which looks at the place of Arabic in identity construction among bilingual speakers, how the participants select which language to use gives us insight into their language choices.

One helpful distinction for understanding the choices which speakers make is Leung, Harris and Rampton's (1997) work wherein they express three types of relationships between language and identity (cited in Block, 2007b). These are called: language expertise, language affiliation, and language inheritance. Block (2007b) goes on to define these, indicating that expertise refers to how "proficient a person is in a language or dialect," while affiliation is the "extent to which a person identifies with and feels attached to a particular form of communication" (p. 40), and finally inheritance is being born into a particular language.

However, being born into a language "says nothing about one's expertise in the language" nor "does it guarantee any degree of positive affiliation" (Block, 2007b, p. 40). This is a very important factor when looking at the place of language as an identity marker. As this notion of 'inheritance' points out, being born into a language does not ensure that the speaker will feel positively toward the language, or that the speaker will look upon this inherited language as a marker of his/her identity. In many situations, the language that one was born with and the language he/she chooses to use, if bilingual or plurilingual, is chosen for its communicative value in specific situations and furthermore, is being used only as a resource for identity construction. However, we have to keep in mind when we talk about an inherited language or mother tongue, that the "phrase 'mother tongue' exposes many features of emotional attachments to a particular language" (Mills, 2004), since "emotion talk begins [early in life]

through interactions with care-givers” (Pavlenko, 2014, p. 268). Those who may have “expertise” in a language may have gained it through studying the language or living in a country with a language different from their native language. In these cases, the speakers, much like the inheritors of language, may not have any positive feelings for the language, and may only see that particular language as useful for communication. All of these factors point to language as being more of a resource for communicating than a marker of an identity. Examples of this include those people who choose to use their second language as “their preferred choice of expression,” such as Joseph Conrad writing in English instead of Polish, and Salman Rushdie choosing English over Gujarati (Piller, 2000).

Joshua Fishman’s (1965 reprinted in 2000) article “Who speaks what language to whom and when” outlines the ways in which speakers choose the language they will speak in. Wei (2007) does an excellent job of summing up Fishman’s argument as she summarizes the factors that lead to choosing one language over another: the person being addressed (family member, school friends, colleagues, superiors, friends, officials, etc.), the location of the interaction (at home, in the street, church, office, and more), the relationship with the person they are speaking with (family, neighbours, colleagues, strangers), and finally the topic under discussion (family issues, school work, politics, entertainment). Specifically, Fishman (2000) argues that the “first controlling factor in language choice is group membership” or affiliation, which includes membership by age, sex, race, religion, etc. (p. 89), while another regulating factor includes the situation style (p. 93).

3.3.1.1 Local affiliation or domains

Affiliations or domains of language behaviour are relevant to language choice. These include the “institutional contexts” in which the language is being spoken. Domains can include: “family, street, school (divided into language of instructor, subject of instruction, language of recess, entertainment, and more)” (Fishman, 2000, p. 93). These can be further sub-divided into socio-psychological areas including: intimate, informal, formal, and intergroup, which quite easily coincide with the institutional levels.

Finally, according to Fishman, when it comes to studies of plurilingual behaviour, it is revealed that the family domain is perhaps the most crucial part. He goes on to state, “The language behaviour may not just be based on individual preference or facility, but also a matter of role-relations.” This is due to the fact that in certain societies “particular behaviours (including language behaviours) are expected (if not required) of particular individuals” when speaking to certain people (Fishman, 2000, p. 95). An example of the role of family in language behaviour can be seen in a 2009 study which sought to understand the role of family members in determining the language choice of bilinguals. Obied’s (2009) study looked at the “collective language use among family members” and how the language practices of older siblings determined if younger siblings conformed or rejected their siblings’ practices (p. 715). He found that siblings do have an effect on the language environment of bilingual families and they “affect the language balance in the home” (p. 717). This review of domain analysis explains that bilingual speakers base their language choices on the social milieu in which they are speaking.

3.3.1.2 Situational

In terms of situational styles, Fishman expands on the notion discussed by earlier linguists (see Gumperz & Naim, 1960; Joos, 1962; Labov, 1963). Fishman looks at situation in terms of style. By this he means those factors pertaining to “intimacy-distance, formality-informality, solidarity-non-solidarity, power status, etc.” (p. 91). Another regulator of language choice in plurilingual settings is that of the topic under discussion. According to Fishman topic issues might occur because the speakers have a habit of discussing specific topics in a particular language. Or the speaker may be educated on a specific topic in a certain language. It also occurs when bilinguals talk to other bilinguals with the same linguistic background and change from one language to the other during the course of a conversation (Wei, 2007, p. 15). According to Grosjean (2015) some topics are simply better dealt with in one language than another and “bilinguals may well change languages when they change topics,” or because they have a larger vocabulary in a particular field (pp. 45-46). Finally, another reason may be that speakers could think some topics strange or inappropriate to discuss in one language, and therefore switch to the language which is more comfortable for that particular discussion.

Two studies carried out in 2011 reveal the relevance of situation to language choices in plurilingual settings. In the first, Gu (2011) studied young people in Hong Kong and found that in “multilingual settings the languages they chose to use were used for different identification purposes.” Essentially, these students exercised agency to take up “subjective positions regarding the symbolic power and social value” of one language versus the other. Wei’s (2011) study of three Chinese males in the UK found that young people are quite happy and eager to “learn languages if they see personal benefits.” By having more than one language to choose from, they could enrich their lives and “open up more spaces and networks” in which they could position themselves (p. 1230).

As Lin (2008), who aligns herself with this post-structural understanding of identity argues, what her identity reveals at a particular moment is “always situated in a consideration of where I am speaking from and to whom,” (p. 203). This view indicates that it is not the language itself which is forming our identity, but the speakers who decide what identity comes forth depending on who they are speaking to and the situation in which they find themselves (Spolsky, 2010). Meaning that we “negotiate and re-negotiate [identity] according to the circumstances” (Joseph, 2010, p. 14), and how we speak is “conditioned in part by the people we are speaking to” (Joseph, 2004, p. 12).

These two perceptions of language and identity: affiliation and situation are both important to this study. Since this study is attempting to discover what young people have to say about their identity construction, being cognizant of these two perceptions and their roles in identity construction is useful to my understanding of Arab youths’ choices of language. Furthermore, these two perspectives also open up the possibility that young people may be using English only as a resource for their identity construction, instead of a rejection of an Arab identity. I am interested in how these two things play out in what Arab young people have to say to me.

3.3.1.3 Investment and language choices

It is important to note that each time language learners speak, “they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly

organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. In other words, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). In addition, they are making determinations about whether to use a language or not.

This section looks at what people do or choose to do with the languages at their disposal, known as investment. When we look at investment as a construct it involves the stand that people take in addition to the actions they take. Applied to identity and language choice, we are looking at how people orient themselves towards a language and the decisions they make about which language they will use. Simply put investment is about how people make decisions about whether to use a language or not.

If people believe that learning English will give them opportunities in life, they may decide to learn the language. People make the choice on whether or not to invest in a language. However, by doing so, they expect something in return (Norton, 1995). Our investment is contingent on how we perceive ourselves in relationship to the particular setting, community, or situation that we find ourselves in. Therefore when we look at language and identity construction it is important that we consider people’s attitudes and orientations towards a language, and whether they choose to invest or not.

The current study’s focus on the relationship between language and identity benefits from a brief look at the research of Norton-Peirce (Norton, 1997; Peirce, 1993, 1995), whose work extends the theoretical and empirical base of social identity and intergroup relations (Brown & Turner, 1981; Tajfel, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to the relationships of second language learners in second language learning circumstances. For Norton-Peirce (1995) theorists in the SLA field need a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the second language learner and the language-learning context, which would allow them to conceptualize and understand more clearly the relationship between second language learners and the contexts in which they interact.

Norton-Pierce's (1995) study about immigrant women in Canada and how they utilized English when encountering native-born Canadians, who were native speakers of English, helped produce a new SLA theory. Using social identity theory research to understand the collected data helped her create the new theory, which she terms "investment." Investment focuses on the individual and the social context. That is, the focus on investment is situational. My research is not looking at how people are treated in relationship to others, nor if they are investing or resisting a language. This thesis is interrogating students' orientation towards the language and whether or not they feel as though investment in English is damaging their Arabic or is a resource for communication. Furthermore, I am investigating their investment in the language and why they believe it is useful to them. This is not about resistance, but about how Arab youth in the UAE use English as a way to ensure a more secure future while increasing their cultural capital.

Based on her study, Norton-Peirce proposes that language learners interact based on the particular social identity that becomes appropriate in an intergroup context. Therefore what she terms "investment" supposes that language learners "are not only exchanging information," but are categorizing their own significance and their relationship to the social world. Therefore "an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space" (Peirce, 1995, p. 18). This notion of investment attempts to understand the relationship between the language learner and the target language. This is a complex relationship and investment tries to describe how and perhaps why language learners might choose to challenge a social order of which they are a part by developing new social identities. It is this decision to invest, and investment that underpins what people do or don't do in terms of language use.

If we look at language learners through the lens of investment, it is apparent we must understand that a learner's investment in the target language is based on its connection to social structures of power and the related opportunities for language learners to "reframe power relations" (Norton-Peirce, 1995, p. 22). Reviewing Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital, Norton-Peirce explains that language learners learn a new language in the belief that it will give them

access to a “wider range of symbolic and material resources” such as: education, friendship, capital goods, real estate, and money. It is then imagined that these will at some point “increase the value of their cultural capital” (1995, p. 17). Thus, the desire to become part of a particular group, which might help one attain material resources, can influence identity formation (Bourdieu, 1992).

3.4 Emotions, language and identity construction

When discussing language we must always remain cognizant of the emotional ties that people hold to their mother tongue, and therefore there is a need for researchers to find ways to include emotions in any account of language and identity (Block, 2013). Although this study is not seeking any in-depth understanding of the participants’ feelings and emotions about which language they use, the literature has reported that participants in some studies (see for example Dewaele & Nakano, 2013), claim to feel “significantly less logical, less serious, and less emotional” when using a second or third language (p. 118). Furthermore since people use language to convey emotions and thoughts, we have to accept that emotions cannot be separated from language (Jensen, 2014; Kim, Bae, Noh, & Lee, 2011). As Jensen (2014) argues, emotion and language are “subjectively felt experiences and are intertwined with our language behavior” (p. 2). Therefore, since “emotion and language [essentially] belong together” (Jensen, 2014, p. 1), it was important to ask participants about their own experiences with regards to emotional ties to their languages.

3.5 The theoretical framework underpinning the study

This study looks at bilingual young people in the Arab world and tries to understand how they use their two languages against the backdrop of how they understand themselves as Arabs. This literature review reveals the complexity of the role of language in identity construction. The fact that there is certainly a link between language and identity is accepted; however, language is not always a marker or signifier of identity.

The rationale for using a post-structuralist lens with regard to language and identity, especially in the current complex environment present in the UAE, is that it accepts the notion that the vision of ethnicity and identity are shifting and

are in no way static. Despite the general structuralist understanding of identity in much of the literature and in view of the debate about Arab identity as presented in chapter 2, this study examines language use and identity construction among Arab learners of English from a post-structuralist perspective. This embraces the capacity of people to act reflexively and exert agency as they engage in a process of identification.

This thesis is interested to subject the discourse in the Arab world, which states that an Arab identity requires Arabic and that the emergence of global English is a threat to Arab identity, to critical scrutiny. This is done through an emphasis on identity as a reflexive project of the self. The key elements of my theoretical framework follow.

The main point which must be acknowledged is that Arabness, or ethnicity, is a contested construct. This leads to the relationship between ethnicity and language, by association, to also being contested. People are not merely products of social categories and therefore their behaviors (such as language use) are not constrained by them. Drawing upon post-structuralism, has helped me understand that it is more helpful to talk about Arabness, and the associated concerns about the threat of English, as a discourse rather than a reality. This is especially important in light of the fact that in the context of globalization one should recognize that there are other ways of thinking that might be equally valid, particularly since English is a major way in which global ideas are promulgated and these young people are fluent in English. Post-structuralism has also helped me understand that discourses inform but do not constrain or impose social practices on people. This is because people do not 'live' in discourses as much as they do in situations and daily events. Further, it is important to think of individuals' agency to their self-identity. Central to this is the re-emergence of the significance of the self in identification processes. In today's world, increasingly understood to be in a state of globalization, identity has become a project of the reflexive self.

Therefore we can no longer view a one-to-one correlation between an identity category such as Arab and certain practices (including language practices). Instead, especially in the case of languages, there is the possibility of choice.

There is the option of deciding whether inheritance of a language defines one's identity, or proficiency, or if it is based on affiliation or situation. The central key now is that people have choices in how they self-identify.

Based on this theoretical framework I had to determine what sorts of questions would need to be asked in order to explore and research this topic. Since my interest is in self-identity, I needed to discover how people see themselves as a crucial way to understand choices; this has seldom been done in research into language and identity. Most traditional self-identity research has not considered language choices, especially with regard to English. While people have looked at attitudes, feelings, etc. towards global English they do not explicitly look at self-identity as something to be investigated. It is assumed perhaps, but not investigated as various studies illustrate.

The framework also helped me choose the methodology for the study. A great deal of self-identity research has been conducted through questionnaires, but interviews are needed to add depth to this topic. I have found that there is a need to uncover what people feel, in terms of their perceptions, but also to ask about what they claim to do. There is the realization that people may use social categories to describe themselves, such as culture, nationality, and religion. In fact, it can be difficult to discuss identity without considering these categories; therefore, Social Identity Theory was employed as part of the study.

3.6 Previous studies related to the research topic

In this chapter, I have developed my theoretical understanding of language and identity underpinning this study. I have argued that identity is constructed through encounters with others and is not solid, but fluid and that people's views of their own identities are socially constructed.

The following section will discuss previous studies that have also focused on the issue of language and identity. Overall, the studies shown here confirm the stance which I am taking and what the literature has revealed, which has been summarized in the preceding theoretical framework. Essentially, most of the studies which have looked at perceptions never asked directly about language and identity and their focus was on attitudes or opinions about global English. I

have been unable to locate any studies which have carried out research exactly like mine, which focused on whether or not an Arab identity is determined by the Arabic language.

Most recent studies regarding the use of English in a globalized world have sought out opinions or attitudes towards global English. Two studies looked at language and identity in the UAE, but neither asked the participants if Arabic was a marker of an Arab identity. Badry (2011) designed her study in order to contribute to the homogeneity-heterogeneity debate by looking at the impact of global English on the cultural identity of university students in the UAE. Her findings revealed that these students demonstrated a linguistic behaviour that was open and porous depending on the context in which they were speaking. Ronesi (2011) also used students in the UAE for her study on how students perceive themselves as Arab speakers of English. Her findings indicate that the students felt a strong attachment to their Arab identity despite their constant exposure to English and western images. The final comparable study, which was perhaps most similar to this current study, is L.S. Kim's (2003) research on the relationship between language and sociocultural identities of English as second language learners in Malaysia. This study found that the participants had a range of identities which they used depending on the context of the interaction and with whom they were speaking. These studies, which incorporated discussions of identity, showed a fairly strong link to affiliation and situation. Participants used their languages based on who they were speaking to and the context in which they found themselves. Overall, notwithstanding the various searches for the link between language and identity and the role of English as a resource, none of the researchers came right out and questioned students about their mother tongue and identity. None of these studies asked directly if the participants' native language was paramount in helping them assert their identity.

Throughout the debate regarding Arabic as a marker of an Arab identity, we have dealt with what people say about language; however, when we examine what they *do* or *choose* to do with their languages, we cross into that area which differentiates stances from actual acts. This is in keeping with Ochs (1993) who argues that people can become part of a social group "through their

acts and stances” (p. 291). I am not looking at language use in order to determine how my participants negotiate their positions. I am only reporting on language choice and use in order to cross check, that they do use English a lot, but their fairly constant use of English may dispel the myth that Arabness requires Arabic.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature regarding language and identity in order to assemble my theoretical framework. The literature has revealed that people are not all similar despite coming from the same culture or sharing a language. People do have a sense of belonging, whether to religion, nation, culture, or language; however, these factors do not shape their entire identity. Using this approach lets me deconstruct and raise questions about the assumptions we hold about categories and the narrow views of Arab identity, allowing me to challenge those assumptions. And even though we may have group identities, those too can be multiple. With post-structuralism, identity is about individuals working their way through the social world, which does have its constraints, but which can be manoeuvred around. When we look at language from this perspective, it shows that language is a socially and culturally situated phenomenon. Within the post-structuralist approach, the conceptualization of ‘self’ in new ways allows one to understand a sense of self within the larger social framework, where identities are produced based on the changing social and material conditions of language, culture, and life (Collins & Blot, 2003; Watson-Gegeo, 2004). Therefore within this ever-changing relationship between language use and identities we are able to determine the role of human agency; as people, both individually and in groups, utilize language in order to negotiate their identities (Auleear Owodally, 2011).

It is the intention of this study to take a post-structuralist approach to the link between language and identity in the context of native speakers of Arabic, who have excellent English skills, and who are studying in an English medium university. The study is designed to pick up on the concerns about global English and the role of Arabic, and the need to be protectionist. Since relatively little research has been done which seeks to understand the link between the

Arabic language and Arab identity, this investigation hopes to address that gap.
The study is described in detail in the following chapter, 4.

CHAPTER 4

Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological assumptions which underpin the research study reported in this thesis, the methods used to gather and analyze the data, and the rationale behind the ways the results are presented. First, the research questions are presented followed by the theoretical foundations of the study. I will then describe and provide a justification for the exploratory interpretative methodology that I adopted in order to address these questions. The two methods used are presented separately in this chapter, with the quantitative methods presented first followed by the qualitative methods. Subsequent sections cover the data collection and analysis procedures, and the way I addressed issues relating to my positionality, research ethics and validity, and trustworthiness of my analysis process. The chapter ends with an acknowledgement of some of the limitations of the study design.

4.1 Research questions

As outlined in chapter 1, the aim of this study is to discover the perceived significance of the Arabic language to an Arab identity among Arab youth who are fluent speakers of English and are studying at a university where English is the medium of instruction. Informed by the theoretical framework introduced in chapter 3, the research addressed the following questions:

1. What are the perspectives of Arab youth, who study through the medium of English, on the significance of Arabic to an Arab identity?
 - a. What are their views on what constitutes an Arab identity?
 - b. How significant do they feel that Arabic is to claiming an Arab identity?
2. Do these young people have any concerns about their use of English and their identity as Arabs?
 - a. How do they use English in their daily lives?

- b. What are their views on the effects of using English on their identity construction?

4.2 The design of the study

4.2.1 My ontological and epistemological stance

The decisions taken regarding the design of any research study will reflect a number of things including the topic under investigation, and more pragmatic concerns such as the amount of time available to conduct the research and ease of access to research participants. However, at a more fundamental level, these decisions are underpinned by and will reflect a researcher's worldview. That is, the researcher's beliefs about the nature of reality (or ontology) and beliefs about the location of knowledge (or epistemology) and how this is produced (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Given this, before going on to consider the methodological decisions that I took when designing my inquiry, it is therefore important to start this chapter by detailing my own ontological and epistemological orientating stance. In doing so, I will draw upon the concept of a research paradigm, which is a relatively distinct set of shared assumptions or worldview among a group of researchers regarding the nature of reality and knowledge and the relationship between this and the design of the research methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). While in recent years the number of research paradigms has increased and distinctions between them are viewed as increasingly blurred, thereby making some question the usefulness of the term (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), there still remains a broad distinction between what is variously referred to as the scientific or positivist paradigm and the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm in the literature. Along with many other researchers, this distinction is one that I find useful in positioning my own orientating stance in this study and has helped me identify my ontological and epistemological stance as aligned with interpretivism (Crotty, 1998, p.67).

As explained in the opening chapter, the central aim of the inquiry I am reporting in this thesis was to critically interrogate a widespread rhetoric in the Middle East, particularly prevalent in the Gulf States, that links the increased

use of English by Arab youth with the erosion of an 'Arab' identity. My rationale for undertaking this study, further informed by my reading around this topic as summarized in the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3 above, was my belief that rather than viewing the relationship between Arabness and language as fixed and stable, there is a need to appreciate that this is a contested and socially constructed term that is subject to different interpretations, particularly in the context of globalization. Moreover, that for some young Arabs who are exposed to and fluent in English, such as those who are the participants in my inquiry, it may be possible to claim an Arab identity without necessarily using Arabic or being a fluent Arabic speaker.

This stance is one that resonates with and positions my work broadly within the interpretivist tradition. In other words, I subscribe to the interpretivist view that reality (and therefore meaning) do not exist in the world independently of consciousness (Collins, 2010), but are constructed through the interplay of behaviours, beliefs, and events (Rowlands, 2005). Moreover, since meanings are always subjective, borne out of individuals' interpretation of their experiences of being in the world (Chen et al., 2010), I believe it is important to appreciate and seek out these grounded experiences of phenomena and to appreciate the multiplicity of perspectives that this can yield (Newman & Benz, 1998). In addition, as Crotty (1998) observes, interpretative research is interested to ask questions about feelings, thoughts, and standpoints with the main purpose of research being to lead to new understanding of phenomena, actions, and perspectives and to reveal the multiple perspectives which can complicate and unsettle but also yield new insights. This desire to generate new understandings and to unsettle established 'truths' about Arab identity and the strength of the relationship holding between this is central to my research inquiry.

At this juncture, it is also helpful to highlight what an interpretivist view entails and how this informs my understanding of my position vis-a-vis the participants and what my role as a researcher should be. This is discussed in more detail in section 4.6 below, but it is useful here to highlight how, as I embarked on my study, I bore a number of points in mind with respect to data collection and analysis. As Denzin and Lincoln (2008) note, undertaking interpretative

research is a situated activity that “locates the observer in the world” (p. 4) whose task is to “make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 4). Doing this requires an appreciation of the principle of double hermeneutic (Crotty, 1998, p. 68), that is, the ways in which the researcher is involved in making an interpretation of the participants’ interpretation of events. This highlights how the researcher is fully implicated in the data analysis process and rather than attempting to be objective, since there are actually no “objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 29), he or she should acknowledge the subjective nature of the interpretation that is achieved and presented as the outcome of the research. From this, I understood that the interpretations I make are developed with full attention to the need for transparency and rigor and it is important to also acknowledge that my interpretations can never really be “separated from my own background, history, context, and prior understandings” (Creswell, 2007, p. 39). That is, as is widely observed in the literature, undertaking research is never neutral (see for example Riessman, 2008; Ezzy, 2002; Richards, 2003).

4.2.2 Methodological decision-making and the design of the study

In research terms, methodology is the “strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular research methods” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). While decisions about methodology will be informed by the researcher’s ontological and epistemological stance or worldview, there are other things that a researcher may take into consideration. These include, on the one hand, the management of practical aspects of conducting the research study, such as time and accessibility of the intended sample, but also the intended audience for the study and to what use the knowledge generated might be put.

As outlined above, since I see my worldview as one that is aligned with interpretivism, consideration of methodological choices in this study were informed by those widely used by researchers who see themselves as working within this research tradition. There are several methodological strategies employed by interpretivist researchers, such as case study or ethnography,

which emphasize the collection of qualitative data from unstructured observations and/or semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Interviews, one of the methods I selected in my study, are seen as particularly useful in building rich and in-depth accounts from participants, of particular phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Although adopting an interpretivist research may inform the selection of methods it is important to appreciate that there is no strict one-to-one correlation between the worldview adopted by the researcher and the data collection methods employed. Thus, while emphasis is often placed on methods that can generate qualitative rather than quantitative data in interpretative research this does not mean that quantitative data has no role in interpretative research and that methods such as questionnaires, to generate this, cannot be adopted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 250). Indeed, the combining of methods, as I have done, is not uncommon, and is undertaken by researchers for a number of different reasons. This includes the use of interviews to triangulate questionnaire findings or because of the belief that the two sources of data complement each other and provide a more comprehensive picture of a phenomenon than can be achieved by one of these methods alone (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Cleary, 2013; Plano Clark, Creswell, Green, & Shope, 2008). However, in my study I saw the inclusion of a questionnaire in my research design, to provide a larger “representative” sample (comprising more than 300 respondents) from the population under study than would have been possible if I had only employed methods to collect qualitative data. The purpose of this was to try to ensure that my research findings had “population external validity” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 65). In other words, to help ensure that the body of data would be enough to potentially provide a counter argument to the established view of English eroding Arab identity in the Arab world as reported in chapter 2. I did this based on Plano Clark et al.’s (2008) argument that the use of a questionnaire would help reveal tendencies and trends across a population and the interviews a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. However, although the questionnaire stage of the study preceded the interview stage, I did not see this as the primary source of data as I believe that to generate data on a complex topic such as identity and language, interviews are ultimately best placed to do

this as they allow a more “illustrative, evocative and close up view of a phenomenon” (Mason, 2006, p. 3). By placing the questionnaire first, I hoped that themes and trends would emerge that could be explored in more depth in subsequent interviews.

My reading on ways to conduct research into identity (and specifically language and identity) helped me identify that a two stage study comprising a questionnaire and interviews would be a helpful way to approach my research design. I discovered that there are a number of different approaches to identity research depending on the particular understanding of identity construction adopted and what the researchers are interested to find out (McNamara, 1997; Hansen & Liu, 1997; Block, 2013). For example, as Block (2013) noted, among interactional social psychologists, who are interested in identity construction as a situated, relational and conversational achievement, the analysis of transcripts of recorded conversations is increasingly common practice. Interviews are also typically used by those who view identity as narrative or storied self (Block, 2010; Hyland, 2012), but they are also increasingly used by those who want to analyze the role of language in the construction of self (Burck, 2005), which was a central interest in my study. With respect to research into language and ethnic identity in particular, I noted that the tendency has been for much of this work, particularly from those who conflate ethnicity and language together into ethnolinguistic identity, to employ questionnaires, largely independently of interviews (Hansen & Liu, 1997). As I undertook the research, as I will discuss in more detail in the discussion chapter (chapter 7), I became more aware of the challenges of employing questionnaires as a data collection method to explore such a complex topic, but at the start of my research project, I found the emphasis on questionnaire studies to look at language and identity encouraging given my interest in external population validity as discussed above.

Using questionnaires in identity research is extremely challenging. It is problematic because it forced me to superimpose constructs such as culture and ethnicity on the participants. As I discovered, students responding both to the questionnaire and especially in the interviews, revealed a difficulty in articulating or agreeing upon the concept of being an Arab. Therefore, despite

the usefulness of the questionnaire in helping me get a global perspective on this issue, it is quite obvious that it is extremely difficult to capture such an abstract phenomenon as Arab identity in this manner. However, this issue did not stop my research design from being very useful in shedding light on the subject under study. Table 1 below provides an overview of the study design discussed above.



April 2011 	Distribution of questionnaires to 304 students
April – September 2011 	Review of questionnaire data and development of questions/themes for interviews
October – January 2011 - 2012	Conduct 12 semi-structured interviews

Table 1 Summary of the data collection activities

4.3 The research site and participants

While planning this study, I decided to focus on young people who were native speakers of Arabic and who were studying at universities in the UAE. As explained in chapter 2, almost all universities in the UAE are now English medium, and I initially hoped to gain insights into the relationship between Arab identity and language from multiple universities. This would have allowed me to interrogate the views of students with different degrees of proficiency in English. However, after discussions with colleagues at my university and other universities in the UAE, I discovered that many administrators were not open to outside requests to do field research amongst their students. Therefore, after confronting these issues I determined that the university where I teach, EAU, gave me access to a wider variety of ‘Arab’ students in terms of nationality and background that I felt was necessary to capture the diversity of young people in the Middle East today.

I chose to use students taking the foundation writing course at EAU. This is a course requirement for all students who matriculate into the university; it is also taught through the department in which I teach. Most of the students are in their

first-year, and the only students who are beyond their first year are those who have failed the course and are repeating it. First-year writing students were chosen as they are a big contingent in the institution and encompass a large number of Arabic speaking students of various nationalities; furthermore, they are a representative sample of EAU students. As I teach in the department, I work with the faculty members who teach this course, and it was simple for me to obtain their assistance.

Table 2 below shows the total number of participants involved in the first stage of the study.

Instrument	Females	Males	Total number of participants
Stage 1 Questionnaire	122	182	304

Table 2 Number of students participating in first stage of the study

A good sample, according to Dornyei is “very similar to the target population in terms of general characteristics such as age, ethnicity, educational background, academic capability, etc.” (p. 71). Drawing upon Dornyei’s (2003, 2007) work, the sample of students can be described as a convenience sample in so far as they were chosen based on accessibility, geographical proximity, and availability (p. 72). I chose the sampling criteria and size based on what I was trying to achieve through this study. In terms of size, there are a variety of suggestions offered by Dornyei (2003, 2007), which run the gamut from one to ten percent of a population, with a minimum of 100 participants to having enough participants to be useful for statistical considerations. It is also important to leave a margin to allow for some to drop out. Using Dornyei’s recommendations as a guideline, my sample was about 7.5% of the student population, during the year I distributed my questionnaire.

My choices of sampling strategies were also based upon insights from Cohen et al. (2007). They detail two types of sampling: a random sample, also known as a probability sample; and a purposive sample, known as a non-probability sample. For this study, random sampling was utilized for the questionnaires. With this type of sampling “each member of the population had an equal

chance of being selected” (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 10) as the sample drew randomly from the wider population of university students.

There were 17 different nationalities represented among the 304 students completing the questionnaire. This is a good representative of the 22 total nations comprising the Arab League. The majority of students came from the UAE, with Palestine following closely (see Table 3). All of the students claimed Arabic as their native language, and this is how they were chosen for the study.

Nationality	Number
Algeria	2
Bahrain	5
Egypt	38
Iraq	18
Jordan	41
Kuwait	3
Lebanon	12
Libya	2
Morocco	3
Oman	6
Palestine	51
Saudi Arabia	18
Sudan	7
Syria	29
Tunisia	2
United Arab Emirates	62
Yemen	5

Table 3 Nationalities of those completing the questionnaire

Interview participants

Voluntary sampling was chosen for the interviews; this sampling relied on the participants, who completed the questionnaire and who were willing to be interviewed. The group of 12, who were interviewed, included 8 female students and 4 males; they were all freshmen or first-year students. Table 4 below shows the total number of participants involved in the second stage of the study.

Instrument	Females	Males	Total number of participants
Stage 2 Interviews	8	4	12

Table 4 Number of students participating in the second stage of the study

The interview participants represented the following countries: Egypt (1), Iraq (3), Lebanon (1), Libya (1), Palestine (2), Saudi Arabia (1), Syria (1), and the UAE (2). These participants had various academic majors including: management, accounting, finance, business, mass communication, journalism, international studies, civil engineering, and chemical engineering. Each of them had excellent spoken English language skills. They had all either been born in the UAE or had lived in the UAE from childhood, except one female from Saudi Arabia. Most of them had attended English medium private schools, except for one of the Emirati students, who had attended UAE public school, where English is taught as a subject, and the female student from Saudi Arabia, who had attended an Arabic-medium school prior to university. General information about them can be seen in Table 5. Further detailed information regarding the interviewees can be found in Appendix 3. The information in the appendix includes the educational backgrounds of these students, where they grew up and resided, and some personal information. All of these factors helped reveal the complexity of their backgrounds as young Arabs living in the UAE.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Major	Nationality
Adel	M	19	Accounting	UAE
Basma	F	19	International Studies	Saudi Arabia
Elias	M	19	Business	Lebanon
Lujaine	F	19	Accounting	Iraq
Maysoon	F	19	Mass Communication	Palestine
Mohamed	M	18	Civil Engineering	Iraq
Noor	F	19	Mass Communication	Palestine
Rania	F	18	Finance	Iraq
Sara	F	18	Journalism	Egypt
Wafa	F	18	Chemical Engineering	Libya
Yousef	M	19	Business	UAE
Yusra	F	19	Management	Syria

Table 5 Interview participants

The following sections discuss the data collection methods I used. I begin with the questionnaire data and then present the data collection methods for the qualitative segment. Additionally it explains why I chose these particular methods and why they were seen as useful for my study.

4.4 Data collection methods

Best and Kahn (1998) indicate that “the researcher chooses the most appropriate instruments and procedures that provide for the collection and analysis of data” (p. 331), which will help answer the research questions. For the types of information I was seeking, using only the questionnaire had its limitations. To obtain clearer and deeper insight into students’ perceptions, it was necessary to also speak to some of the students. This is why the semi-structured interviews were set up, in order to add depth to the responses on the questionnaire.

4.4.1 Questionnaires: initial data collection method

Questionnaires are used in order to obtain information from a large number of people. They are “designed for efficiency” as large numbers of participants can be reached and the data can be analyzed quantitatively (Wagner, 2010, p. 26). A questionnaire is used as a “fact-finding mission” and to give qualitative research a “wider picture or an overview;” it is considered to be the best method to obtain an overview of a population (Wellington, 2009, p. 101). The advantages of questionnaires include the fact that they are popular, as they are fairly easy to put together, and are “extremely versatile and ... gather large amounts of information” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 101). Furthermore, depending on how well they are constructed, they allow for quick processing (Dornyei, 2003).

4.4.1.1 Design of the questionnaire used in this study

The design of the questionnaire was informed by my theoretical framework developed in chapter 3, which articulated my understanding of identity as socially constructed and the different ways in which the relationship between language and identity can be conceptualized, the debates surrounding language and identity in the Arab world, and the way globalization and global English are perceived to be affecting this situation. As is evident from my theoretical framework, drawing upon Social Identity Theory, I recognize that identity is a process of belonging and one way to understand this is to see identity as a form of group membership. Given this, I saw it as helpful to draw upon categories of group membership such as ‘culture’ ‘religion’ and ‘nationality’ in addition to Arabic that might be seen as linked to or manifesting an Arab identity. As discussed in chapter 2, these are all understood, alongside

language, to be ways of marking an ethnic identity. I am aware that pinning identity to these categories is not without its challenges given the fact that these things are open to different interpretations and intersect in different ways. However, I felt, to gain a 'global' perspective on what was understood by the term Arab and what the relationship between this and language choices was, that the use of these categories was acceptable, particularly given that I included open-ended questions and follow up interviews where finer nuances could be picked up.

Since my understanding of identity construction was also informed by post-structuralist perspectives, which see identity more in terms of an individual project of meaning making formed against the backdrop of and drawing upon different (and also competing) discourses, I made sure to include items that would provide a sense of the way individual agency informed their sense of belonging and their views on these discourses. I saw as central in capturing their perspectives regarding language and being an Arab, whether they felt there was a tension between claiming Arab identity and using English. Finally, in line with the emotional attachment to language and identity categories highlighted by my reading, I included explicit items on these things.

There are several steps required in constructing a questionnaire including: ensuring they are not too long (not over 4 pages), writing effective questions/items, sequencing items, and writing clear instructions (see Dornyei, 2003). It is also important to be very careful with word choices, as minor variances in how a question is framed or the words used, can make a difference in the types of responses attained (Dornyei, 2007). Furthermore, according to Dornyei (2003) it is a good idea to ask things more than once. I followed this advice, as can be seen for example in items 16 and 22 on the questionnaire. Questionnaires may include both closed and open-ended items. Closed items do not require any free writing by the respondents; they need only tick a ready-made response, while open-ended questions require respondents to write their response on the lines provided (Dornyei, 2003). These two types are designed to elicit both objective and subjective data (Wagner, 2010). My survey utilized both, as open-ended items can offer more "richness" to quantitative data (Dornyei, 2003). Responses to the open-ended questions

were helpful in giving me some clearer examples and useful quotes. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

The questionnaire was made up of 27 items which were divided into four major sections. The themes are based on the two research questions that guide the study. The first part of the questionnaire was an introductory section that was utilized to collect background information on the respondents. There were four items requesting the students' academic year, gender, nationality, and native language. The sections of the questionnaire are outlined in Table 6 below. The design of my questionnaire was also influenced by the fact that I was also planning to use interviews. The final section of the questionnaire asked participants to write in their first names, email addresses, and mobile phone numbers if they were willing to be contacted for an interview at a later date.

Introductory section	Demographic details Academic year Gender Nationality Native language
Section 1	Questions to investigate participants' understanding of Arabness and Arab identity
Section 2	Questions to investigate who participants speak each language with, and the effects of that use.
Section 3	Questions to investigate participants' language use and identity construction
Section 4	Questions to investigate participants' views on globalization and its impact on identity and language use

Table 6 Structure of the questionnaire

(a) Section 1 was entitled "Defining Arabness or Arab Identity." This section had four main components with a total of eight parts. Students were first given statements which made claims about their identity, wherein they could tick off several responses. Additionally they were given extra space to fill in open-ended responses to three of the statements. Those statements sought to

understand why respondents considered their identities to be based on Arabic or not, if they believed the Arabic language to be a defining feature of being an Arab and finally what other markers they thought identified a person as an Arab.

(b) Section 2 focused on how the participants used the two languages: Arabic and English and was entitled “Use of Language.” There were 11 statements to which students had to respond on a Likert scale. The first seven items were directly related to their use of English, its effects on them, and how it made them feel towards their Arab culture and identity. The final four statements asked how often the students spoke the two languages and to whom.

(c) Section 3 was entitled “Language Use and Identity Construction” and consisted of seven boxes wherein students could tick off which language they preferred in certain situations. They were asked in which language they read, thought, and expressed feelings better. Additionally they were asked about their feelings on culture, using English in their studies, and which culture they felt more attached to.

(d) Section 4, entitled “My Views on Globalization” asked about the students’ perceptions about globalization. There were five Likert-type statements which asked for their views on globalization and the Arabic language, Arab culture, and Arab identity. The final part of the questionnaire allowed students to write in their first names, email addresses, and mobile phone numbers if they were interested in being interviewed.

I divided the questions by themes in order to explore those themes which I had set out to interrogate. It is important to note that the way the questionnaire is set up, including the organization of the questions, was to make the instrument easy and logical to navigate and attractive for the respondents. The sections and the questions within them were purposely organized in order to help the respondents address the research questions as shown in Table 7 below.

Research Questions/Themes	Corresponding question(s) on the questionnaire
What are the perspectives of Arab youth, studying through the medium of English, on the significance of Arabic to an Arab identity?	1-3, 16 and 22
How significant do they feel that Arabic is to claiming an Arab identity?	4
Do Arab youth have any concerns about their use of English and their identity as Arabs?	5-11 and 23-27
In what contexts do Arab youth use English as opposed to Arabic?	12-15 and 17-21

Table 7 Research questions/themes and corresponding questionnaire items

Some other aspects of the questionnaire design worth noting are that where appropriate, I used some items from other questionnaires on the topic of language and identity, which I felt were particularly well-worded (such as those from Badry's study 2011, mentioned in chapter 3 above). I did not find this to be a problem as from my reading I understood that due to the "replicating nature of social science research in general and survey research in particular" researchers are actually encouraged to use questions from previous research studies (Bradburn, et al., 2004, p. 23). Finally, as suggested by Dornyei (2003, 2007), I was exceedingly careful not to use any leading questions, which might have caused them to have overly negative or positive perceptions about either language or their personal identity.

4.4.1.2 Piloting the questionnaire

It took several drafts to come up with a questionnaire that I believed would effectively collect the information I was looking for to address my research questions. Once I had a draft that met with the approval of my supervisor, I also had two colleagues review it. They each have carried out empirical studies in the UAE, and their input gave me insights for improving the instrument. One colleague suggested I omit negative words such as 'not' from the survey, and the other pointed out that some of my open-ended questions lacked clarity.

Once I had what I assumed was my final draft of the questionnaire, I embarked on a pilot of this. Piloting of a questionnaire is considered essential (Dornyei, 2003; Wellington, 2009) to help ensure that the questionnaire will obtain the information it is intending to collect. Therefore after receiving feedback from my colleagues and approval from my supervisor, I then piloted the questionnaire to a sample of 28 students in my own writing classes to ensure that the questions were easily understood and that students' reactions to the questionnaire revealed no confusion. Students were given the option not to complete the questionnaire, and were told I was only piloting it and that the data would not be used in my research; only three of my students opted not to complete the questionnaire. I also informed them that any feedback they shared would be helpful. After the students completed the questionnaires, I had a de-briefing with the classes and asked them what types of things could be changed, re-written, or updated to help other students better comprehend the questionnaire. My goal was to produce a questionnaire that was clear and easy to comprehend for first-year university students. This step was needed to determine if the questions were "straightforward and that the format made logical sense" (Bradburn et al., 2004, p. 317). Following discussions with the pilot group, there were a few adjustments in terms of word choices, and from there I finalized the questionnaire. Piloting the questionnaire also helped me in determining the amount of time required to complete it. From the piloting sessions I discovered that it took about 20 minutes for all students to complete the questionnaire, this seemed to me to be an acceptable amount of time. This information was needed to share with instructors and students at future distributions of the survey.

4.4.1.3 Gaining access to the research sample

Once the pilot of the questionnaire was complete and I had identified the target group of participants for this study, I had to consider how to gain access to participants. As noted in 4.3 above, universities in the UAE can be difficult for researchers to gain access to, and the red-tape involved and the lack of control over the time and place often makes the situation untenable. Therefore, as I explained, I chose my own institution, EAU. I first contacted our Institutional Review Board (IRB) chairperson and informed her of my research plan. I completed a lengthy application process; wherein, I detailed my study, its

purpose, my requirements, and the students who would be involved. After assuring the committee that my study would not be harmful to our students, I was approved to proceed. In the interim I obtained ethical approval from the University of Exeter's Graduate School of Education. The approval forms from EAU and Exeter can be found in Appendices 8 and 9.

4.4.1.4 Distribution of the questionnaire

Following the changes made to the questionnaire after piloting, I printed the final version. In order to distribute the questionnaire, I emailed all colleagues in my department, assigned to teach the introductory writing class, asking if they would be willing to allow me to distribute my survey in their classes in the spring semester of 2011.

Although I do teach the introductory writing course, I did not use my own classes to avoid the possibility of students responding based on my role as their teacher. All of the faculty agreed to participate and responded to my original email request with the number of students in each of their classes. Questionnaire distribution took place in April of 2011. I chose to administer the surveys myself as there are a number of advantages inherent in administering questionnaires personally to groups of participants (Best & Kahn, 1998). As Best and Khan (1998) note, doing so allows the researcher to "establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study, and the meaning of items that may not be clear" (p. 299).

I made hard copies of the questionnaires and was able to visit each of my colleagues' classes over the course of two weeks. Each time, I explained the questionnaire to the students and let them know they had the right to opt out at that moment or later if they chose to; only nine students did. Those who opted out did so just before I distributed the questionnaires to their classes. After giving the instructions I remained in the classrooms until the students had completed the survey; the average time for completion was 20 minutes. For most of the classes I arranged to be at the classroom towards the end of class, thereby allowing the students to leave when they finished. There were three separate instances when colleagues changed the dates when I could distribute

the questionnaires. Although this briefly required some rearranging on my part, in terms of my own schedule, I was able to attend on the new dates.

4.4.1.5 Analysis of the quantitative data on the questionnaire

After I assembled all the completed questionnaires, I numbered each form from 1-304 to ensure that I could go back and check data contained on specific questionnaires, which was particularly helpful when I began the interviews. I then entered all the information from the close-ended items on the questionnaires into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet in order to generate the quantitative data that appears in chapter 5, the quantitative results chapter. Following Dornyei's (2003) advice, I had asked things more than once on the survey (items 16 and 22 for example). Therefore when analyzing the quantitative data, I had to focus on clusters of items instead of looking at 27 separate items. In order to present my findings, I used tables to reveal frequency and percentages of responses. I ensured that I re-organized items so that those which covered a particular topic were all presented together.

4.4.2 Interviews: second data collection method

As mentioned in section 4.2.2 above, one of the most commonly used research methods in interpretative research is the interview (Flick, 2007). Kvale (2007) makes the case that it is "through conversations we get to know people, learn about their experiences, feelings, hopes, and the world they live in," (p. 1) and as discussed earlier, it was for these reasons that I decided to use interviews alongside questionnaires to collect data for my research project. As explained earlier in the chapter interviews were conducted after the questionnaire results had been analyzed.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews for my study as they allowed me to generate more questions as the research progressed (Harklou, 2000, cited in Perry, 2011), and they helped me to ensure that I obtained a more in-depth perspective of the participants. The semi-structured interview, according to Perry (2011), does have pre-set questions; however, it allows the interviewer to follow up with other questions in order to "probe further" (p. 125). This is one of the advantages to interviews: the ability to probe. In addition, they allow the interviewer to determine if the questions are fully understood, provide guidance

and direction, and the interviewee can elaborate on particular matters (Dornyei, 2007; Perry, 2011). Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to “prepare questions guided by identified themes in a consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses” (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). These steps were used to ensure that my interviews obtained elaborate replies giving me the needed information to write up clear and incisive details in chapter 7.

4.4.2.1 Design of the semi-structured interviews used in this study

Once I had collected all the completed questionnaires, and analyzed the data, I was able to plan my interview design. I used Dornyei’s (2007) guidelines to prepare for the interview and to design my interview guide. I first outlined an interview guide, which would function as my main research instrument (a copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix 2). This required planning and piloting to ensure it would obtain the information I was seeking. According to Dornyei, we need the interview guide to ensure nothing important is left out, that questions are worded appropriately, that probe questions are available, and to give the researcher a template (see Dornyei, 2007, p. 137). I also ensured that the same procedures were used for each interview, as this helps when comparing responses (Perry, 2011). The interview guide was divided into four themes which sought to address the research questions and also mirrored those on the questionnaire. I discussed and shared a copy of the guide with my supervisor prior to initiating the interviews.

The literature reveals several ways of conducting interviews. There is the option of one-on-one meetings or group interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008). For this study I chose face-to-face interviews as they are more intimate and allow the interviewer to obtain more in-depth information about the participants and their understanding of the phenomenon under study. In this more personal setting, participants are less inhibited by others around them. Generally studies of this type use interview questions that are open-ended (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Semi-structured interviews seek to uncover the “stories that people choose to tell about their lives” (Atkinson, 1998 cited in Block, 2010, p. 340).

The interviews were designed to begin with fairly concrete questions, and then gradually moved towards more abstract issues of identity. I started the interviews with opening questions, mainly biographical regarding how long they had been using English and in what capacity. Then I moved on to questions about their attitudes and perceptions towards English, Arabic, their cultural backgrounds, and identity. The questions evolved from the two main research questions of the study, and although they were the starting point for the initial questions, once the students began responding I had the flexibility to follow certain threads which were instrumental in answering those questions, but more broadly. I wanted to allow them the luxury to think about their responses, suggest their own ideas about their Arab identity, and offer me as much information as possible, which would help me answer the research questions of this study. Through the one-hour sessions with each participant, I was able to extract quite detailed information from the interviewees.

4.4.2.2 Identifying the interview participants

This section discusses the data collection procedures carried out to obtain the interview data. The first section describes how I piloted and trialed the interviews. Then I explain how the interviews were conducted.

Since the questionnaire was distributed during the spring term 2011, I used the summer months to gather the quantitative data and assess the information obtained. In the fall term of 2011, I proceeded to contact those students who had indicated interest in participating in the interviews as discussed in section 4.5.1.4 above. They had given an email address and a mobile phone number on the last page of the questionnaire. I emailed each of them. Of the 46 who initially agreed to be interviewed, only 18 responded to my email. After the initial contact, I sent a follow up email and asked for their best times to come to my office for a briefing session. At that point the number fell to 13 students who maintained contact and following the loss of one more, my final group of students, who were willing to be interviewed, numbered 12. I purchased a digital recorder specifically for recording all the interviews.

4.4.2.3 Trialing the interview

There were several matters I needed to confirm before undertaking the interviews. I had to determine the length of time required for the interviews, how appropriate the questions I planned to use were, and make sure I was familiar with the digital recorder that I planned to use in order to record all of the interview sessions. I chose a colleague from my department for the sample interview pilot. She is an assistant professor with a substantial record of interviewing students for her own research. Her studies are often carried out with the same coterie of students as mine, i.e., students from EAU, and she has had great success in obtaining valuable information from our students. She has lived in the UAE for over 10 years, has developed a good rapport with students, and succeeds in gaining insights from them through interviews. Although I had the option of trialing the interview on a student or students, who represent my target population, I chose not to. I did this because my reason for trialing the interview was to focus on my interviewing skills and the clarity of the questions I was asking. I was concerned that interviewing a student would not necessarily get me the needed critical perspective required to help me improve my interviewing skills. Students often find it difficult to be critical of a teacher. I needed to gain input that would make me a better interviewer and give me useful input about my delivery of the interview questions, my prompts during the interview, and my overall success as an interviewer. I believed that this type of input would be stronger and more useful coming from a successful interviewer rather than a student.

As an outcome of the trial interview, I made some adjustments for the final interviews. In the trial, the interview lasted over one hour and a half. This helped me realize that I needed to be more focused with my time to ensure that participants were not kept too long answering questions. In addition, this experience helped me as a researcher, who does not have extensive knowledge as an interviewer, in developing better interviewing skills. By trialing my interview on an established researcher, I obtained valuable input from her regarding my interview techniques and style. I was informed that I needed to slow down while speaking and that I needed to allow more time for participants to respond before bringing up the next question.

4.4.2.4 Conducting the interviews

Before conducting the interviews proper, I first undertook a short pre-interview meeting with participants; it lasted 15-20 minutes for each student. I used this time to acquaint myself with the students, allowed them to get to know me, and answered any questions they had about the study or what I would do with the interview data. This meeting was important for establishing rapport with the students and helping them understand my plans for the study, additionally it let them get used to my voice and questioning patterns. During this meeting we went over the consent form, which I had sent them earlier, and all students signed the consent during this meeting. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix 7. Participants were informed that they still had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. We also used this time to look at their schedules and choose the best dates for our actual interview sessions. Before the students left after the first encounter, we had determined a time and date; I informed them to email me if anything changed. Later, only two students had to change their appointment times due to a conflict; the others attended on the dates we agreed on. For all 12 participants, these two sessions were sufficient.

The interviews began in October 2011 and were completed in January 2012. All interviews were held in my office, which is located in the Language Building of EAU. I had asked the students during the first brief meeting where they would like to carry out the interviews; all participants agreed that my office was an acceptable choice. When I interviewed them, I did not sit at my desk, but across from the students at a small table in my office. To ensure privacy, I put a note on my door indicating an interview was in session, and we were never disturbed. Each interview was recorded by me. Depending on the students' schedules, I sometimes had two interviews in one week, but usually I only carried out one interview per week. The interviews lasted an hour or a little more in some cases.

As the interviewer, I considered the four interviewing skills promoted by Hannabuss (1996). These include establishing rapport with the interviewees. This was done by meeting the students prior to the interview session, to get to know me better, learn more about my research, and help them feel comfortable. Secondly, according to Hannabuss, the interviewer has to keep

the discussion going and avoid questions that might inhibit the conversation. As an instructor of second language learners, I often have students who are silent and seem disinclined to respond to questions. Having that background made it easier to pick up on what was last said and encourage more dialogue. Additionally, I was careful not to bring up topics which might cause the interviewees to feel uncomfortable or stop talking. This was particularly important during the time I was carrying out the interviews as the Arab Spring was underway and many of these students had family in the various countries involved. I was careful not to encroach on their personal feelings about that situation. The third skill is to know when to interrupt the speaker and keep the interview focused. Being an instructor often requires me to interrupt a student who has gone off topic, and I am able to do so without any hard feelings on the part of the speaker. Staying focused during the interview can be challenging for the interviewer because often the information that is brought up is extremely interesting, but may not be on topic. Interviewees have many stories to tell, but it is the role of the interviewer to ensure that the stories we collect will benefit our research. Finally, Hannabuss (1996) suggests that the interviewer assume a non-judgmental attitude and be able to handle moments of silence. During my interviews I did my best not to judge. In many cases their frankness surprised me, and for that I was grateful. When there were moments of silence, I usually jotted down a few notes, although the digital recorder was running, and just waited for them to continue. If participants had nothing further to say, I would often reiterate the last question and ask if there was anything further they wished to add. I tried not to let silences get too long as they could make the student uncomfortable.

4.4.2.5 Personal observations and notes

Immediately following each interview, I wrote up my own personal observations of the interviews and how I felt they went. This technique records information about both the self and method, and this reflexive journal provides information on the methodological decisions made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 327). Additionally, this reflexivity reveals my ability to reflect on my “own positioning and subjectivity in the research and how my role may have any influence over the findings” (Starfield, 2010, p. 54). I kept these notes in a designated notebook, locked in my office. Writing up personal observations helped me with

the interviews. In one of the first interviews I felt I had not obtained the type or amount of information hoped for, and I wrote about those concerns in the notebook and sought to address them. I wrote notes immediately following each interview to take advantage of my short-term recall. By recording my impressions of the interviews I questioned how each interview went and determined if anything needed to be changed or tweaked in upcoming interviews. This exercise was helpful in keeping me connected to the information I collected.

4.4.2.6 Analysis of the qualitative data generated from the interviews and open-ended questionnaire items

Hatch (2002) indicates that the analysis of qualitative data entails, “a systemic search for meaning.... so that what has been learned can be communicated to others” (p. 148). The following sections lay out the procedural steps undertaken in analyzing the qualitative data I collected from the interviews. A similar procedure was followed for analysis of open-ended questionnaire items.

4.4.2.6.1 Step 1: transcription

After each interview I uploaded the recording to my computer and then transcribed each one within two days. By following this procedure I obtained the information required to provide a rich amount of data grounded in the words of the students themselves (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). After transcribing the interviews, I emailed a copy to each of the students for verification. Member checking is important in order to achieve trustworthiness in qualitative research. It refers to sharing transcripts with the people under study (Dornyei, 2007; Starfield, 2010). If they noted any discrepancies in what they had said, they were to contact me. However, the only comments I received from students were for certain words that they believed to have been transcribed incorrectly, because they had been said in Arabic.

I chose to use verbatim transcripts to give a clear portrayal of the students' views in as much detail as possible, and this allowed me to use direct quotes in the discussion chapter. However, at times participants used fillers, such as “stuff,” “it’s like,” “you know” so often that I did make slight changes to the

content. Those deletions in no way take away from the actual meanings of the utterances.

4.4.2.6.2 Step 2: coding

Once the interview data and the responses from the open-ended questions were complete, I proceeded to code them. At this point I was looking for patterns in the data. I had to consistently reduce the data while attempting to draw conclusions. I used a method of data analysis, widely adopted in qualitative research, one popularized by Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory methodology. This entails a process of coding leading to the eventual core themes around which findings are to be presented. I used these procedures to help my analysis have a systematic feel, which is one way the trustworthiness of my claims for analysis are demonstrated. According to Holliday (2007) the first step in coding the data is open coding; where comments are converted into key words. Axial coding, which determines themes, is next; this involves looking for connections to the initial open codes. Finally, the process terminates with selective coding; wherein, the themes are used as headings or subheadings to construct an argument (p. 102).

I began the open coding after familiarizing myself with the open-ended questionnaire results and the interview transcripts. I went through all the questionnaires and typed the open-ended comments written by students. I then went through both the open-ended comments and the interview transcripts, annotating them with remarks which referred to the ideas they conveyed. This was done on a line by line basis, wherein I wrote in a phrase or word which I felt satisfactorily referenced the things participants said. From these phrases, I began to see patterns and identified initial codes. After I finished the open coding of the data, I started the axial coding. Axial coding is used, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "to reassemble data ... fractured during open coding" (p. 124). My goal was to classify codes into related categories. At this point several sub-codes began to emerge under more than one major code, leading me to carry out additional cross comparisons between transcripts. The third stage of this process was selective coding; wherein, I was able to narrow the themes that I had found through this process, and this helped me solidify the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this step I used my themes as

headings and then wrote under those headings brief extracts from the data. The main objective in all these stages of coding was to incorporate the two types of data: the questionnaire and interview, in a way that would help respond to the research questions while attempting to give an overall view of the students' perceptions. An example of a coded interview can be found in Appendix 6.

The coding process took several stages before I was certain that I had obtained all the information I could from the interview transcripts and the questionnaires. Glaser and Strauss (1967) view the coding process as revolving around interactive stages. As I continued working with my codes, I arranged them in various ways, trying to get at the core of what I had collected. I first tried arranging the codes in lists, while I searched for categories and sub-categories, and then I tried to combine codes where possible. I tried clustering the codes to see if there were other ways things could be put together (Glesne, 2011). I wrote the codes on cards and physically arranged them in an order which revealed the categories and sub-categories. I also highlighted key terms and pieces of conversations with a variety of colored markers each representing a particular theme. Finally, I made comments directly on the softcopy transcripts.

By exploring the themes through the interviews, using thematic analysis, I was able to obtain a thorough look into all the data and achieve saturation, which helped reinforce the credibility of the study (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Thematic analysis is endorsed by Kvale (2007), and defined by Block (2010) as "focusing on the content of what is said, while leaving out other aspects of narrative, such as how it is produced" (p. 340). However, there are some who view this particular approach as overly simplistic, but Riessman (2008) argues that it actually requires a great deal of meticulousness. A list of the open codes and axial codes can be found in Appendices 4 and 5.

4.5 Ensuring data quality

In this section I discuss the steps taken to ensure the quality of my data. I do this by providing an overview of the three areas wherein I reveal my rigor in this research, those include: my impact as the researcher on the data I collected

and analyzed, how I showed my credibility and trustworthiness, and finally my attention to ethical considerations during the process.

4.5.1 My impact as a researcher on the data collection and analysis process

Although this study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to carry out the research, the phenomenon was studied through my stance of interpretivism. As explained in section 4.2.2 above, I am aware that in engaging in a process of interpreting others' interpretations, I was generating my own narrative of the findings, "telling a story that unfolds over time" (Creswell, 2007, p. 43). As such, it is likely that my 'constructions' of the various meanings and input I obtained through my research may have been influenced by my own values and those I bring to the situation (Pring, 2000), and there is a need to acknowledge that I "speak[s] for a particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 28). Earlier in chapter 1, I discussed my own experiences as a bi-cultural person and how those experiences may shape my interpretations of the results (Creswell, 2007), and these also acknowledge my vested interest in the Arab and Arabic debates that the thesis is interested to explore. As mentioned in section 4.2.1, this transparency is important for the future readership of the thesis.

In today's world, "the interview is a negotiated text – a site where power, gender, race, and class intersect" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 47). Interviewers recognize that "many interview situations involve unequal power relations and are sites of identity negotiation" (Starfield, 2010, p. 58). As the interviewer, I had to remain cognizant of my role in this study. That was perhaps most obvious in terms of power and gender. I was an authoritative figure to the participants, due to my role as a teacher at EAU, in addition to being a woman in a patriarchal nation. By not interviewing my own students, I hoped to distance myself in some small way from representing a figure with any personal power over the participants.

However, my impact was not only at the level of ideology, but also in terms of my physical presence and my stance as the researcher in this project (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). My role as an instructor at this

particular institution may have had some bearing on how the students responded, both to the questionnaires and in the interviews. Although I chose participants who were not my own students, the fact that I teach at EAU may have impacted their responses. Students do interact with one another, and at the time of the data collection the university had about 4000 students; therefore, the possibility of students asking about me as a teacher or person, could have affected their willingness to participate or even their responses to my questions. There has been some research regarding interviewing English language learners (Sengupta & Leung, 2002) which found that at times the participants responded in certain ways either in the hopes of pleasing the interviewer, or gave answers they thought would make them look better to the researcher. This is a factor we cannot really control as researchers, but by being unknown to the students as a teacher, I hoped that they did not know about my beliefs on the subject under study.

I believe that my Arab background was useful during these interviews as I have the ability to understand the nuances in culture; plus, I can communicate fairly well in Arabic. My objective through the interviews was to get a deeper and clearer understanding of how these Arab youth constructed their identities, and I feel that objective was achieved. I realize that my role as the researcher has influenced both my own interpretation of the results, and how the students perceived me and chose to respond to me. As a researcher I must acknowledge these factors and keep in mind their effects on the final outcomes of the study. Furthermore, as an interviewer “influenced by post structuralism,” I was aware that I would only attain partial knowledge (Starfield, 2010, p. 58). Finally, I acknowledge the fact that the findings I will present in the next two chapters are actually an interpretation. I am interpreting those events that the interviewees shared with me. Therefore, I understand that my own personal narrative will definitely effect how I interpret and make sense of their stories.

4.5.2 Ensuring credibility and trustworthiness

In this section I discuss the steps taken to ensure that my research has validity or is trustworthy. It is recognized that undertaking interpretive research is subjective and never neutral (Riessman, 2008). Due to the subjective nature of interpretation, it is not possible to use the traditional criteria of validity and

reliability that are applied in the scientific research methodologies in order to assess the merits of a study. Despite this fact, it is still important that the subject of rigor be addressed (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Since validity is part of the positivist paradigm, those who carry out qualitative research prefer to use the term 'trustworthiness' (Starfield, 2010, p. 56), which is a term introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "a qualitative researcher's answer to 'validity'" (Dornyei, 2007, p. 57). In several fields, with education being one of them, the issue of how trustworthy findings are is a major factor (Merriam, 1995). "The question of trustworthiness becomes how well a particular study does what it is designed to do" (Merriam, 1995, p. 52). Furthermore, for readers to find a study useful they must believe in it and trust its integrity (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Moreover, ensuring credibility is an important factor in establishing trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I will discuss how I ensured credibility through attention to research ethics in section 4.5.2.1 below.

When we discuss trustworthiness in qualitative research we look at an alternative to the traditional reliability and validity which is found when judging educational research (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). There are criticisms of interpretive research by those who argue that study findings can never be judged conclusively because circumstances continually change. First of all, it is difficult to find outside reference points to judge the findings according to S. Kim (2003). And furthermore, interpretive methodologies often include research subjectivity in terms of the design of the research as the researcher's beliefs or interests are found within how the research questions are phrased and then analyzed (L.S. Kim, 2003). However, despite concerns with the limitations of interpretive approaches, the opportunities for authentic assessment still exist and the researcher can certainly take steps to ensure that what is presented is valid and based on actual findings as opposed to pre-conceived notions. This requires rigor on the part of the researcher, which includes being able to make sure that the data collection techniques will generate a suitable amount of detail to address the research questions. The steps required to complete an interpretive research study are conducive to ensuring validity despite the seemingly 'subjective' nature of the work. Reliability is not a major issue with

qualitative research, as it is with scientific research, since the results cannot be duplicated exactly. However, results are generalizable in that findings can contribute to new thinking about and understanding of a phenomenon which can help the efforts of others interested in the same line of research (Radnor, 2001).

Trustworthiness in this study is partly achieved by my transparency throughout the research process (see Riessman, 2008), in terms of my decisions on data collection and analysis, and how clear I was about my own beliefs and background (see Holliday, 2010, p. 100). In section 4.2.1 above, I discussed the theoretical underpinnings of this study, thereby clarifying my own theoretical perspectives. In section 4.2.2, I discussed how my interpretivist research approach informed my selection of methods and my rationale for using this to inform my study design. I described the participants in section 4.3, while section 4.4 details the steps I took in order to ensure I clearly explained how I carried out my study. Trustworthiness is also achieved by the decision to use extracts from participants' accounts to verify claims in my presentation of the data. Finally, when I analyzed the data I presented relevant extracts of the participants' stories and included a sample coded interview in Appendix 6.

Further, to ensure the trustworthiness of the data obtained, I collected data through the questionnaire, carried out semi-structured interviews, and wrote up personal notes following each interview. This variety of information was collected since multiple methods of data collection contribute to the trustworthiness of the research (Starfield, 2010). These three data sources provided an expanded context for interpreting the students' reflections, helped offer leads and prompts which were useful in collecting the data, and finally they created a trustworthy basis for analysis (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Therefore the design of this study was presented in a manner which will allow readers to be able to carry out a similar study in a comparable position. The study also includes details regarding how I collected my data and what steps I took throughout the project. Details were divulged throughout the study that

should give another researcher enough information to attempt to carry out a similar study.

4.5.2.1 Research ethics

In interpretive research one of the major issues, which is of concern to all researchers, is that of the ethical stance of the study, or how a researcher reveals his/her credibility. This links back to the trustworthiness of our research, as one way we inspire trust in our results is by showing that we treat participants ethically and in ways that ensure their voice is well-represented. Bradburn et al. (2004) note three principles around which ethical issues revolve: “the right of privacy, informed consent, and confidentiality” (p. 12). It is imperative that subjects in any study have their privacy protected; both during and after data collection. But for them to be part of the study they must give consent to the researcher. Informed consent implies that participants will have enough information to determine what they are being asked and how their responses will be utilized (Bradburn, et al., 2004). The following section discusses how I protected the privacy of my participants and maintained an ethical position.

In this study I ensured that all participants had their privacy safe-guarded and all the information they shared was considered confidential. As mentioned in section 4.4.1.3 above, in order to make sure my procedures were ethical, I completed an IRB form from my institution, EAU, where the data was gathered, and had it approved before I distributed any questionnaires or held an interview (see Appendix 8). Prior to beginning the second phase of the data collection, the interviews, participants signed a consent form giving their permission for me to use their information, see section 4.4.2.4 above and Appendix 7. This form reiterated the study’s focus and confidentiality assurances. All completed questionnaires were kept in a locked cabinet in my office, as was the data elicited through the interviews, the digital recordings, and my notes. My office door is always locked unless I am inside.

To ensure that ethical procedures were followed, I made certain that the participants’ informed consent, privacy, and emotional well-being were addressed (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Fontana & Frey, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin,

1992; Miles & Huberman, 1994). All participants were informed about the reason for the study, and were assured that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. They were also assured that all the information they shared both on the questionnaires and in the interviews, would remain confidential and pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities. (See Appendix 7 for the consent forms).

Several additional measures were taken to safeguard the students' emotional well-being. For example, as the interviews took place during the Arab Spring I avoided probing into areas that I felt might cause distress. I therefore prompted them to discuss only parts of their backgrounds that they felt comfortable revealing. This was done by using open-ended responses to any areas of concern they voiced about families back home, such as "you must be very concerned about your family" instead of pointed questions that would have required more details from them. Despite that, in some instances a few students wanted to discuss the situations in their home countries. The interview environment, in which they were sharing so much of their personal understanding about language and identity, may have felt like a 'safe' place where they could talk about current issues. I realized that some of these students could become quite emotional if I allowed them to stray too far from the interview questions and delve into personal issues related to their home countries. In those instances, I ensured that the participants felt they were being heard, but I also made the effort to move them away from topics that were not relevant to the study. I did this in order to maintain a situation in which the students would not feel stressed about the interview.

Despite my own strong interest in politics of the Arab world, I was very cognizant that these interviews were not the time or place to obtain information from my participants about their own insights on the Arab Spring. They had signed up for a study on language and identity, and despite my own personal interest, I knew that my role as a researcher was to stay focused and make sure my participants did not feel uncomfortable. As a person who has lived in exile from my own country for political reasons, I truly understand people's fears and concerns about government knowledge and influence. Some of these students came from countries whose governments are well-known for halting

dissent and ensuring silence from their citizens. Therefore, I was very aware that fear or concerns might arise during the interviews; depending on what direction the conversations went. However, since I understand those fears and apprehensions, no matter how irrelevant others might find them, I believe that I was able to help my participants feel secure about their responses and their anonymity.

Another way to ensure ethical standards was to schedule the interviews when the students were free. I did everything I could to be accessible on the dates and times that allowed the students flexibility in their busy schedules. Additionally, I provided an atmosphere during the interviews that I believe was conducive to making the students feel comfortable and letting them know that their information was extremely helpful to my research. This involved reassuring the participants of how helpful their responses were to me as a researcher, and how fortunate I was to have met them and learned so many fascinating aspects about their lives and views on Arab identity.

Finally, as mentioned in section 4.5.1, I carefully outlined my own positionality within this research and addressed those issues which I faced due to my position. By discussing the power relationships inherent in this study, in addition to my positionality, I have also revealed my ethical stance.

4.6 Limitations of the study design

Every research design will have limitations, and there were certainly limitations associated with the design of the current study. I was aware of some of these limitations when I began my study, but others emerged as I carried out the research.

My decision to use interviews for this study can also be seen as a limitation. This is due to the fact that there are other methodologies which I could have utilized that may have produced different outcomes. Furthermore, I knew when I set out to use semi-structured interviews that they have limitations, which I addressed earlier. There are some concerns regarding interviews and the fullness of their account, because as Jaworski and Coupland (1999) note, every narrative is “intimately tied to the narrator’s point of view, and the events

recounted ... are his/her (re)constructions” as opposed to an impartial reality (p. 32).

Another limitation is that the participants came from one EMI institution, and they were all studying in English; this was discussed in 2.4 above. Additionally, most of those interviewed had studied in English throughout their primary and secondary years of schooling. The location of the study, in one emirate and one university, cannot be seen as encompassing every type of Arabic speaking student in the UAE. Despite the limitations mentioned, EAU serves as a microcosm of the UAE and gave me a broad range of Arab nationalities to address my research questions regarding language and identity. Therefore I feel that the design of the study is an appropriate means of obtaining useful information and insights that can answer the research questions posed in the study I report in this thesis.

CHAPTER 5

Findings from the questionnaire

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is the first of two which present the findings of my inquiry into the relationship between Arab identity and language. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings from the questionnaire completed by 304 students. As explained in chapter 4 above the purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain a global overview of the perspectives of young people in the Middle East who are completing their higher studies at an English medium university with respect to their perspectives on what constitutes an Arab identity, the significance of being competent in Arabic to this, and the extent to which they subscribed to the rhetoric of English, a language which is closely linked to globalization, posing a threat to Arab identity which is widespread in the Middle East, including in the UAE where this study took place. As was also explained in chapter 4, the findings of the questionnaire were used as a stimulus for the second stage of my study, which sought to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the issues of language and identity construction mentioned above, obtained from interviews with 12 of the questionnaire respondents. The results of my analysis of these interviews are presented in chapter 6 below.

This chapter is organized into two sections, which reflect the focus of the research questions presented in chapter 4. Throughout the chapter the results of the close-ended items of the questionnaire are presented in tables by frequency and percentages. With regard to open-ended questions in the questionnaire, the results of the thematic analysis of their responses are presented in tables and/or through the use of verbatim quotes from participants write in responses.

5.1 What it means to be an Arab and what marks an Arab identity

5.1.1 The extent to which participants self-identify as Arabs

As explained in chapter 4 above, as part of my inquiry into the relationship between claiming an Arab identity and being an Arabic speaker for the young people who took part in my study, I saw it as important to establish how far participants, who were selected because they self-identified as Arabic

speakers, also claimed an Arab identity. This was explored through a number of items in the questionnaire which sought to inquire into their perspectives on their ethnicity and culture. The first of these, item 1 on the questionnaire, asked participants if they self-identified as Arabs and two other questionnaire items (items 16 and 22) asked them to describe their cultural affiliations. The results obtained are shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3 below.

I consider my identity to be mainly an Arab identity	Percent	Number
Yes	87.5%	266
No	12.5%	38

Table 1 Q1 Participants' views on identity

When it comes to my culture I consider myself	Percent	Number
Mainly Arab	81.5%	248
Equally Arab and Western	13%	39
More Western than Arab	4%	12
Neither Western nor Arab	1%	5

Table 2 Q16 Participants' perceptions of their own culture

As noted earlier, there are major challenges with undertaking identity research. It is for this reason that I asked multiple questions to address this issue. Following from the two questions mentioned above (1 and 16) there was a subsequent question (22) on belonging, which revealed a slightly different picture of cultural affiliation. Question 22 stated "I consider myself belonging to Arab and western culture," which asked students to think about their culture as an attachment or belonging to both Arab and western cultures, see Table 3.

I consider myself belonging to Arab & western culture	Percent	Number
Yes	30%	89
No	70%	215

Table 3 Q22 Participants' perceptions of belonging to Arab and western culture

Commentary

As can be seen from Table 1, while the majority, 87.5% of the respondents, indicated that they did consider their identity to be an Arab identity, 38 participants (12.5%) indicated that they did not feel this was the case. Similar

findings were obtained when participants were asked about their cultural background with most of the respondents selecting “mainly Arab” at 81.5% (see Table 2), but with 18% indicating that they felt their cultural identity was not primarily Arab. And finally, when asked if they felt they belonged to both Arab and western culture, the majority of the students, 70%, indicated that they did not (see Table 3).

Despite the fact that all these students self-identified as L1 Arabic speakers, as reported in chapter 4, they did not necessarily view themselves as Arabs, ethnically or culturally. This highlights that for some of these students, whose L1 is Arabic, there is not necessarily a link between being an Arabic speaker and claiming an Arab identity. This issue is further compounded by the results of their responses to subsequent items on the questionnaire which asked them about the relationship between being Arab and being an Arabic speaker, which I will discuss in section 5.2.

It is important to keep in mind while reviewing these results that one cannot read too much into them. This is due to the fact that, as explained earlier in chapter 2, there are a number of identity categories that intersect with ethnicity in addition to culture, such as nationality and religion. Therefore we must be aware of different ways that these participants viewed their Arab identities. The next section examines the various markers of an Arab identity mentioned by the participants. These findings point to the variety of possible markers of an Arab identity as informed by my theoretical framework presented in chapter 3. For these students, the fact that some do not identify as Arabs when responding to the questions, may not necessarily mean that they do not see themselves as Arabs, only that they may see some other markers of Arab identity, which are not mentioned here, as more salient.

5.1.2 Participants' views on markers of an Arab identity

Table 4 below shows results for item 1 in the questionnaire which asked respondents to highlight what they saw as the markers of an Arab identity. This is followed by Table 5, which highlights the main themes identified from my analysis of the open-ended questions following on from item 4, which asked participants to identify any additional markers of an Arab identity.

Marker	Percent	Number
Family (i.e. growing up in a family that identifies as Arab)	41%	126
Language	44%	133
Religion	50%	152
Nationality	69%	210
Ethnicity/Arabness	77%	233
Culture	78%	238

Table 4 Q1 Participants' views on pre-chosen identity markers

Commentary

As can be seen from Table 4 above, the identity markers linked to holding an Arab identity which were selected most by participants included culture (78%) and ethnicity/Arabness (77%). This was followed by nationality and religion. Interestingly, language was only selected by 44% of participants and the importance of family background by 41%. Some participants elected to elaborate on some of the markers mentioned, indicating perhaps that they saw these as most important. Thus for example, 17 respondents stressed religion writing comments such as: "My religion is my identity," "Religion is the main factor in an identity," and "Arabs are known for their religion." In a similar vein, 18 respondents stressed nationality writing in comments such as: "My nationality is my identity," and "my Palestinian nationality is a major part of my identity," while two UAE students wrote in "the nation of the UAE." Regarding family, 24 respondents wrote in comments such as: "our families are important," "how I was raised," and "my background and upbringing."

Table 5 below shows the themes identified from an analysis of the comments offered by those who responded to the open-ended question. These highlight a number of additional markers that were seen as important. It can be seen that traditions were mentioned by the highest number of respondents (40), closely followed by origins (35) and experiences (32).

Additional Markers	Indicative Quotes	Number
Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “People are recognized by their looks” • “How we dress like Arabs” • “Even without Arabic, people can tell you are Arab from your looks” 	18
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Arab history is our identity” • “If you know Arab history, you are an Arab” 	22
Mentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Our mentality makes us Arabs” • “The way we think is what makes our identity” 	29
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “behaviour and dress,” • “mannerisms and greetings” 	30
Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “identity is everything I experience in my life” • “all the things that happen to me in my life” • “the many things I experience in each day help make my identity” 	32
Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I am of an Arab origin, so this is part of me and my identity” 	35
Traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “rituals and habits” 	40

Table 5 Themes resulting from my thematic analysis

Since in their responses to item 4 (presented in Table 5 above), most respondents ticked more than one marker, it was apparent that many saw Arab identity as comprised of a multitude of markers. This was also something that was stressed by many of those who completed the open-ended question. Thirteen of those who wrote in comments mentioned more than one marker and a further seven explicitly stressed that they felt their identity as Arabs was comprised of a number of different elements. For example, one architecture student wrote that “my identity is made up of my traditions and family and our culture,” which combined three of the markers mentioned earlier. Other

comments included one from a Bahraini student who wrote, “I am a part of many things, culture, religion, beliefs, they make me,” and “[identity] is a mixture of culture, religion, beliefs, traditions, nations, and state of mind,” written by an Egyptian student.

Another interesting observation from my analysis of the comments in the open-ended questions was that different nationality groups tended to foreground some markers more than others. Thus for example, among Palestinian students nationality was given emphasis, while appearance was something stressed by students from the UAE, and almost all of those who highlighted mentality (25 out of 29) were male. Although not possible to verify, this suggested that individuals not only draw upon multiple markers to signal their identity as Arabs, but that different markers may hold particular significance which reflect their social, historical, and political positioning and/or their lived experiences. This is something that would be an interesting focus for future research.

The sense of lived experience was also something stressed by a number of those who completed the open-ended question. As the indicative quotes shown in Table 5 above highlight, there appears to be a sense that these participants want to contest the idea that identity is merely an affiliation or form of group membership but rather is something that is constructed by individuals out of their lived experience. In doing this, they highlight the role played by individual agency in identity construction.

These insights into participants’ understandings of what is meant by an Arab identity were ones that were seen as important to develop and elaborate on in the interview stage of the inquiry. After reviewing the various markers that the participants revealed as marking their Arab identity, the following section focuses specifically on the place of Arabic as a major marker of an Arab identity.

5.2 Views on the significance of the Arabic language as a marker of Arab identity

The results presented above for item 1 regarding markers of an Arab identity (see Table 4) reveal two things regarding respondents views on the significance of Arabic to an Arab identity. Firstly, they reveal that only 44% of respondents signaled that language is an important marker of an Arab identity, and secondly that there are many other markers, and ethnicity or Arabness, culture, nationality and religion were all highlighted by a higher percentage of respondents. Since identifying the strength of the relationship between Arabic and holding an Arab identity was a central focus of my study, a number of additional items in the questionnaire explored this in more depth, and the purpose of this section is to report on the findings from these.

Items 2 and 3 on the questionnaire explicitly asked respondents for their views on the relationship between Arabic and an Arab identity. The results for these two items are presented in Tables 6 and 7 respectively below.

I consider my identity to be based on my Arabic language	Percent	Number
Yes	49%	149
No	25%	77
To some extent	25%	78

Table 6 Q2 Participants' views on Arabic as an identity marker

The Arabic language is a defining feature of an Arab	Percent	Number
Yes	44%	133
No	56%	171

Table 7 Q3 Participants' perceptions of Arabic as defining feature of an Arab

As can be seen from Tables 6 and 7 above, the results for these two items show that just under half of the respondents felt that language was an important indicator, thus confirming the findings above. A further item, number 4 on the questionnaire, also confirmed the earlier finding regarding the fact that there are a number of markers of an Arab identity, with just over 80% of respondents signaling this as in show in Table 8 below.

I believe other factors determine my identity as an Arab	Percent	Number
Yes	81.6%	248
No	18.4%	56

Table 8 Q4 Participants' consideration of other identity markers

An open-ended question following on from item 3 invited participants to comment on their views on the significance of Arabic to an Arab identity. This was completed by 16 respondents, from these, seven provided support for why they felt Arabic was essential to claiming an Arab identity, and nine provided comments on why they did not feel this was significant.

Among those who felt Arabic was important, four participants stressed the importance of Arabic. Some offered general comments to endorse their responses to the close-ended questions on this topic. For example, one student simply wrote: "No Arabic means not Arab." Five stressed the importance of Arabic to religion. Indicative comments were: "Arabic is the language of the Quran, Arabs should be proud," and "Arabic is the language of Islam." Other comments, from three students, emphasized the importance of Arabic as part of the cultural heritage of Arabs. For example, one wrote in "Arabic is part of our culture and identity" and another, "Arabic is the language of our ancestors." Finally, one participant who also commented on the link between Arabic and religion also saw Arabic as describing "our feelings."

Of the nine students who offered comments to support their view that Arabic was not a defining feature of being an Arab, one student pointed out that "Not just language defines my identity," while two other students noted, "I speak more English, but I'm an Arab" and "I use English and Arabic, but I am still an Arab." Five participants stressed the notion that languages can be learned and therefore do not necessarily point to identity. Indicative comments were: "People from the west speak Arabic – it doesn't make them Arab," "Anyone can speak any language, it is not a marker" and "Arabic is only one way to be an Arab." And finally, one participant commented on the need to feel a commitment to Arabness in the statement: "Being Arab doesn't depend on language, it is a commitment to being an Arab, there is no need for the language."

5.3 Using Arabic and English and any related concerns

To address the second major research question, several items in the questionnaire sought to uncover the amount of English participants claimed to use and any concerns they had about this. I will first consider their claimed language practices and report on the results of a number of items which were designed to consider participants' views on how far they felt using a global language was perceived more as a threat or an opportunity to their identity.

5.3.1 Participants' language practices

Items 12 through 15 and 17 through 21 were an attempt to comprehend how often native speakers of Arabic use their Arabic, English, or both in various situations. As explained in chapter 4 above, the inclusion of these items was in part to gain another perspective on the relationship between holding an Arab identity and the significance of using Arabic to this, which could provide a more comprehensive understanding of this issue, particularly among those who claimed a strong relationship existed between Arabic and claiming an Arab identity.

Capturing this information on language practices was also seen as an important contextual backdrop to understanding concerns they might have about using English. In what follows, I will report on those items which asked about language use with friends, parents and siblings, language used at university, and the item included to establish how much they read in English outside their studies, which was examined with reference to reading newspapers. Finally, I will consider the results of the items which asked them to consider language in relation to the more abstract constructs of thought and feelings.

Language practices with friends, parents, and siblings

When it comes to interactions with their friends and families as outlined in Tables 9 - 11 below, students gave quite a mixed response.

With my friends I speak	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
English	3% 9	24% 73	67% 205	5% 17
Arabic	9% 29	58% 178	30% 93	1% 4
English & Arabic	6% 20	10% 32	73% 224	9% 28

Table 9 Q12 Participants' responses to language use with friends

With my parents I speak	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
English	1% 3	3% 12	33% 101	61% 188
Arabic	65% 199	28% 86	5% 16	1% 4
English & Arabic	3% 8	2% 9	32% 100	61% 186

Table 10 Q13 Participants' responses to language use with parents

With my siblings I speak	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
English	5% 17	15% 45	45% 138	34% 103
Arabic	37% 113	46% 122	20% 62	2% 7
English & Arabic	5% 17	4% 14	54% 165	35% 107

Table 11 Q14 Participants' responses to language use with siblings

If we look at which language participants speak either “all the time” or “most of the time” with their friends, Arabic is used by 67% (n=205) of respondents. Nevertheless, by giving them the option of indicating if they use one or both of the languages “sometimes” we find that 67% (n=205) also use English at times. Students also reported that they use both languages “sometimes,” 73% (n=224) with their friends.

Ninety-three percent (n=285) of the students asserted that they speak Arabic “all the time” or “most of the time” with their parents. This is the highest number found within these particular items (12-14) and shows a fairly uncontested use of Arabic with parents. It is within the responses to this particular question that we observe the highest number of students indicating that they “never” use English or English and Arabic with their parents, at 61% (n=188). However, although we find these very high numbers for using Arabic in this particular situation, we still have 33% (n=101) of the students indicating there are times when they use English with their parents, and 32% (n=100) noting that there are times when they converse in both English and Arabic with their parents. Only one percent, or four of the participants, claimed that they never speak Arabic with their parents.

In terms of which language was used with siblings, 83% (n=235) of the participants speak Arabic with their siblings “all the time” or “most of the time.” However, they also claimed to use English “sometimes” 45% (n=138), and English and Arabic together were used “sometimes” by 54% (n=165) of respondents. For interactions with siblings, a small number of students 2% (n=7) claim they “never” speak Arabic with their brothers and sisters.

Language practices at university

The fact that most of these students attended English medium schools prior to matriculating into the university, led them to be very comfortable using English. For them, English is a language that is associated with studying and learning. On the questionnaire, item 21 gave participants the occasion to express the usefulness of English in their studies, see Table 12 below.

Using English in my studies	Percent	Number
allows me to express my ideas more easily	49%	148
doesn't make a difference	28%	86
makes it difficult for me to fully express myself	23%	70

Table 12 Q21 Participants' perceptions on using English for their studies

Despite the fact that these students are all native speakers of Arabic, the majority (49%, n=148) indicated that when they use English in their studies it allows them to express their ideas more easily. For 28% (n=86) of these students the language used did not make a difference in their studies, and only 23% (n=70) voiced difficulty in expressing their ideas in English for their studies.

Question 15 asked students to indicate what language they use at the university (Table 13). This question did not specify if this meant in or out of the classroom; however, most interactions in the classroom are in English. Therefore the participants most likely are referring to which language they use outside of the classroom on the university campus.

At the university I speak	All the time	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
English	14% 44	63% 191	21% 65	1% 4
Arabic	2% 6	24% 74	71% 216	2% 7
English & Arabic	6% 20	13% 39	75% 229	5% 16

Table 13 Q15 Participants' responses to the language they use at the university

English was definitely the language of choice at university with 77% (n=233) agreeing that they use English “all the time” or “most of the time.” Arabic was only used by 26% (n=80) of the students while at university. The second most used form of communication at the university was a mixture of English and Arabic with 75% (n=229) of participants indicating they used this “sometimes.”

Language for reading newspapers

Another question which sought to get at students' actual usage of languages, was number 17 which asked students in which language they preferred to read newspapers, Table 14 below.

I prefer to read newspapers in	Percent	Number
Arabic	32%	98
English	21%	64
Both English and Arabic	46%	141
Other	.003%	1

Table 14 Q17 Participants' responses to language for reading newspapers

The greatest response to this was the choice of both languages at 46% (n=141), Arabic was chosen second at 32% (n=98), and English came in at 21% (n=64); one person marked that they prefer to read newspapers in “other” languages. Arabic was chosen by only about a third of the respondents.

Language of thoughts and feelings

After asking students about who they spoke their two languages with specifically, I sought a more general impression about their use of each language. In order to obtain that overview I wanted to know which language they thought better in and which language allowed them to express their feelings better and expressed who they are, Tables 15, 16, and 17 below.

The first question in this section tried to find out which language they thought better in (item 18), which can be seen in Table 15 below.

I find that I think better when I use	Percent	Number
Arabic	38%	117
English	25%	75
Both English and Arabic	30.5%	93
It depends	6%	19

Table 15 Q18 Participants' perceptions of which language they think better in

Those completing the survey indicated that they thought better in Arabic by a slim margin (38%, n=117), while 30.5% (n=93) noted that they thought better in both Arabic and English. Those who claimed they thought better in English were 25% (n=75) of the group. Six percent chose "it depends".

Question 19 continued in a similar vein, asking students about which language allowed them to express their feelings best, see Table 16 below.

When it comes to expressing my feelings I prefer to use	Percent	Number
Arabic	49%	150
English	24%	72
Both English and Arabic	27%	81
Other	.003%	1

Table 16 Q19 Participants' perceptions of language which expresses their feelings best

On the survey, 49% (n=150) of respondents to that question claimed that they could express their feelings best in Arabic. Both English and Arabic were chosen by 27% (n=81), and 24% (n=72) opted for English only.

The next question, item 20, asked them to choose the "language that really expresses who I am best," which can be seen in Table 17 below.

The language that really expresses who I am best is	Percent	Number
Arabic	60%	182
English	14%	42
Both English and Arabic	26%	80

Table 17 Q20 Participants' perceptions of their most expressive language

For 60% (n= 182) of those surveyed, Arabic was the language which best expresses who they are. The response to this particular question was the only time that Arabic had a significant lead in this section of the questionnaire. Only 14% of those surveyed chose English. English and Arabic were picked by 26% of those surveyed.

Commentary

What this section has revealed about these participants is that despite what they initially determined was the importance of Arabic to their Arab identity, their usage of both languages does not entirely back up their early perspectives. Notwithstanding how they see themselves as Arabs, and many claimed Arabic was essential to their Arab identity, they still tend to use a lot of English in their day to day reality. The interviews are absolutely essential as a follow up to the questionnaire as the interviews will delve deeper into this issue and help us understand their rationales for using so much English. The following section turns to how the students perceive the impact of English on their Arab identity.

5.3.2 Participant perspectives on the impact of speaking English on an Arab identity

A number of questionnaire items were included to gain a global perspective on how far the participants, from the English medium university that formed the setting for this study, felt about the relationship between speaking English and an Arab identity. Items 5-8 asked them if they felt using English had an impact on them. In addition, items 10 and 11 sought to establish whether they felt this was a concern. As explained in chapter 4, this entailed establishing their views on the discourse of global English as a threat to identity, widely promoted in the Middle East as discussed in chapter 2, as well as their views on how far they felt global English was more of a threat or opportunity to them as individuals.

5.3.2.1 The extent to which English poses a threat to an Arab identity

In the Arab world there are major concerns over the impact of globalization on both language and identity. This was discussed earlier in chapters 2 and 3. However, it is important to recall the intrinsic link between globalization and global English in today's world, and especially in the UAE. These two phenomena are closely tied and we cannot fully understand one without the other. Much of the concern regarding the possible loss of Arabic and Arab identity revolves around globalization and the increasing expansion and need for global English. It is due to this strong link that it was important that globalization be included in this study.

Globalization and Arab identity

There were four Likert-type statements regarding globalization on the questionnaire. Students had the option to check whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed, or strongly disagreed. The statements were not personal in nature and allowed students to think about globalization as a phenomenon relating to all Arabs, not just themselves. Question 25 on the survey sought to obtain participants' views about globalization on Arab identity and asked if they believe it to be harmful to said identity, Table 18 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Globalization is harmful to Arab identity	3%	49%	23%	25%	.003%
	9	150	69	75	1

Table 18

For this particular question those who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement were 52% (n=159); over half of all respondents. Only 25% (n=76) disagreed with this statement.

Globalization and Arabic

Previously I looked at students' perceptions about globalization and Arab identity. In that case I was seeking their perceptions only. However, at this

juncture item 26 wanted to detect if students felt that globalization was harmful to the Arabic language, Table 19 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Globalization is harmful to the Arabic language	6%	52%	34%	7%	.003%
	17	159	104	23	1

Table 19

More than half of all respondents, 58% (n=176), agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. For this particular question only 7% (n=24) of the participants disagreed, and 34% (n=104) were neutral. These findings reveal that just over half of these students feel that globalization impacts their language slightly more than it impacts their identity. More of them disagree (25%) about globalization's impact on their identity than on its impact on language. At a general level they seem to subscribe to a view that globalization has more of an impact on language loss than identity loss.

Effects of speaking English on participants personally

Effects on Arab culture

The following section looks at how the participants responded to a variety of items on the questionnaire which sought to understand how the use of English may be affecting them personally. Items 7 and 11 were both seeking input on how the participants viewed using English on their Arab culture. Results of these can be seen in Tables 20 and 21 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English has affected my attitude towards Arab culture	4%	17%	5%	51%	23%
	12	52	16	155	69

Table 20

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English makes me feel distant from Arab culture	.006%	21%	29%	43%	6%
	2	66	90	129	17

Table 21

In terms of Arab culture, the majority of respondents indicated that there was no effect on their attitude toward Arab culture, with 74% (n= 224) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. Item 11 sought to put into perspective how or if speaking English made the students feel distant from Arab culture. Only 21% (n=68) of respondents felt that speaking English made them feel distant from their Arab culture, while 49% (n=146) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement, and 29% (n=90) of student participants remained neutral.

Effects on Arab identity

All of the statements questioning the impact of speaking English were directed at the respondents personally, that is each of the statements used “I” or “my” or “me” thereby allowing the students to respond in a personal manner and based on what they felt about their own usage of English and Arabic, except for item 10. Number 10 was more of a discourse question as it was not focused on the students personally. It stated: “speaking English makes it difficult to maintain an Arab identity,” Table 22 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English makes it difficult to maintain an Arab identity	.006%	45%	16%	34%	4%
	2	139	49	103	11

Table 22 Q10

As this was not directed at them individually it may have resulted in a higher number agreeing, more so than in any of the other questions in this section, at 45% (n=141). Those who disagreed or strongly disagreed were 38% (n=114), thereby making the results not too drastic in difference, but certainly a noticeable difference as compared to earlier results with the same types of questions.

Effect on family dynamics

As much of the concern about loss of Arab identity in the UAE revolves around the possibility of young people “drifting” away from their culture, traditions, and

parents, item 6 gave the participants the statement: “speaking English has affected the way I relate to my family,” Table 23 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English has affected the way I relate to my family	3% 8	14% 45	5% 14	59% 180	19% 57

Table 23

The students responded to this in the negative with 78% (n= 237) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement; only 17% (n=53) agreed or strongly agreed. Earlier in section (5.3.1), students revealed that they often mixed English and Arabic with their families, especially their siblings, and in no way was this looked upon as a negative in their lives.

The final statement on the questionnaire was item 27 which asked if students had any concerns about how much English they use as opposed to Arabic, Table 24 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
I have concerns that I speak English more than Arabic	2.6% 8	17% 51	35% 108	42% 127	3% 10

Table 24

The response to this statement showed very little concern about the amount of English they use; 45% (n=137) indicated strong disagreement or disagreement with this statement, revealing a large number of participants having no worries about their English usage. Those who were neutral on this topic were 35% (n=108) and only 19.6% (n=59) students agreed that they had some concerns with the amount of English they speak overall. It is important to keep in mind that the way this question is phrased assumes that they do have concerns. However, there may be some who disagreed because they do not actually speak English more than Arabic.

Commentary

The findings of this particular section, sought to understand what the participants felt about the relationship between speaking English and an Arab identity, and if they had concerns that using English had an impact on them. What emerges from the findings discussed above reveals a complex vision of how these Arab youth view their usage of Arabic and English in terms of their Arab identity. Their responses do not offer a complete picture of the situation under study, because without discussion it is difficult to understand why they responded as they did. Therefore it is imperative that the interviews, which follow, were carried out in order to obtain the in-depth knowledge that is needed to understand the relationship between language and identity. The interviews will help deepen our understanding about why this particular group of students claims that speaking English is not having a negative effect on their Arab identity.

5.3.2.2 Other perceptions on the impact of speaking English on the participants

While some of the previous opinions of English usage on these students were not entirely positive, there were some perceptions they had of using English that were very optimistic. This positivity emerged mainly from the pragmatic use of English and how it afforded them opportunities that were not as available with just Arabic. These views point to some of the advantages that speaking English can offer, and contrasts with some of the concerns mentioned above.

Language of opportunity

Item 9 on the questionnaire was seeking to determine if these participants viewed English as a language of opportunity. Although this particular question might be seen as self-evident, I still felt it important to ask students whether they believed that speaking English would give them better opportunities for their futures, Table 25 below.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English will give me better opportunities for the future	31%	55%	13%	0%	0%
	96	167	41	0	0

Table 25

Nearly all of the participants agreed, with 86% (n=263) agreeing or strongly agreeing that speaking English was actually beneficial to their futures and possible opportunities. Only 13% (n=41) were neutral on this question and no students disagreed with this particular statement.

Global English and worldview

Question 5 stated: “speaking English has affected my interpretation of world events,” Table 26 below. A large number of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, (77%, n= 235). Only 15% disagreed that their worldview was affected by speaking English. On a similar note they were given the statement in item 8 that “speaking English has affected my attitude towards western culture”, Table 27 below. In this case 67% (n=235) agreed that speaking English was affecting their attitude towards western culture. From their responses we cannot be entirely sure if this is a positive or negative answer.

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
 D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English has affected my interpretation of world events	26%	51%	7%	13%	2%
	80	155	22	40	7

Table 26

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English has affected my attitude towards western culture	5%	62%	17%	13%	2%
	14	189	54	41	6

Table 27

These findings may point to the fact that English is transforming their views – potentially positively - and these are things that need to be delved into in more

depth in the interviews. This section has discussed participants' views on how their languages are seen and used pragmatically. Their views regarding Arabic and English are quite realistic and focused on how the two help them communicate, and why they need English for their studies and future opportunities.

5.4 Summary

This chapter set out to interrogate identity in two ways: by looking at Arab students' perceptions of what markers were needed for constructing an Arab identity and then by analyzing their actual performance of Arabic and English usage. As discussed earlier, since Arabic is continually considered the marker of an Arab identity, this thesis asks students to reveal their actual usage of Arabic versus how important they claim the Arabic language to be.

In sum, in terms of defining their Arabness the majority of the students (87.5%) revealed that they definitely felt they had an Arab identity. Based on their initial rationales for what gave them an Arab identity, most chose ethnicity/Arabness and culture. When asked how important the Arabic language was in terms of confirming their own identities, almost half of the survey respondents indicated that it was important, while the remainder were evenly divided over Arabic not being a crucial characteristic, or only being important to an extent. Furthermore, there was a lack of consensus on how important the Arabic language is as a defining feature of being an Arab, with 56% indicating it was not important.

Having presented my findings from the quantitative data through the questionnaire, the following chapter, 6, will discuss the findings obtained through the qualitative portion of this study, the interviews.

CHAPTER 6

Findings from the interviews

6.0 Introduction

In this chapter I report on the results of my analysis of the semi-structured interviews with 12 participants which were undertaken to provide a richer and more in-depth picture of their understanding of the significance of Arabic to holding an Arab identity and whether they had concerns about the amount of English they use. As with the previous chapter, which presented the results from the questionnaire, this chapter first considers the results of my thematic analysis from my reading of participants' accounts regarding what they feel are the defining features of an Arab identity and how far and in what ways they find this identity category to be personally relevant to their understanding of who they are. To add further to the picture presented in the questionnaire regarding the relationship between an Arab identity and Arabic language, I then consider the results of my analysis of their views on the relationship between language and the construction of an Arab identity followed by their rationales for the language choices they make in their daily encounters. In the final part of the chapter, I consider their views on whether their use of a global language for study and in their daily lives is a cause for concern, particularly with respect to their understanding of themselves as Arabs.

Throughout the chapter I will support my presentation of findings with reference to extracts from participants' interviews and where useful, will also reference their responses on the initial questionnaire they completed. As will be revealed, the picture to be presented here elaborates and extends on the emerging complex picture regarding the perspectives on identity construction and the role of language for the young people who took part in my study highlighted in the presentation of the questionnaire findings presented in chapter 5 above. As explained in chapter 4, interview participants were those who elected to participate in this stage of the study. Fortunately, these participants provided a good snapshot of the diverse student population enrolled at the university where this study was undertaken both in terms of their backgrounds and life experiences. Detailed descriptions of each participant can be found in Appendix 3.

6.1 Participants' perspectives on how far they considered themselves Arabs

As was reported in chapter 5 (see 5.1.1) the majority (87.5%) of the questionnaire participants indicated that they felt their identity was Arab, but 12.5% felt it was not. It was fortunate that those who elected to be interviewed contained both those who had initially signaled that they did have an Arab identity (9 interview participants) and those who did not (3 interview participants). As such, the interviews made it possible to build a more nuanced and detailed (though also more complex) understanding of their perspectives on the nature of an Arab identity and how, and how far, they did or did not identify with this construct.

One observation that needs to be made from the outset is the challenge posed by asking participants to talk about such an abstract concept as identity. Although only one participant, Yusra, actually started her account of an Arab identity by asking "What does that mean?" a sense of the slippery nature of the topic was evident in several accounts with many referencing something more concrete like nationality rather than Arab in their discussions. It is important to acknowledge that, for some, an understanding of what was meant by an Arab identity and the salience of certain markers evolved and shifted over time. For some participants, interviews revealed different perspectives from those offered in their questionnaire responses, and for a few these shifted over the course of the interview itself. Thus, for example, at the start of his interview, Mohamed indicated that he thought Arabic was an important marker of an Arab identity, but as he talked and reflected on the topic, he modified his initial assertion conceding "so, I guess it's more your behavior than your language." These things posed challenges for analysis, but also were one of the ways in which the dynamic multifaceted nature of an Arab identity signaled in the questionnaire findings reported in chapter 5 above, were made visible and fleshed out in the interviews. It was also interesting to note that participants utilized a number of different vantage points in their efforts to gain a purchase on the topic of Arab identity. These included the ways others see Arabs, the Arab diaspora, a sense of what was variously referred to as "real Arabs" and

“the Arab persona,” in addition to their own personal life histories and experience.

6.1.1 Staking out the territory: the meaning of an Arab identity

- **Arab identity as a complex multifaceted construct**

The following table shows the various items that were invoked by the participants in their attempts to identify what being an Arab meant, and this includes those who rejected an Arab identity to describe themselves, Table 1 below. In terms of language, since all were asked about Arabic, the table below only refers to those who volunteered Arabic as a marker.

Pseudonym	Arabic	Family	Culture	Religion	Traditions values	Behavior	Emotional attachment (feelings)	Experiences
Adel								✓
Basma	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Elias	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Lujaine		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Maysoon		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Mohamed	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Noor		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Rania		✓	✓		✓			✓
Sara			✓				✓	✓
Wafa		✓		✓			✓	✓
Yousef	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Yusra		✓		✓				✓

Table 1 Markers of an Arab identity

From Table 1 we begin to get a clearer picture of the complexity of this issue. The results on this table, allow me to make three points about Arab identity as an extremely multifaceted construct.

Commentary

First of all, every student interviewed signaled multiple ways of marking an Arab identity and often discussed them at the same time. Some illustrative quotes include: Noor saying “if I would describe myself as an Arab, I would say

first of all, I lived within an Arab country, my values are Arab...I think my identity is a lot of things.” While Maysoon and Lujaine maintained respectively that

I have lived in the UAE most of my life, so I am a combination of things. Yes, I am from Palestine, but I never lived there. I don't speak Arabic all the time and I have the Arab identity I hold today because of a lot of things coming together.

My culture and the country I am living in, they help me keep our traditions, our values alive. The values of being an Arab are important, and so is religion, it helps us stay rooted to our Arab nature.

These findings are certainly in keeping with those that came out of the questionnaire data. At that point, participants were writing in more than one item which made up their Arab identities.

There are two further observations that can be made on the basis of Table 1. First, we note that people in this study foregrounded different markers in their discussions of an Arab identity. These markers will be discussed in turn below. Secondly, the table also demonstrates that not many of the participants foregrounded Arabic as a marker of identity. These findings also resonate with those that emerged from the questionnaire data, as discussed in 5.2 above.

There is an obvious complexity which is revealed in the participants' accounts regarding their affiliation with an Arab identity. And although all the participants acknowledged that they were Arabs, they did so to different degrees and some even questioned the relevance and usefulness of this identity label to their own personal understanding of who they were. In doing this, some of those who mentioned identity markers shown in Table 1 above, did so to problematize the construct of an Arab identity or to question its value to their own identity construction process.

I will first discuss how participants described the positive affiliation between the markers mentioned and their understanding of themselves as Arabs. This will be followed by a consideration of the insights into the problematic nature of Arab identity for these young people and the alternative ways in which they understood themselves.

- **Different ways of claiming an Arab identity**

Family

Of the 12 interviewed 11 invoked the marker of family in a positive way. The following are some representative comments. Rania proclaimed, “I do describe myself as an Arab, I’m born into an Arab family.” Basma said that “My identity is really where my family is from and where we live now. They show me my identity and I try to be like my parents.” This was echoed by Lujaine, who expressed, “Our families are important parts of who we are. They are Arabs, which makes me have an Arab identity.” Finally, Wafa also noted the importance of family in forming an Arab identity, but approached it mainly in terms of women, “I think especially for women, our families are very important, mostly our mothers. We learn from them how far we can go in life.” The notion of family was also brought up with nationality in one case. Elias asserted that he had an Arab identity “because I was born in an Arab country and raised in an Arab family.”

Culture

During the interviews eight students brought up culture as important. Mohamed had very strong feelings about his culture. He said “Arab culture is like an arc. The Arab culture is special, it’s unique. Being part of it makes me have an Arab identity, because all of those things that are in me; I was raised with them.” He sees Arab culture as something which is unique, but at the same time crosses over national boundaries and holds Arabs together. These sentiments were repeated in my conversations with Rania, who noted, “We are Arabs because of our culture and where we come from. We do things certain ways and we are known for certain things, like our hospitality and caring for our families. These things give me an identity.”

One participant, Wafa, questioned how central culture was to viewing herself as an Arab, suggesting that religion was a much better marker. Wafa was quite critical about Arab culture, stating, “I don’t like to associate myself with the Arab culture because I feel like the culture itself oppresses women in so many aspects.” She went on to be critical about Arab society which maintains that various rules and regulations are part of the culture and must be followed. She

strongly condemned those notions stating, “Well, I don’t have to follow my culture. I need to follow my religion. There’s no rule that I have to follow my culture, especially if I don’t believe in what they do in terms of the oppression of women.”

Religion

Religion is a factor that was highlighted by three female participants. One student who mentioned quite strong ties to religion was Yusra, who claimed, “Christianity identifies me because it’s something, it’s not like a tradition, where you can lose it. It is something you carry around where you go, and it’s always with you.” Wafa also revealed a strong affiliation to Islam when she stated, “Islam is what holds me to my Arab identity.”

Religion was also brought up with behavior. For Noor, who wears the Islamic hijab (scarf), her visible marker means that others will see her as a Muslim due to this outward symbol. However, she does not see religion as a major part of her identity: “Maybe if I didn’t put a scarf on, I would say I’m a Muslim, but I have my scarf on and that’s an identification without me saying anything. Islam is very important to me but I cannot say religion is the major part of my identity.”

Traditions and values

Only two students talked about traditions or values positively during the interviews. Lujaine indicated that “My culture and the country I am living in, they help me keep our traditions, our values alive. The values of being an Arab are important.” While Yousef expressed what tradition means to him when he stated, “I am proud of our Arab traditions and culture. Arabs are well known for our kindness to strangers and our ties to our families, I think this is how tradition is part of my identity.” For Yousef, tradition means those aspects of Arabs which are appreciated and looked upon positively, both within Arab society and by the outside world.

Behaviours (how others view you)

Four of those interviewed mentioned behaviours as a marker of an Arab identity. Sara’s comment stated that “what we wear, how we wear it, what to eat, behaviours, all these things are markers.” While Lujaine had a stronger

belief that determining if someone is Arab or not is discernible by verbal and non-verbal cues. She explained that “part of an Arab will always be with them. For example, when I go abroad I instantly recognize Arabs by their speech, their gestures. Arabs have very distinct gestures, and they carry themselves different.” Basma indicated that “how we act when we are outside the home or especially outside the country is what people see as our identity.” Mohamed stated, “Arabs should behave a certain way, when people see that they will know they are seeing an Arab.” For several of these Arab youth, an important part of an Arab identity seems to be perceived as behaving properly, especially in front of others.

Nationality

For Maysoon her nationality was important as she pointed out “being Palestinian is a part of my identity. I think for those of us from Palestine, this is always an important part of who we are.” While Noor delineated the order in which she perceived her Arab identity, “I specify first that I come from Palestine, then I am Muslim, and then I am an Arab.” This notion of an Arab country was brought up by several others during the interviews, including Lujaine. She stated with great confidence that “living in an Arab country does help you identify yourself as an Arab more than living in a foreign country.”

However, on the other hand, Rania, who is originally from Iraq, but carries both Canadian and Iraqi passports, had issues with nationality being a marker of an Arab. As she succinctly noted:

I don't think my passport is a big part of my Arabness... I don't think that contributes in any way to whether I'm Arab or not. People that are non-Arabs can get an Arab passport [and] people that are Arabs can get a non-Arab passport.

Language

There were only four interviewees who placed great emphasis on the Arabic language being part of their identity. Some illustrative quotes include Elias's initial response to what made up his Arab identity, when he said, “... language, I talk in Arabic. I don't use a lot of English in my life. My whole family speaks Arabic at home. So that's what I describe myself as.” He went on to say:

...an Arab...comes from the word Arabic; you speak Arabic. So it should be ...the language is what makes you an Arab. It's one of the aspects which make you an Arab, other than the way you act and the way you live your life.

Yousef also had strong feelings about Arabic being an important part of his identity and something that he must work on and maintain in order to feel strong about himself as an Arab. He was adamant about language remaining strong stating that

I must make sure that the language part of my identity is not anything other than my first language, my mother tongue. It doesn't mean that I don't have to learn other languages. It just means that there is an important language, because if I lost my language, then I have nothing, because the biggest part, I believe, of identity that constitutes identity, is language.

Arabic was brought up by others during the interviews; however, each of them mentioned the language in conjunction with other things. Maysoon's interview is an example. When the interview began and I asked if she would describe herself as an Arab, she quickly replied, "Yes I do, I describe myself as a Palestinian. I lived all around the Gulf so that makes up a lot of my identity. Another thing that makes up my identity as an Arab is the fact that I'm Muslim, for sure. Other things, I speak Arabic, that's my first language." When I asked Basma what she thought gave her an Arab identity, the first thing she said was: "my language, that my first language is Arabic," followed by values, culture and nationality. After probing which, if any, she felt were most important, I asked her "is Arabic the major thing, is that your identity?" and her response was an emphatic "no." This issue of the Arabic language and its relevance or not to an Arab identity will be discussed further and in more depth in section 6.4 below.

6.1.2 Questioning the relevance of Arab identity as a construct

In the questionnaire 38 participants claimed that they did not think they were Arabs. Since three of those, who did not claim an Arab identity, took part in the interviews, this provided me with an opportunity to explore their rationales for this in detail. What these showed was that the picture that emerged was more nuanced than the questionnaire was able to provide. Interviews with participants revealed that all 12 claimed to be Arab to some extent, and about half of all the participants expressed varying degrees of reservation about the

significance of Arabic to the ways in which they viewed their Arab identity. Three main themes emerged from the analysis of participant accounts, which will be discussed in turn below.

- **Arab identity as too broad a construct to be personally meaningful**

Several participants saw the concept of an Arab identity as too broad to describe who they felt they were and chose to distance themselves from this. In some participant accounts Arab seemed to imply ethnicity, (although this was not explicitly brought up in interviews), as it was distinguished from other categories such as religion or nationality. As Sara explained, for example: “I’m not only an Arab; I’m also Mediterranean, Muslim, [and] Egyptian.” In Noor’s case, as the following extract shows, the category Arab was deprioritized too. “I specify first that I come from Palestine, then I am Muslim, and then I am an Arab.”

Noor, who is from Palestine, problematized the term Arab, when she articulated that “being an Arab is a broad term, so when you really want to identify yourself, you should narrow it down to one category [which should be] a nation.” While Sara, contested the labels that are imposed by others, when she firmly stated:

Arabs are Africans, Mediterranean, Asian, and Arabian, Muslims, Christians, Jews, citizens of the world. I mean, we have so much diversity, and that kind of diversity is always left out [when people talk about Arabs].

Finally, Rania’s view of identity saw Arab identity as a discourse rather than a reality, as the following extract reveals: “I don’t think Arabs think about their identity, they just are. I think that’s how this society thinks. I don’t think any Arab person has a conflict with the kind of identity they have.” However, as will be seen below, these were not views necessarily shared with others in this study.

- **Arab identity in the contemporary world**

This was implicit in the accounts of several participants. For these participants in an era of globalization the contemporary world was typified as including increased intercultural contact and migration, which had resulted in new forms

of identity that impacted on how they saw themselves as Arabs, led them to question whether they had full Arab identities, and to argue for the significance of their own agency and experiences as locations of their identity rather than an 'Arab' identity.

Life experiences and hybrid identity

Three students were quite clear from the beginning of their interviews that they did not feel that they had a full Arab identity; they were Yusra, Adel, and Mohamed (see Appendix 3).

For Yusra and Adel, this led them to view their identity as based more on their experiences. For Adel, this also led him to resist certain ways of being that he felt were closely associated with the concept of Arab identity which he found oppressive and which he tried to resist. For Adel the problem with the concept of an Arab identity was that it was too closely tied to cultural practices. Adel and Yusra saw no problems with the emphasis on experience and identity as a project of the self, and it was also mentioned by several other participants. For example, Sara stated that "the things I go through make me who I am," and Basma further expanded upon this notion when she said, "I think of myself as unique. So my identity is basically whoever surrounds me, but I use a special filter to take whatever matches my identity as an Arab."

Yusra revealed an inability to label her identity as purely Arab. Having lived outside of her home country, Syria, all her life, left her unable to fix her identity as an Arab. During the interview when I asked if she considered her identity to be Arab, her response was "What does that mean? I don't know, to be honest. I'm not, like... I don't feel like, yes, I'm an Arab. Like, in what way? I don't find, this specific way, why am I an Arab, you know? Just because I'm born here, family is here, and raised here, that's it." For Yusra, taking such a decisive position on an identity and labeling it as Arab was not feasible. She said that it would be difficult for her to conjure up an Arab identity, because her life in the UAE did not seem to encourage that. Her words were "Because I was raised between different kinds of people, you know, different cultures, different origins and stuff, and I wasn't raised in my home town. So it's like I live between different countries and, I don't know, I feel like I don't have my roots, you know?"

I don't know where I belong. So it's like I'm blending in with everyone." In her view she is already a mixture of the geography and experiences in which she has resided for 19 years.

Adel too illustrates the significance of experience, and is also unable to fully identify himself as an Arab. His reply to my question asking about his Arab identity was answered with: "well, I'm partly Arab, like it's part of my personality, but I won't say I'm just Arab. I'm a lot of things into one person." He was quite resolute in his description of himself as made up of the various experiences he has had when he said: "I have lived for 19 years, so it's not all Arab in there. What my parents taught me, of course, is mostly Arab, but I've learnt a lot of things, I've read a lot of books... Those things are not Arab, I guess I am influenced by the western things."

The only identity he seemed to see himself as having was made up of all the experiences he has had in his life:

All the things I've seen and done are part of my identity, they helped make me. I interact with a lot of different people, my friends, and I think some of them contributed to the way I am today. Our experiences together, what we do together.

In fact, Adel did not place any emphasis on traditions or culture as an identity marker. When asked about them being part of his identity he stated categorically, "I'm not really big on those." In this instance we see a rejection of Arab culture, which was also noted by Wafa above, when she equated Arab culture with something that "oppresses women in so many aspects."

Finally, what emerged from my interview with Adel was his sense of being "trapped," in fact he often used that word regarding his life and was a little discouraged by his inability to get out of what he perceives to be a life that he is not interested in maintaining in the UAE. He went on to discuss how he tries to work against the constraints he feels and resist the 'trapped' nature of his life. Adel tries hard to resist the label Arab, and pointed out that it was "hard to join in with the family and relate to what they say because, people who aren't convinced of the whole Arab persona wouldn't mix well with people that are

Arab entirely,” he was referring to himself as one who is not convinced of an “Arab persona.”

- **Contemporary Arabs as not ‘real’ Arabs**

When Mohamed was asked about his identity as an Arab, he seemed a bit confused. In his view, Arabs today are somehow influenced by the west and its culture; thereby, making them less true Arabs. Despite responding ‘yes’ to the question on the survey about having an Arab identity, when we sat down to talk about it, he had reservations about claiming a full Arab identity. He began with “yes, I’m an Arab” but immediately qualified that by saying, “there are different diversities” [to being Arab]. He claimed that there are many outside things, such as “cultural things, traditions. That changed us from Arab to western. Not westerners, but in the middle, between us and westerners.” He saw his identity and even that of other Arabs, as being in some way altered and perhaps less firm, due to outside forces, which he described as ‘western.’ When I asked further, “You don’t think of yourself and your family or friends as real Arabs?” His response was:

No, no. Even [though] we try to, [for example] go to the desert sometimes, we feel that we are doing stuff our grandparents did, but most of the time ...we go mall shopping, having dinners in fancy restaurants, driving good cars. I don’t think that it’s like before. The mixture of cultures changed us a lot.

In Mohamed’s view, his Arab identity and that of others has been watered down due to the influx of western culture upon it, brought about by globalization, and he felt this was a concern. As he said “globalization is harmful. It gives kids all kinds of input they never saw before and they want it. Those kinds of things definitely harm their Arab identity. I see [Arab] identity as kind of shaken and that they are maybe not on their own ground. I don’t believe in right or wrong, it’s always a gray area, but it doesn’t come across as an Arab or as a Gulf person or something like that. It’s like someone, just someone, not someone belonging to a group.”

However, not all of those interviewed agreed with Mohamed, highlighting the importance of agency in identity construction, and their belief that people play an active role in constructing their identity. They believe that if Arab identities

were being lost it was because people chose to lose them. For example Adel argued, “Arabs need to stop blaming the outside world for why we don’t hold onto our Arab identity; maybe we just don’t want it.” In the same vein, Lujaine insisted:

If people can’t hold on to their Arab identity, then I think the problem is theirs, not globalization. Sure, we see things we might want to have or even be, but it is still our choice to take those things or hold onto our Arab identity.

6.2 Arabic language as a marker of Arab identity versus Arabic as a means of communication

As indicated in the section above, some of the participants did highlight the fact that they saw Arabic as a significant marker of identity; however, many more were less convinced of this. Certainly, some saw Arabic as one marker of an Arab identity, but not the only one. All but one of those interviewed were unable to state categorically that Arabic is the defining feature of being an Arab. Most of them had a much broader vision of who could be considered an Arab, and it did not rely on being an Arabic speaker. The following section will provide the rationales offered by those who saw Arabic as important to an Arab identity.

Arabic as important to being a real Arab

The rationale offered by two of those who indicated Arabic was important stressed the central role that Arabic plays in conveying a sense of self as an Arab. For example, Elias, who was mentioned earlier, was very certain about the place of Arabic as being a major factor in his Arab identity, when he said, “Arab...comes from the word Arabic; you speak Arabic.”

For Yousef, his rationale for how important Arabic is to an Arab identity is essentially more about the rediscovery of the central role that Arabic plays in his own personal identity. This can be seen through his comment that “I was kind of, let’s say, westernized. I lived up to English. I was average in Arabic, speaking and writing.” He looked a bit dejected about this discovery of himself. But it appears his initiation into university life through a required course on Arab heritage gave him the impetus to focus on his Arabic. Once he began that course it made him more interested in reading Arabic literature in Arabic.

At that point he related that he ran into an Emirati friend, who was also attending EAU, but whom he had not seen in years. And although his friend had attended an Arabic high school and had good Arabic, Yousef found him to be too westernized in his mannerisms and his viewpoints, and he realized he was just like his friend in that sense, but without the good Arabic. Yousef said, "When I looked at his [friend's] personality, I kind of thought ...this is the wrong path, I should look into my identity, I should look again into my language, because the Arabic ...that I'm using, was going downhill." After this realization, Yousef began working on his Arabic, reading more in Arabic and even starting his own blog in Arabic, although he claimed, "I had hardship writing in Arabic, but I got good comments." This venture encouraged him to keep trying to improve his Arabic. Yousef perceived, in himself, that a move away from his Arabic was in some way associated with a move towards westernization or something he did not feel comfortable with. For him, Arabic is an important part of his identity and something that he must work on and maintain in order to feel strong about himself as an Arab.

While Elias indicated that Arabic was one of the things that defined him as an Arab, Yousef seemed to see this as more central (the biggest part of his identity) because in his view culture and traditions might change but language remained pivotal in being an Arab. As he said

I must make sure that the language part of my identity is not anything other than my first language, my mother tongue. It doesn't mean that I don't have to learn other languages. It just means that there is an important language, because if I lost my language, then I have nothing, because the biggest part, I believe, of identity that constitutes identity, is language.

He went on to say, this is essential because "we should be able to express ourselves in our language not in other's languages, because if you try to copycat others, then what's the use of your identity, what's the use of your language?" Yousef and Elias were also the only two interviewees who agreed with the statement: "speaking English makes it difficult to maintain an Arab identity," which was item 10 on the questionnaire.

Another participant, Rania, who noted several possible markers of an Arab identity in addition to language in Table 1 above; saw language as something

that made one more authentically Arab. She highlighted this with reference to the Arab diaspora saying, “They are Arab, but I don’t think they’re as authentic as the Arabs that can speak.” She then elaborated on this by telling me about her cousins who grew up in Chicago, USA, with two Arab parents, but who barely speak any Arabic and when they do it is “broken” Arabic. She goes on to claim, “I don’t think they identify themselves completely as Arabs, because they’re American born and raised, but they have Arabic roots.” However, she qualified this initial statement by adding:

They’re not to blame, because maybe they have their own reasons, why they moved from one area to another, it could be political, economic, or so forth but they should catch up. It doesn’t mean if they don’t speak Arabic they aren’t Arabs, but they should be knowledgeable or enlightened about Arabic and what is Arabic. They should appreciate Arabic, their language, their mother language.

Being Arab doesn’t require being proficient in Arabic

Ten of those interviewed felt that an Arab identity was possible without the Arabic language being required. The following is a representative sample of those discussions. Lujaine voiced absolutely no concerns about anyone professing to be an Arab, while lacking Arabic language skills. Lujaine was another student who had cousins residing in the US. She based her comments on what she knew about them and how they managed in the US. She stated that “Arabs, especially in foreign countries [i.e. not Arab countries] they kind of get together, they have their own communities. I have cousins who have lived their entire lives abroad, but they consider themselves to be Arab.”

Sara voiced a similar outlook to Lujaine about what it meant to be an Arab and saw no need for Arabic as part of the equation. Sara’s reply to my query “if someone speaks no Arabic, could they be considered Arab?” brought a resounding, “Yes! If in their heart they feel Arab, then yes.” She went on to say “Even if they were stuck in, like Greenland, where they had no schools that taught Arabic.” Finally, Wafa was also very open to what constituted an Arab. She too is familiar with Arabs who have lived abroad, in non-Arab nations for extended periods of time, who still consider themselves Arabs. Therefore, she believed that their personal feelings, more than language should be enough for them to claim to be Arab. She also gave a broad interpretation of what an Arab is, leaving it up to the person as she said, “If you consider yourself Arab, then

you're an Arab. No one can say you're not an Arab because you don't know how to speak proper Arabic."

Cultural belonging as significant as or more significant than language

Eight of those interviewed felt quite strongly that having a cultural connection to Arabness was very important for an Arab identity, and saw that as actually more important than being able to speak Arabic. However, this is in contrast with Mohamed's view that language is more important than culture.

For example, Mohamed's response to the question "can a person be considered an Arab with no Arabic?" was:

It depends. It's not only about the language. It's about the culture. If they act like us, but they don't speak Arabic well, I would call them Arabs. But if neither language nor their culture nor anything they do is Arab, I don't think they are Arabs.

Another student who also felt that culture was more important than Arabic when claiming an Arab identity was Maysoon. She talked about Arab culture and the Arab political arena as more important in defining an Arab than the language. She was quite assured in her tone when she stated:

If some people can't speak Arabic but they know more about the Arabic culture, about the Arabic political situation or other things that also makeup the Arab world, so I don't think that just because they can't speak proper Arabic, that makes them less of an Arab. If they're pretty aware of what's happening ... just aware of what the culture is like, I think it's fine if they don't speak Arabic.

Arabic as just a way of communicating with people

Among those who did not hold a strong belief in the centrality of Arabic to being able to claim an Arab identity, nine argued that Arabic was best seen as merely a means of communication. While for Yousef above, a concern about his language proficiency in his mother tongue and feeling disaffected by 'western' influences on Arab society, led him to reassert his identity as an Arab by investing more in Arabic. Basma, on the other hand, was one of those who did not see a strong link between an Arab identity and Arabic, and this was in spite of her love and appreciation of Arabic. As she said

I'm very proud that my first language is Arabic because it's the language of the holy Quran, and being Muslim, that's a source of pride to me, that

the language our holy book is written in, or scripted in, is Arabic. I love it; it's a very beautiful language.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, when I asked Basma what she believed made her an Arab, the first thing she said was: "my language, that my first language is Arabic." But when I asked her if Arabic was the most important thing, her response was categorically negative:

No, no, my identity is not my language, but if I would describe myself as an Arab, I would say first of all, I lived within an Arab country, my values are Arab...I think my identity is a lot of things. Arabic is just how I communicate with people.

Another student who shared the same view was Maysoon. When I asked if Arabic was a major part of her identity, she was adamant that it was not Arabic that made her identity, she responded, "That's an interesting question, the language and identity. I think the language is just a way of expressing yourself; I don't think it reflects on who I am." She went on to explain, "Language does play a part, but I don't think it makes up my personality or my identity; it's just a way of expressing myself."

6.3 Summary of identity markers and being an Arab

Despite the range and diversity of opinions held, all of the participants stressed their affiliation to an Arab identity. However, as can be seen above, most of the participants did not see Arabic as the most distinctive or significant component of their 'Arabness'. Since these young people are fluent in both Arabic and English, an additional way to interrogate the sort of relationship that holds between Arabic and being Arab that could help corroborate the findings above, was to examine their language practices, and in particular the extent to which these young Arab youth used English in their daily encounters.

6.4 Being Arab and using English and Arabic

In this section I will identify the functions of English and Arabic for the participants in this study. This section will demonstrate that language choices, for these students, do not seem to be driven by Arabness on the whole. That is, which language they choose to use is made for pragmatic reasons. This is seen as a manifestation of their lack of any serious concern over language choices as young Arabs.

The first key point to note is that nearly all these young people are using English outside of their studies at various times, which echoes the picture presented in the questionnaire data. The interviews have provided insight into the motives for why they use English so often, and highlight a number of reasons for this use. Overall, the students don't feel the need to choose one affiliation, or feel that one of their languages shapes their identity, and this comes through in their consistent code-switching. The following information obtained through the interviews is a representative sample

Parents

The following are some of the most representative comments the interview participants made about their interactions with their parents and the language they use. Several of the students pointed out that one or both of their parents were not very strong speakers of English and that was one reason why they spoke mainly Arabic at home. This was the case for Elias who said, "With my parents, only Arabic, actually they don't speak very good English." Maysoon indicated that she did something similar, but did use English some of the time: "With my parents I speak mostly Arabic, especially with my mom. My dad is a strong English speaker, but since my mother isn't, I usually speak Arabic at home. But I do let some English words into the conversation."

Despite being aware of her mother's lack of strong English skills, Maysoon still has English words peppering her exchanges. The ability to mix her two languages has essentially led to consistent mixing as a habit. Throughout the discussions with these students there was the continual variety of occasions for why either language was chosen. Sara, for example used the word "mixture" when she described her discussions with her parents:

When I talk to my parents it's a mixture. My mother and I usually speak Arabic but when she is angry with me she speaks in English. If my dad and I discuss the university or American politics, we speak in English. But other conversations we speak in Arabic, Egyptian.

Two of the students mentioned being conscious of which language they wanted to use based on the situation in which they found themselves in their homes.

These conversations arose out of the discussions about the language they spoke most to their parents.

The language of visitors

From there, two students talked about which language they would use if there were visitors in their home. Yousef, for example, used English if there were Arabic speaking visitors in the home and he wanted to tell his siblings to get something without the visitors understanding. He explained it this way:

When I speak with my family it is only in Arabic. I might use some English if a visitor is over at our house and I need to tell my brother or sister to get something. It would be rude to whisper, so I tell them in English to go get the coffee. This is to keep people from being embarrassed.

Basma also discussed the choice of languages in reference to who might be visiting with the family. She pointed out that

I try with all of my family to speak Arabic. It's kind of disrespectful to speak in English because you have to take into consideration who might be sitting at the lunch or dinner table. There may be elderly people who don't understand. So you have to talk in Arabic.

Siblings

Four of the interviewees claimed to only speak Arabic with siblings, three said they used English, and five used a mixture of both languages. Many of those interviewed indicated that they do speak only Arabic or mainly Arabic with their siblings; however, there were some who did not. The conversations with siblings were as mixed as they were with parents. Elias was the only participant who revealed any actual frustration with a sibling speaking English in the home. He claimed:

I speak only Arabic with my brothers and sisters. Sometimes at home my sister starts speaking in English and I start shouting at her, 'Why are you speaking in English? We are Arabs; start talking in Arabic!' So then she switches back and starts talking in Arabic.

There were two participants who discussed how they tend to speak English with their sisters, but Arabic with their brothers. In both cases, the brother was a younger sibling. Yusra expressed this notion when she said: "With my sister I only speak English, but with my brother I speak both, mostly Arabic. I don't know why, it just turns out like that." While Maysoon, who also described this

phenomenon, gave a little more background information which might reveal a reason for this choice of languages:

I have two sisters and a younger brother. With my sisters we speak in English, with my brother in Arabic. My brother is a stronger Arabic speaker compared to us. My parents noticed our Arabic was not that good, so they focused on my brother.

In each of the three situations mentioned above, we see that there are some tensions with language use. For Elias, he is the one who doesn't want his family members switching to English. While in the case of Yusra and Maysoon, there is a switch to more Arabic when communicating with their brothers.

Friends

Among the interviewees, three said they speak Arabic most of the time with their friends, two said English, and seven indicated they mostly use English and Arabic. I attempted to get a clearer understanding of how much English these students were speaking with their friends and why. There were a variety of reasons for why they chose to speak in either English or Arabic to their friends, some of it is situational and some due to affiliation.

In some cases they started out speaking in Arabic, but then when they began discussing their major, they were unable to find the words in Arabic in that particular situation. This is what occurred with Rania as she described to me what happens when she speaks to her friends: "I start out in Arabic, but if I want to discuss something in one of my courses, for example my [business] law course, I have to speak in English for certain terms because I can't find those terms, law related terms, in Arabic." For Maysoon, having friends from different Arab countries, made it hard for her to be able to converse in her Palestinian dialect. She explained it this way: "On campus I usually only speak English, because none of my friends are Palestinian. Most of my friends are Egyptian or Sudanese, so the dialect can be very different. We just find English like a common denominator, it's just easier." Wafa had the same problem with her Libyan dialect, which most Arabs, outside of North Africa, have difficulty comprehending. She revealed, "When I talk to friends on campus I only speak English, even to Arabs. No one understands the Libyan dialect, and no one speaks foos'ha [MSA], and I don't prefer to speak other people's dialects."

Some of the interviewees claimed that they tried to speak Arabic, but some of their friends continuously switch to English. This is how Mohamed described it:

With my friends I do speak Arabic, but some of my friends, who are Arabs, they prefer English. I don't get why they prefer English, but they do. So when I speak to them I try to mix between Arabic and English. But they don't speak Arabic very well.

Basma remarked that code-switching happened when she got excited:

When I'm really excited, I'm discussing something, words keep popping in my head; sometimes I can't find alternatives to them. Like, if I want to say a word, but...I try to look for the alternative in Arabic, I can't find it, so I just say it in English. And it also happens when I'm speaking in English as well, if I'm talking in English and then suddenly there's a word in Arabic, and when I [try to] translate it in my head, I can't. So it goes both ways. It just happens, vice versa, with Arabic-English and English-Arabic.

For Sara, her code-switching is not something she feels she has much control over. In her words, "it just happens." She indicated, "I begin a sentence in Arabic and then, like I end with the last two words in English, unfortunately. It just happens, I try my best to stay in Arabic, but sometimes it doesn't work." However, she went on to give an example that showed an actual need for code-switching, when she discussed speaking in her Egyptian dialect to her Palestinian friend. "It's like, we're talking in Arabic, and I want to say something about taking a shower, but in Egyptian we say *douche*, which isn't even Arabic. So then I have to say shower in English, because I don't think they say *douche* in Palestinian." So in some instances, she is aware that she is doing it, but it is done in order to benefit communication.

Elias, on the other hand, felt that code-switching happens for two reasons: "Maybe because some people find it...like it's good or something, to talk in English. Some other people, like me, when they don't have the right word to say they just take up English in their sentences." In his opinion, some young Arabs code-switch in order to be seen as 'cool': "some of these students, they end up all speaking English, because they go to an American university and they are too happy about it." Yet, he acknowledged that he too does code-switch: "when I talk about my major, I use English terms, I don't even know the Arabic terms in my major."

Yousef had an entirely negative perception of code-switching and offered this example:

When I sit and talk with my friends, they are talking in Arabic, but then they would throw in those English words, just to show how highly educated they are. But I thought, this is not showing education, this is showing a shaky personality, a shaky identity. [Code-switching] is a weakness in their identity.

The participants in this study revealed a wide range of rationales for why they use each language, and even offered up reasons for why others might do so. Some see code-switching as something entirely innocuous and assisting them in communicating their ideas, while others believe it to be pretentious or a sign of weakness.

6.5 Language as sentiment

Due to the influence of the discourse of Arabic, which tends to romanticize the language and insist upon its centrality for a true Arab identity, it was necessary to question the participants' beliefs about this conviction.

Language of thought

During the interviews, not much actually came up about which language the interviewees thought in. However, Rania made the comment that “even in my head, when I’m thinking, it’s mostly in English.” For her this included all topics she had going through her mind. Rania felt her Arabic was not as “fluent” as she would like it to be, as she speaks her Iraqi dialect very well, but her “textbook Arabic” is not as fluent. Therefore, when she thinks about most matters, she does so in English.

Sara, on the other hand, revealed that one language would take precedence depending on her mood or the subject matter. In her case, it seems that emotionally charged times and topics were when her Arabic thought-process was noticeable. As she asserted:

When I’m frustrated, when I’m depressed, or when, like I’m angry about something... I start thinking in Egyptian. I think in Egyptian because there are no words to describe it in the English language, and I know a lot of words in the English language. I get frustrated over things that are Arab. Frustration, for example, when I rant about things in Egyptian,

usually they are about things in Egypt, like for example, the elections, and what happened, and that I can't vote.

The strength of ties to Arabic: the language of self-expression

When it came to the responses regarding which language helped them express their feelings best, there was quite a variety of responses from the interviewees. Some felt completely comfortable with Arabic, some preferred English, while others felt that they could express verbally in Arabic, but when it came to their writing they expressed themselves better in English. These continuous dichotomies in how they used both their languages, mirrors the complexity found in their ability to claim an identity.

Arabic wins out

Two interviewees, Basma and Noor, still maintain a connection to Arabic that they are both proud of and happy with. Each of them indicated that they had a facility with both languages, but their true allegiance in this particular situation was to Arabic. These two students were the only ones who acknowledged that there was a strong connection with their native language in terms of expressing who they really are.

Basma shared this about her feelings for Arabic, "Even though I need English for my studies, I just feel like Arabic is the language that really shows people who I am." While Noor's words reveal her commitment to her native language when she stated, "I can write in both English and Arabic, in fact, I write my poems in Arabic. It is a much richer language and it has a better vocabulary for the thoughts I want to say. So I would have to say I can still express myself better in Arabic."

Yousef was very clear in his views on language usage. Although initially he acknowledged his Arabic was not as good as it should be, by this point in the interview he was adamant about the need to express himself in his mother tongue. When I asked which language he expressed himself better in he responded:

I do feel that I could express myself better in Arabic because that's when you express yourself, you talk about culture, and when you talk about culture, it's hard to translate ideas, because Arabic to some extent is

malleable when it comes to meanings and ideas. You can express, you can manipulate a word to mean a thousand meanings, and you mean one certain thing in those thousand meanings.

In contrast to those who feel a closer association with English in their ability to express themselves, Yousef, was adamant about his relationship with Arabic when he stated:

How you express yourself or the language you use to express yourself *is* you. I find Arabic fascinating, just as English major speakers would find English so fascinating and so nice, so expressive. So, that's why I look up to my language, just like anyone else should look up to their mother language or mother tongue.

Yousef continued discussing the importance of expressing oneself in his/her native language for quite some time during the interview. He was quite resolute that who a person actually is, comes through the language he/she uses. This particular point of view came forth in the following comments he made:

When it comes to language that means you are expressing yourself, and I don't want to express myself as an American, or British, or Australian, or as an English speaker. I'm an Arabic speaker, I'm an Arab, and I'm proud of who I am, I'm proud of my language. It's not a matter of prejudice, but it's a matter of identity and keeping track of traditions and culture. Because if you keep on speaking another language, it would result in weakening your major language. Language is related to identity, and all of a sudden you are going to demolish your identity, or change it and shift it from one side to another. Change is inevitable, but not in language.

Mohamed, who also showed a great affinity for Arabic and wanting to speak the language fairly consistently, readily acknowledged that "I express myself much better in Arabic than English. I feel more comfortable when I speak Arabic, it's better for me to speak in Arabic than in English." However, having said that, he immediately explained that in terms of writing, it is the "opposite." He noted, "I think that my writing is much better than my speaking, in English, but in Arabic it's the opposite. My speaking is much better than my writing in Arabic."

Both Wafa and Basma remarked that which language they were better able to express themselves in depended on the subject, much like Sara's thinking patterns mentioned earlier. Wafa, who prefers to speak Arabic only in her Libyan dialect, maintained that when trying to express herself it

would depend on what you're trying to express, but if it were in the Libyan dialect, I would express it especially at social gatherings, normal talk. But if you are talking about scientific talk, like it's not every day talk, you're in conferences or formal, I would speak more in English.

Wafa went on to comment that when it comes to writing, much like Mohamed, she definitely expresses herself better in English.

Basma also felt her ability to express herself in two language depended on the topic, pointing to the importance of situation in her case. As a student majoring in international studies she noted that

I can express myself more in English when it comes to my political thoughts, and how I view political issues. But when it comes to other things, like family, friends and all of that, Arabic is definitely the language I'd pick. There are more meaningful words in Arabic that can describe more. Like, if it's in English, you would go on and on. But in Arabic, I would say just that one word and everyone would understand how I feel.

But unlike Wafa and Mohamed, Basma contended that when she writes, Arabic is the language that she can express herself in best.

One very interesting comment came up in two separate interviews. Both Rania and Maysoon explicitly indicated that they would have been unable to have the long involved interview conversation that we had in Arabic. Since all these students consider themselves native speakers of Arabic, it was quite remarkable to note that some did not feel comfortable enough with their own language to carry out the type of in-depth discussions we had during the interviews. Rania maintained that "I couldn't have this conversation in Arabic. I could...I could have, but it wouldn't be as clear as I'm trying to make my ideas right now." While Maysoon informed me, "I wouldn't be able to have this conversation in Arabic without stuttering or pausing or having English words stuck in between."

English wins out

All 12 of the students interviewed mentioned how reading and writing in English over the years has made them develop a competence in the language. In contrast, and unfortunately in some of their opinions, the Arabic language was not something they focused on in school in terms of writing. And furthermore,

most of them discussed the lack of exciting reading materials encountered in Arabic language classes. This has led to them finding English a language in which they are better able to express themselves. The examples below are representative of the types of comments made during the interviews.

Elias, who felt very strongly about the need to speak Arabic whenever possible, had to admit that he believes English is the language which expresses who he really is. This came forth when he noted:

We spent no time on writing in Arabic when we were young. The Arabic class never encouraged writing, it was all about grammar. So I wrote more for my English classes, and even now, we are still writing in English at this university. So when I try to express who I really am, I do it better in English.

Sara too acknowledged the amount of English she encountered as a child when she said, "I think all those years of reading in English, even my children's stories, based on Disney, growing up gave me a strong ability to express in English. It is unfortunate that my Arabic is not that strong."

Basma shared an interesting encounter she had with several Sudanese peers at the university. It was these types of incidents which led her to be careful about using Arabic in all situations. Unfortunately, through the encounters, Basma discovered that even though,

we both talk Arabic, but there are some words we say that are considered ...a lot of words, actually, that we say that are considered taboos to them. This happened to me a couple of times. So from then on I decided to speak English, just English in order to be on the safe side.

Due to the many dialects in Arabic, these situations can be quite common. And in this particular case it has led to a student choosing English over Arabic in order to avoid any awkward encounters. And finally, Lujaine indicated that she chose English over Arabic in many instances with those who were not very close to her; because she felt that when she spoke in her Iraqi dialect it had an "intimate" feel to it. For that reason, she did not like to speak Arabic with the general population, if they could speak English.

6.6 English as an opportunity versus English as a concern

- **Opportunity**

This section contains two main segments. The first will discuss the English language as a language of opportunity. English provides plenty of new opportunities for young people living in the Arab world to negotiate and transform their identities. And English, for these participants, is not seen as a threat to their identities as Arabs. The second segment will discuss those findings which reveal that there are some concerns about language loss within this group of students. However, despite those concerns these students do not link this loss to their sense of themselves as Arabs or their ability to see themselves as Arabs.

English and education

When asked about how using English in their studies helped them express their ideas, eleven of the interviewees maintained that using English allowed them to express their ideas more easily.

English has been part of their lived experience due to its role as part of their educational reality. It is this consistent role in their lives which has made it difficult for them to see the language as a concern. As Rania pointed out, “The educational system I have studied in for a long time is English, so I use English a lot, and in school English was focused more on in school than Arabic.” Yusra had similar comments when she noted that “I went to only English schools; Arabic was taught only as a subject.” While Mohamed indicated, “I prefer to study in English, because when I was a kid, I studied in English, so I prefer to study math and physics in English.” Even for everyday language practices at the university, eight of the interviewees used English most of the time.

What the students revealed in the interviews showed a much stronger facility with English than Arabic in their university studies, both in terms of being able to express their ideas more readily and the vocabulary they had attained specific to their majors. Nearly all of those interviewed commented that when they encounter a situation about their major courses they only know the words in English. Studying at the university level in English has given them an

extensive vocabulary in their field, but for most of them, they are unable to find and use similar words in Arabic.

English: language of the future

In the interviews the notion of future opportunities was consistently a rationale for the importance of studying English and becoming fluent in the language. Most of the students maintained that in order to have prospects for future employment, English was mandatory in today's world, both in the Gulf region or beyond, a representative sample of those discussions follow.

Wafa viewed this issue from within the UAE borders by claiming, "Nowadays we all need English, just look at the UAE, here we need English. I think most Arabs are starting to realize this now." In a similar vein, Adel stated:

If we want good jobs and a good salary, then English is what we have to learn. If we just speak Arabic, no one will hire us in the future. That is why so many Arabs study here at our university in English.

Elias continued by arguing:

Now that everyone is speaking English...it's like a standard language; we need it. You can't create a whole new language which everyone would speak. Arabic wasn't that language, but English did it. Now everyone can talk to each other using English.

And finally, Mohamed somewhat pragmatically acknowledged, "Wherever we go from here we will need English. This is how we will get jobs and go somewhere in life. Unfortunately it will not be because of our Arabic, but our English." Each of these students revealed an understanding of the importance of learning, speaking and investing in English in terms of their futures and their hopes for a career, in the UAE or other Arab nations.

English and culture

Through the interviews I also wanted to determine participants' attitudes to both Arab and western culture, and if they felt that speaking English had any effect on those outlooks. These questions are relevant both to the discourse of Arabic and the notion of investment. In terms of Arab culture, all 12 of the interviewees disagreed that speaking English had affected their attitudes toward Arab

culture. When responding to the same question asked about western culture, all the interviewees agreed that speaking English had affected their attitudes toward western culture.

From the interviews, there was agreement that speaking English only served as a means of communication. Even those students who early on in the interviews held strong views about the importance of Arabic, had to agree that using English was not really capable of distancing an Arab from his/her culture, as the language was only an instrument used to help them converse. Several of the students indicated that by using English, especially in terms of their writing, they could actually get closer to their Arab culture by writing about it and having a wider audience, i.e. English speakers, to share with.

Several of the students revealed similar ways that English helped them understand culture better; for some it was Arab culture and others western culture. A representative sample of their comments follows. Noor explained that

My Arab culture is just a part of who I am, I don't think learning another language has had any effect on how I feel about my culture. English probably just gave me another way to read more about Arab culture and appreciate it more.

In Noor's case, being able to read about Arab culture in a different language and from a new perspective was a very positive situation and caused her to be more grateful for her Arab culture.

Lujaine viewed her ability to speak English as a positive factor in terms of her Arab culture as she remarked:

Actually speaking English lets me do more with my Arab culture, because I can tell other people about my culture. Not many westerners speak Arabic, so this is a chance for us to talk about Arabs in a language they can understand. I think it makes me closer to Arab culture.

She saw speaking English as an important method for helping her share more about her culture with people who do not speak Arabic. Similarly, Sara saw her English as an opportunity to spread the word about Arab culture through her writing, but at the same time, she also felt it helped her learn more about her own culture. She described it as follows:

Because I like to write and blog and I can do it in both languages, then I have more ways to talk about my culture. I think this works well for me; I get more exposure and learn more about Arab culture at the same time.

Rania, on the other hand, felt that learning English increased her understanding of the west. She remarked that

I think learning English has mainly helped me understand western culture more. When you can read about a culture or country in the language of its people, like westerners, then I think you can get more out of it. That is what happened with English, I now understand the west better.

By gaining another language, English, Rania was also able to gain insight into the west. She did not view this as negative at all; in fact, it helped her expand her perceptions about the west, and therefore has been a resource for her.

Finally, Adel was very realistic in his response. As a young man who felt distant from his own Arab identity, he still looked upon English as a language for communication and not in any way a threat to his Arab culture. He contended, "When we speak in English, we are not becoming Americans or British, we are just communicating. So no, I don't see any way that using English takes me away from my culture."

English and world events

All 12 of the interviewees agreed that speaking English did, in some way, affect their interpretation of world events. From the interviews, it became apparent that the amount of information that these Arab youth have been exposed to through English has had an impact on their learning and understanding about the world; a representative sample of those discussions follows.

As Adel remarked, he was interested in things that came in the English language:

I was interested in a lot of things that were in English. All the video games I played were in English. I read a lot of books as a kid, all of them were in English, and yes, I also had a lot of friends from different countries who spoke English. I was influenced by what I read in English, but not the language itself.

Sara gave English all the credit for why she decided to study journalism and for her interest in world events:

It was all the interesting things I could read in English language newspapers and magazines that made the idea of journalism come alive for me. Had I only read Arabic I don't think my interest in the world would have ever developed. By reading English I could find a variety of points of view on one topic, not like the more boring one story found in Arabic. So, yeah, learning English really did make a difference in how I interpret the world.

None of those interviewed revealed any negativity towards the English language's influence on how they interpreted world events. It was just an acknowledged fact; English allowed them access to more information and more ways of obtaining information about their world.

English and family dynamics

When it came to discussions about their families, none of the students revealed any major tensions or concerns with using English, sometimes more often than Arabic. Because overall, they acknowledged that learning and studying in English was something that their parents want for them.

Maysoon credited her parents for her future prospects when she stated, "I am educated in English, which was my parent's decision and choice to get a better life." She went on to explain:

For my family, our excuse for so much English is my parents wanted the best education for us. And that was somehow synonymous with American education because of how they thought Arab education was falling behind. Everything in English became number one, so our parents put us in American or British schools, which meant more English than Arabic.

Yusra was able to elaborate on this by pointing out it was parents who brought them to the UAE and "Our parents are raising us between different cultures, so they don't worry too much about our Arabic because this is what they chose for us, to study in English and now at an American university." The usage of English in their lives is not seen as a negative factor in their relationships or interactions with their parents.

Language of communication

A final point, which is of importance at this juncture, is how several of those interviewed looked at English and the amount spoken or used in their day to day lives. What stands out is that there is little concern that speaking English is going to have a detrimental effect on an Arab identity, because these students just do not see it that way. Some representative comments follow.

As Basma said, “Even if I use a lot of English in a day, it doesn’t really effect who I am as an Arab. I don’t think I am losing something by speaking English; it just helps me get along.” Yusra gave a similar response when she noted:

English is just a language, I use it when I need to and it can’t change me. If I am an Arab I won’t not be one because I speak a lot of English. This is just how it is nowadays, we use a lot of English.

Finally, Maysoon also expressed a comparable notion while giving more of an example about when each language is used as she remarked:

I never even think about how much of which language I speak. I just use the language that suits the conversation I am in, or the people I am with. If I happen to spend a lot of time in a day with Arabs, I might speak more Arabic, but on days at university, I usually use more English, and I don’t worry that something is happening to my Arabic or my identity.

Despite the lack of concern shown by many of the participants about the amount of English they used, not all of them felt the same way. This can be seen in the next section which discusses some of the concerns that a few participants had about possible language loss.

- **Concerns about language loss**

Only Yousef voiced a personal concern about how much English he was speaking when he stated, “I do worry about using so much English, of course. I am an Arab and need to use Arabic. Therefore I do get worried when I spend a full day at university and sometimes barely speak any Arabic.”

When asked if English would interfere with the Arab identity of others, Yousef had anxieties about Arab youth and the need for them to lessen their usage of English. He voiced this concern by stating, “I think our language is really important for our identity, so if students and young people keep focusing on English, then they could be losing part of their identity.” Elias had similar

notions about this situation and also pointed to the importance of continuing to use Arabic. He stated, "If people insist to only use English or keep using it, yes, it can cause problems for their Arab identity. I think we must try harder to keep using Arabic."

For some of the students, the inability to be able to speak fluently about their university major has caused some distress. This is notable in Basma's comments:

This is a problem I face, that there are a lot of terms, like political terms, I got introduced to in university. So you know them in English, but I don't know them in Arabic. So, like just a year ago, I knew that nationalism is *qawmiya*. So, I try my best to watch the news in Arabic and try to understand what they're saying, but sometimes, if I don't know what it means in Arabic, I would say it in English. But I am very disappointed about that fact, that I came to know more words and terms in English and not knowing them in Arabic. I try to catch up as much as I can.

Lujaine explained that "my university major is mostly in English. I wouldn't understand if I had to discuss my major in Arabic." She then went on to make an interesting comment, which she seemed to feel quite strongly about, but which my research in this study could not confirm. She believed that studying in English for most of her education made her more fluent in English at the expense of her Arabic. She supposed that having gone to a

private English speaking school kind of affects it (her Arabic). For example, the others who went to an Arabic school, they write Arabic perfectly. They can express themselves better; they have a better mastery of it (Arabic) while they think that their English is not as strong and they might not express themselves as well in English.

However, this is not what all of those who studied in Arabic voiced to me. For example, Elias, who had nine years in Arabic school, declared that when he writes in Arabic "I have a lot of spelling mistakes; I have a lot of grammar mistakes." And even Mohamed lamented his Arabic by noting how he is concerned about his Arabic writing in the future. "Sometimes I think if I am working and have to write a letter in Arabic, I think I wouldn't be able to. I would write, but I don't think it would be perfect." Therefore regardless of what language of instruction the students carried out their studies in prior to university, many of them still indicated that expressing themselves and writing in English was easier for them.

During the interviews students disclosed that there was not much thought given to how much of either language is spoken; they use the language they need in a particular situation. Furthermore, the use of English, from their view point, has nothing to do with maintaining their Arabness. They could never really concede that their own identities were difficult to maintain in the face of English, as they felt very strongly about their own Arab identities.

From the above it can be seen that the students' perceptions of their own Arab identities vary. The participants had differing viewpoints on how much of an Arab identity they felt they had. These interviews help signal the different markers that this group perceived as explaining their Arab identities. Furthermore the participants were able to articulate their feelings regarding which factors impacted their identity. Their responses are a constant reminder of how diverse and complex this particular group of students turned out to be as well as the issue under study. More information can be obtained about each student from the vignettes posted in Appendix 3. Having looked at students' perceptions about Arab identity, I then sought their input on what effects, if any, they felt that globalization had on Arabic and Arab identity.

6.7 The effects of globalization

As with most of the questions in this study, those about globalization and its effects on both Arabic and an Arab identity brought up the dichotomy of views among these young Arabs. The following information, which was obtained through the interviews, gives a representative sample of the comments participants made.

Globalization can't stop us from using Arabic

Several of the interviewees had no concerns about the effects of globalization on their Arabic language abilities. Noor, in fact, was quite positive about her own language skills. Noor discussed how she managed globalization when she stated: "Globalization did not stop me from speaking Arabic, it did not stop me from writing Arabic, or from thinking as an Arab or Palestinian, but still it's there in my life. I use the good things." However, she did have some worries about others, when she observed:

In my case, because I have a good wrap on my Arabic, it's fine, but when I look at other people who do not know how to speak Arabic [properly], who stereotype the Arabic language, who dislike it, that makes me feel really sorry because you are Arabs, why would you say that about your mother language? At least learn a little about it, but don't say such bad things about it. [I've heard] some people say it's [Arabic] stupid, some people said 'who would speak such a kind of language? English is the world language now,' this kind of stuff.... So when these people lose their language and they stereotype it and they don't like it and they don't want to learn it, then it's a major issue. [The rationale for these changes and use of English is] I think the globalization, modernization, most of the things that we search for on the web is in English. The TV is English; everything is English and that puts the Arabic language down below. Even the way they present things, on media, the way they represent things in English is more appealing than how they present it in Arabic, and you cannot get to the youth without being appealing in a certain field.

Sara acknowledged there were some rough patches in her early life, wherein she did not give Arabic the attention it deserved. However, she was able to get through that situation with help from her father, and now sees the importance and relevance of maintaining and using her Arabic.

I remember back in middle school, it would be like not cool to speak in Arabic. I didn't speak a word of Arabic when I was in ninth or eighth grade. Yes, maybe at home sometimes, if my parents spoke to me in Arabic. At a point my dad was like, really angry about it, and he told me... Because whenever someone would speak to me in Arabic, I would answer in English, which was really rude. So I stopped doing that. Then one winter I went to Egypt and my dad took me to all these museums, and he told me more about, like things that I already knew, but he told me more about all these great people of the past, and to know more about these people I had to read Arabic. And then in tenth grade I realized the importance... and I started speaking in Egyptian Arabic.

Globalization is harmful to Arabic

On the other hand, there were a few students who did share some of their worries about the effects of globalization on Arabic generally, and on them personally. Maysoon, for example, was concerned about the influence of globalization on her own Arabic. She believed that it was globalization which had led to her weak Arabic skills. She explained it as follows:

This might sound kind of ironic because of the answers I answered earlier, but I think it [globalization] effected my Arabic in a negative way, obviously because I am exposed to so much English media through globalization. My Arabic almost died, is that what you mean by globalization? Yes, there are the good parts, but I think the biggest negative impact was my Arabic not being as strong as it could be.

Throughout time it's getting even worse because I don't take Arabic courses now in university.

Mohamed and Yousef both viewed globalization as a threat, and saw its effect on Arabic as detrimental. Mohamed contended:

I do think it is harmful to Arabic. Look how all kids are speaking in English, thinking this is the 'cool' language. They are even rapping in Arabic. This is because of globalization and I think we are going to lose Arabic this way.

Yousef applied the problem to his own peers when he insisted, "Even my friends don't want to speak Arabic with each other anymore. It's like they think it is not something modern, Arabic is old; they only want new things. That stuff comes from globalization." Yousef expanded upon this problem among his friends when he continued:

Even if they talk in Arabic, for example, some of the guys, they would rap out their words. I don't know why. They do this just to show they are cool, they are fitting into society, and the way that they should express themselves. I think they misunderstood.

He went on to try to explain why his peers were using so much English at the expense of Arabic. Some of it, he thought was their desire to "fit into the mosaic," which he equates with the need for English and expressing themselves in English and even thinking in English. What concerned him most was that he did not believe

we should be a copy of someone in order to be able to accept them. I don't need to change. I just need to be knowledgeable of the other, I should respect the other. And if we don't speak a common language, that doesn't mean that I don't accept the other.

Globalization and Arab identity

Wafa initially looked at globalization as a negative factor impacting Arab identity. She did this by giving an example of how people choose to change their identity. For her, globalization is something which has allowed some young women to make the decision to remove their hijab; thereby, allowing what she believed to be harmful choices. She observed that

Maybe they even use it [globalization] as an excuse, like the girls we see who used to wear the hijab, after the whole globalization thing, they take it off. You see them sneaking behind the parents and doing all things they aren't supposed to. I think they lose their identities depending on what they are exposed to. If people are saying we are losing our identity

because of globalization, I think it's because they want to. It's up to the people in the end.

Despite how strongly Wafa began her statement, she seems to think that people do have some choice in the matter, and that those who do things, which she believes are counter to Islam, do so because they want to. She does not imply that globalization is solely to blame. The remainder of those interviewed actually highlighted the importance of agency in identity construction. From their point of view people play an active role in constructing their identity and therefore if Arab identities were being lost it was because people chose to let them go.

For example, Adel argued: "If people worry that globalization takes away peoples' traditions, I mean, if people really want their traditions they would stick to them, but if they don't, then who cares if they leave them, it is their choice." Adel tends to feel the Arab world needs to stop blaming the outside for why Arabs don't hold onto their Arab identity; he thinks maybe they just don't want it. In the same vein, Lujaine insisted:

If people can't hold on to their Arab identity, then I think the problem is theirs, not globalization. Sure, we see things we might want to have or even be, but it is still our choice to take those things or hold onto our Arab identity.

Noor acknowledged change but said, "Like in my case, okay, globalization has some impact in my life, it changed some certain things, but it did not remove my identity, obviously."

As noted above, the discussion on globalization brought up the usual dichotomy of views among these participants. There were both negative and positive views of globalization and its effects on both Arabic and an Arab identity. However, overall, despite some of their negative feelings towards globalization, several of the interviewees did acknowledge that some things that came with globalization were not that bad. For example, Sara declared that "technological globalization is the best thing that has ever happened to the world." And Yousef acceded: "I do believe in individuality. You should have your own thoughts, you should have freedom of thought," which is much more of a western construct as compared to the collectivist Arab mentality.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings from the qualitative data obtained through the interviews. The chapter has expanded upon the more global findings in chapter 5, and revealed a more in-depth and personal view of Arabic and identity as understood by the 12 participants who were interviewed. There is no doubt from these findings that the issue of the Arabic language and Arab identity is extremely complex and multi-layered. The following chapter will discuss and interpret these findings with reference to my theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 7

Discussion and Implications

7.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results presented in chapters 5 and 6. This study was interested to interrogate the belief that in order to possess an Arab identity, one must speak Arabic. I did this through critical scrutiny with an emphasis on identity as a reflexive project of the self. It is my desire to generate new understandings and to unsettle the established 'truths' about Arabic and an Arab identity and the strength of the relationship between them that is central to my research inquiry. Furthermore this thesis sought to consider Arabness and the Arabic language in the context of globalization, and I will use this chapter to discuss the findings in light of the theoretical framework introduced in chapter 3.

The discussion will be organized around the research questions presented in chapter 4, which guided the study. I will draw on the questionnaire findings, which provided a 'global' overview of a large number of young people (304), who were studying at the university which formed the setting for the study. The challenges of engaging questionnaires as a data collection method to explore such a complex topic, is certainly real; however, using them to investigate language and identity was useful since I was concerned about gaining external population validity as discussed in 4.2.2 above. I will also draw upon the interviews, which were undertaken with 12 participants from whom I obtained a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity, language, and globalization.

I will then reflect on the implications of this study. This will be twofold, as I will first reflect on the implications in terms of what they contribute to an understanding of the relationship between language and ethnic identity in the context of globalization. Secondly, I will look at what the implications are for policy makers and others with regard to whether (as it is widely assumed) studying in English and using a lot of English will erode an Arab identity.

Before getting to the discussion and implications, it is important to make an observation about the enormous complexity inherent in studying the relationship between ethnicity, identity, language choices, and globalization. This situation is extremely challenging for the researcher undertaking a study into this area. Much of this is due to the fact that with the advent of globalization, for this particular group of participants, the relationship between language and ethnicity becomes disrupted. Their lived experiences put them in a world where the cultural forces of globalization offer them new ways of being and determining who they are as Arabs. Additionally, many of the responses from the participants shifted and changed between their initial responses on the questionnaire, to various times during the interviews. These changing responses definitely posed challenges in doing this type of research. However, they also revealed how dynamic and multifaceted Arab identity is. One thing that I noted that many of participants did during their interviews, was to use their discussions to essentially talk themselves through Arab identity, and in so doing it wasn't always just about them personally. They also included how others view Arabs, the Arab diaspora, and a variety of terms that pointed at what they considered "true" Arabs, while pulling in their own personal lived stories and experiences.

It is also important to note here that even though I used two types of instruments to collect my data, they do not carry equal weight in terms of the information gleaned from each. Given how several of the interviewees shifted their views on the subject matter, from their responses on the questionnaire, to changing their minds within the interviews, I view the interview findings as more helpful in understanding the issues I was investigating.

In the first part of the chapter I will reflect on the results regarding perceptions of what the Arab youth in this study believe constitutes an Arab identity, and how relevant Arabic is to that identity, by addressing research question 1. I will then look at how they use the two languages by addressing research question 2. After that I will account for the results, and consider the theoretical and pedagogical implications of these results. The research questions of this study were designed to determine how Arab youth today, living in the UAE, comprehend their attachment to an Arab identity and if it is tied to their native

language of Arabic. It is important to keep in mind that this particular group of students is not representative of all Arabic-speaking students in the UAE.

7.1 Perceptions of Arabness and the place of Arabic

The findings indicate that the majority of the students in this study felt that they do have an Arab identity, and there are several ways in which they perceive that Arab identity. Despite the fact that all of the participants in this study were Arabs and self-identified as native speakers of Arabic, a small percentage claimed that they did not have an Arab identity; (they will be discussed in 7.1.1 below).

However, an interesting finding with regards to Arab identity was the comments made by Rania and Sara (6.1.2), who argued that Arabs don't really think about their identity, but rather they just "are." This is a rational point, as often the preoccupation with identity and what it is and what it stands for can be lost on other cultures, which are not so profoundly influenced by discussions on the topic. For many Arabs, the notion of identity may not be something they have ever given much thought to, but they just know deep inside that they are Arabs.

Part of this lack of belief in an Arab identity may be that some people cannot conceptualize themselves in these terms; the idea of what an identity is or what it entails may be lost on them. This is part of the challenge in even asking about people's identities, as some are unsure about their identity generally, and in this case some of the students cannot categorically state that they feel Arab. This notion has been pointed out by various scholars who argue that for some people, identity and identity formation are universally accepted and are just a part of every human's experience, and not something they spend time thinking about (Skeggs, 2008; Tomlinson, 1999). Furthermore, there are those researchers who argue that in many non-western contexts people do not believe in these social categories.

In the case of these students, there was a questioning of defining what it means to be an Arab as it is a broad construct. Sara (6.1.2) for example could not narrow her own identity down to only being an Arab, she mentioned being

Mediterranean, Muslim, and Egyptian. While in Noor's case (6.1.2) the category of Arab was also deprioritized with nationality and Islam being mentioned first.

I was further surprised that the participants were open to accepting non-Arabic speakers as Arabs. This is in contrast to what many Arabs believe about what makes an Arab, and revealed a more open and tolerant attitude by these Arab youth. They understand that globalization has taken many Arabs far from their homelands, resulting in sometimes poor Arabic skills, or even no Arabic (Wafa, Sara, and Lujaine, 6.2). These youth accept that at times something may interfere with the possibility of learning Arabic, and they do not look at the situation as negative or something that precludes an Arab identity. It is these continuous findings among this group of students, which reveals the need to interrogate the place of Arabness and Arab identity from the post-structuralist perspective which helps account for the hybrid nature of their identities.

7.1.1 Non-Arab identity

Despite the small number of students who indicated a lack of an Arab identity, this point is still important as 12.5% of the participants noted this. It may seem surprising that this many young people feel so distant from their Arabness. However, it may have been in some cases that they had parents from different nationalities or a non-Arab parent. However since this was not one of the factors I accounted for in the research, this is an unknown. But the fact that one of the students, who felt this way, was interviewed and was a UAE national, reveals that this situation is not solely based on a divided nationality. In fact, when one thinks of strong feelings of Arabness it seems especially solid among UAE citizens.

There were several reasons given by those who did not feel their identity was Arab. Some of their explanations included the many experiences they had in life, a lack of attachment to a home country, and even cultural confusion due to western influence (see Adel, Yusra, and Mohamed - 6.1.2 & Appendix 3). For these particular students, their daily lives and experiences, including interactions with others of different cultures and languages, have led them to divest themselves of an Arab identity, and left them unsure if they need to be defined by a specific label or identity. This refers back to SIT as discussed in

chapter 3, wherein the importance of social groupings forces humans to attempt to fit into complex groups. However, as noted, for some, fitting into a specific category can become complicated. This study has found this to be the case for a few of these students, as they revealed an inability to associate themselves with an Arab identity.

What this reveals is that these students are contesting their ethnicity; not just language and identity. What we are finding is that some people don't want to be marked by their ethnicity; their ethnicity is not central to how they see themselves. These students are saying "we don't feel Arab," and they are rejecting other people's attempts to make them be Arab. This highlights how globalization has opened up ways that allows some to deny their ethnicity as an important part of who they are. Globalization is leading to the pluralization of society, and its effects are being felt by this particular group of Arab youth. In an era of globalization, these young people feel that they have the ability to cultivate alternative identity choices, different from those imposed by society. These results confirm the conceptual understanding of globalization presented in chapter 3.

Despite those who claimed not to have an Arab identity at all, the remainder of the participants could claim an Arab identity, but not based on any specific item. From the findings of this study, it appears that Arab youth living in the UAE today see their identity as an amalgam of factors which together create their identity. As Basma (6.1.2) stated, "I am a combination of everyone's efforts around me." This view is in keeping with the concept presented in chapter 3 which points out that people are informed by what they meet in the world and what they encounter (Lin, 2008; Spolsky, 2010). This relates to the post-structuralist understanding of identity, wherein globalization stresses the dynamic experiences of identity. Globalization has also led to a shifting of people and therefore the language a person grows up with may not be the language he or she identifies with. Most of the participants in this study were unable to categorically maintain that only one element was responsible for their Arab identity, specifically Arabic.

7.2 Various markers of an Arab identity

The first research question was interested in knowing if Arabic is a major marker of the participants' Arab identity, or if there were other factors that they believed made up their Arab identity. This study shows that there is a vast array of items that these students see as markers of an Arab identity, and they don't necessarily or even most often, have to do with Arabic. Arab youth in this study have a fluid notion about their own identity, and view it as having many markers, with language being only one of them. These students do not feel constricted by what defines them and mentioned several factors which they perceived as having a part in building their Arab identity. They had a multiplicity of markers while also showing interconnectedness among some of the markers. Some of the students foregrounded certain aspects such as family, while others talked about their nationality, and all of them mentioned experiences. What comes forth when questioning identity in this group is the wide variety of viewpoints; essentially they cannot agree on what the markers are for an Arab identity. The following sections will briefly discuss these various markers.

Family

Participants mentioned family as a determining factor in constructing an Arab identity several times during the interviews. They saw their parents as the people who they wished to emulate because they viewed them as positive examples of Arab identity. Both Wafa and Yousef (6.1.1) discussed their parents' Arab identity and how those identities in some ways became their own, while Rania and Basma (6.1.1) also pointed out the place of family as an important piece of their Arab identity. These findings echo Fishman's (2000) conviction that the family domain is crucial for multilinguals.

Culture

Most of the participants responded to the role of culture in their identity construction by revealing a strong bond with their Arab culture. For a collective society, like that of the Arab world, these findings are not surprising. These students appreciate their Arab culture and feel strongly tied to it (Taylor, 2002). The Arab youth of this study seem to look upon their Arab culture as part of their identity that they share with others and which helps them interpret life and

assign meaning to their world (Smith, 1990). Through their culture they are able to understand their place in life and how they should react in certain situations. Mohamed and Rania (6.1.1) felt strongly about their culture, and showed pride in Arab culture because their culture allows them to be a part of the in-group of Arabs.

However, on the other hand, Wafa (6.1.1) was distinctly wary about assuming her Arab identity was marked by her culture. Her problem with viewing Arab culture as a marker of her identity emerged from her disillusionment with how Arabs often use culture to erect barriers that stop women from being full members of society. For example, telling women they cannot be involved in political matters or drive, when those matters are never mentioned in Islam. Wafa pointed out that cultural norms were not equivalent to religious norms, and her loyalty lay with Islam and its tenants, not her culture. Adel (6.1.2) also had issues with placing any emphasis on culture as an identity marker. In both these cases we see a rejection of Arab culture. For Wafa, it is because she sees cultural values interfering with religious edicts, which she is determined to follow. While in Adel's case, his lack of an attachment to any Arab identity has also left him without a strong link to Arab cultural mores. These findings concur with Canagarajah's (2006) premise that at this point in time we can't look at identities as belonging to one culture, as people are able to be more hybrid.

Religion and traditions

Religion and traditions were often mentioned together as markers of an Arab identity. The limited role of religion as a marker for Arab youth was a surprise finding of this study. I had imagined that Islam would have been a more central marker of Arab identity for these students, as the majority are Muslim and the UAE is an Islamic nation. These findings are in opposition to the literature in this area, which tends to view Islam as central to constructing an Arab identity (Lewis, 1998; Modood, 2005, Zughloul, 2002). This occurrence also goes against the belief that it is through the religion of Islam that Arabic will be maintained. If Arab youth, in this instance, are not seeing Islam as a major marker of their Arab identity, then the link between Islam and Arabic cannot be guaranteed.

Living in the UAE has given these young Arabs a different lifestyle and perspective than many would have had back in their home countries, and their ties to religion may not be as firm due to their ability to have more input from outside sources and perhaps a bit more freedom than in their home countries. Additionally, without extended family to spend time with, their friends and relationships tend to be outside the home. This sense of freedom may have some impact on the low number of students who perceived their religion as being a marker of their Arab identity. Only two students talked about religion at any length during the interviews: Wafa and Yusra, who is a Christian (6.1.1). Wafa felt that Islam actually held her to her Arab identity, while Yusra saw her Christianity as the only constant in her life; something that could not change or be altered no matter what she encounters in life. Both of these young Arabs view religion as one factor which helped them construct their Arab identities. Despite the participants' lack of a direct link between religion and identity, the discourse of Arabic attaches itself to the importance of Arabic to Islam and has concerns that the lessening of Arabic usage is having or could have damaging effects on Islam. However, those who discussed religion in this study seemed comfortable with the amount of Arabic that they have in their possession to maintain their religion. These findings seem to confirm the post-structuralist view presented in chapter 3, which rejects any type of core identity as being fully shaped by society.

Within the traditions mentioned by the participants we can find various societal norms through which Arabs can “reveal” their Arab identity physically and thereby be recognized by other Arabs and by outsiders. Mohamed (6.1.1) seemed keen to discuss how others are able to recognize Arabs from some of their traditions, while Lujaine (6.1.1) also voiced her appreciation of her Arab traditions and how they helped mark her Arab identity. Although these feelings of a tie through traditions are subjective (Smith, 1990), they are still important for Arab youth. The fact that their many Arab traditions are well known in the world, items such as hospitality for visitors, giving assistance to those in need, etc. would give this specific factor an added benefit in that it could be recognized by others on the outside.

Behaviour as an Arab

Behaviour as a marker of an Arab identity was brought up at length by three interviewees: Sara, Basma, and Mohamed (6.1.1). However, each seemed to look at what is meant by this a little differently. Sara was mostly thinking about the way Arabs dress and what they eat, while Basma placed her definition upon the actions of Arabs outside their homes, but even more so, outside their countries. In those times she feels that an Arab identity is truly witnessed by the outside world and acts as a marker of an Arab identity. Mohamed went on to advise that it is important for Arabs to behave a certain way, and when they do so they will be recognized as Arabs and will reveal their Arab identity. These students see part of their Arab identity as something which is visible to others and something which they can and should control in order to be viewed in a positive light. This particular finding fits in more closely with the traditional view of Arab identity, than the more current way, which relies on globalization as a way to fit into the world.

Nationality

While several of the interviewees did mention their nationalities as markers of their Arab identity, those who had the most attachment to a nation were students from Palestine. This was visible from both the questionnaires and the interviews. Both Maysoon and Noor (6.1.1) reported on the importance of their Palestinian nationality to their Arab identity. The place of Palestine for many Arab youth from there is most likely based on a desire to have access to and be able to enter the land of their ancestors. Many of our Palestinian students have never visited their 'homeland' and this tends to bring up in them feelings of longing in addition to their parents consistently reminding them of their homeland and their identity as wrapped up in being from Palestine. On the other hand, we also had Rania (6.1.1) point out that holding an Arab passport was in no way an identity marker. As a dual citizen of Iraq and Canada, Rania did not view her travel document, or link to a nationality, as part of her identity. This is because in her opinion, and for others, identity documents that give people a nationality can be obtained by anyone. For example, Arabs can get US or UK citizenship and vice versa. Despite what is considered to be a strong affiliation for Arabs (Humphreys, 1999), nationality for participants other than Palestinians was not very relevant in this study. This is most likely due to the

migrant nature of these students, who have not lived in their home countries for extended periods or developed strong ties.

Language

Despite the large number of students who claimed that Arabic was a major marker of their Arab identity (49% of those surveyed), this did not hold up under further scrutiny. Very few of the others interviewed placed much emphasis on Arabic as part of their Arab identity. In fact, only four made comments about the importance of Arabic. Yousef (6.1.1.) insisted that not using his mother tongue would result in some lessening of his Arab identity, because for him his identity was based on Arabic. While Elias (6.1.1) uses Arabic at home and with his family, because neither of his parents speaks very good English. However, he mainly sees Arabic as one aspect which makes his identity Arab. The others who brought up Arabic, Maysoon and Basma (6.1.1), both mentioned it in conjunction with additional items, such as culture, values, and living in the Arab world; ergo as part of their identity, but certainly not the main feature. From this group of four, who actually included Arabic in their discussion of markers of an Arab identity, we can see the variety of responses and insights that they shared. From a student who is completely certain his Arab identity is strictly locked within his Arabic language, to others who see it as important, and/or as a portion of what they can pull together in order to claim an Arab identity, these findings reveal that making the claim that Arabic is at the center of an Arab identity is not defensible among the participants in this study.

Most saw their identity as a mixture. This is certainly in keeping with the post-structuralist standpoint, discussed in chapter 3 (3.2.3) that an identity is not based solely on one factor; agency is involved and people can cultivate alternative identity choices in today's global world (Canagarajah, 2004). And as such, identity is constructed and produced socially. This would account for why these students view their identities as more fragmented than those who see a one-to-one correlation between language and identity. Therefore, despite being considered Arabs by virtue of their native language, their social identity, which is assumed to be shared with other Arabs and Arabic speakers, does not always equal or reflect their personal identity, which is how they self-identify.

This appears to confirm what was discussed in chapter 3 regarding the concept of a personal and social identity (3.2.2.4).

Most of these students seem to show strong notions of being aware of both their personal identity and their social identity, which is shared with other members of their group. Despite the fact that people have group identities, those too can be multiple. These findings seem to resonate with the growing body of literature which contests the belief in a one-to-one correspondence between language and identity (3.2.2). These students seem to view their Arab identity through more of a post-structuralist perspective allowing them to be individuals as they work their way through the social world.

Among these participants there tends to be a movement away from the focus on Arabic as the *major* marker of an Arab identity, which corroborates the concepts presented in chapter 3. Furthermore, the participants' belief about their language being only a part of their identity is similarly echoed by post-structuralist theorists in chapter 3 (3.2). These results reveal that there appears to be a dynamic relationship between ethnicity and language, as proposed in chapter 3, and these students are aware of their options.

Mixture of rationales

The majority of participants claimed to have an Arab identity; yet, identified a multiplicity of markers, not Arabic, as the major marker. It is these different markers which are seen as operating in combination to give the participants their Arab identity. Many students wrote in or discussed more than one item as a marker of Arab identity. These students definitely see their identity as an amalgam of factors; they are unable to say with any authority that they feel their Arab identity is one-dimensional. This factor is revealing in that it gives us more information about how these youth see themselves as Arabs and shows us that they do not think they have an Arab identity based on one specific component, but that they see themselves as being made up of a combination of elements. An important part of this mixture of rationales includes experiences. Each of the interviewees discussed how the experiences they have lived through in their lives have had an effect on their current Arab identity (Yusra, Rania, Adel, and Mohamed). These findings confirm the concepts in chapter 3 which indicate

that an identity is assembled based on a variety of group memberships, in order to fit into a particular setting. Despite the acceptance in the UAE that an Arab identity is based on Arabic, these participants had a much more intricate view of their identities, and were able to articulate their personal understanding of their identities through this study. The findings in chapters 5 and 6 confirm the conceptual understanding of identity in a globalized world as hybrid and allowing people to cultivate alternative identity choices.

7.3 Arabic and Arab identity in the contemporary world

The fact that many of these Arabic speakers do not consider Arabic as marking an Arab identity is a key signal that there is a problem here regarding Arabic and identity. This reveals the importance of this study in helping to understand this disconnect between the discourse of Arabic and Arab identity and this particular group of young Arabs' beliefs about this subject.

7.3.1 Diglossia

One reason why Arabic might not be considered an identity marker is the lack of attachment to Arabic itself due to the diglossic situation, as discussed in chapter 2 (2.2). When we talk about students maintaining their Arabic, we are talking about the Arabic they use for daily speech interactions, and that Arabic is a dialect, as no one uses MSA for daily communication. The diglossic situation of Arabic is a major factor in these students' inability to achieve fluency or perfect their MSA. Living with a language that forces people to speak one way but study and learn in another way, makes it difficult for students to find a balance; this was mentioned consistently during the interviews (Rania, Yusra, Maysoon, 6.6). When Arab students learn literary Arabic in school, it is very different from the Arabic dialect they speak in several ways, including vocabulary and grammar (Benkharafa, 2013).

The main problem that some students admitted to was a loss of MSA, and the fact that they don't write Arabic as well as they feel they should. Especially in today's globalized world where English is necessary and important, there has been a turn away from MSA and the ability for young people to develop a strong affiliation with the language. As discussed in chapter 2, the arrival of a second language which becomes dominant, can cause children to withdraw

from their native language. This is not the fault of Arab youth, but instead, much of the problem lies with the early introduction of English. In the final analysis, the Arab students who attend these private schools often have proficiency problems with their Arabic (Troudi, 2007).

Since Arabic is a language of dialects, many of the students revealed difficulties in being able to communicate with other Arabs in their own dialect. This variance leads to many encounters wherein there are communication breakdowns, despite both parties speaking Arabic. The issue with diglossia has become perhaps more glaring in light of the option Arabic speakers have to choose global English. Many times these breakdowns result in a shift to English as the language both parties can communicate in. With this lack of a strong connection to MSA, it is not surprising that Arab youth in the UAE would not find Arabic to be a major marker of an Arab identity. Since they do not all have a firm grasp on literary Arabic in addition to problems communicating in their many dialects; it would be difficult for them to equate Arabic with an Arab identity.

Lujaine (6.5) indicated that when she spoke in her Iraqi dialect it had a more “intimate” feel to it and she therefore often chose English over Arabic when communicating with other Arabs, who could understand English. She has gravitated to English as a language which has no special meaning, but is a tool for communication. Wafa (6.4) speaks the Libyan dialect, which is notoriously different compared to many other Arab dialects, and she indicated that no one at EAU can understand her. However, she refuses to speak in any other Arabic dialect, although she is able to. She felt speaking another dialect removed her from her Libyan roots. She too chose to speak in English. Basma (6.5) had to admit defeat when it came to trying to speak to friends from Sudan. She encountered several instances where her Saudi dialect caused breakdowns in communication and embarrassed her because her words were considered rude or inappropriate. At that point she started using English to communicate with people from Sudan. These types of breakdowns, found rather consistently among Arabic speakers from different countries, have led many to choose English to facilitate their communication. These findings confirm the concepts in chapter 3 that claim it is not the language informs one’s identity, but it is the

person who negotiates his/her identity depending on the circumstances. What these findings seem to be pointing to is a possible problem for MSA in view of the diglossic situation with Arabic, which leads Arabic speakers to often turn to English in order to be understood.

7.3.2 Migrants and hybridity

Another reason for why many of these students do not have strong attachments to Arabic as their identity marker is their lifestyle as migrants, which has moved them away from their collective family life. Many of the participants appear to have withdrawn, in some ways, from the collective notion which they might have retained had they still lived in their countries of origin. The separation from extended family, nation, and traditions has definitely removed some of these students from their attachment to the representation of "home." Yusra (6.1.2), for example felt that by living in the UAE her whole life, she had no ties to her family's nation of Syria. By residing as migrants in a country that, although Arab, has an enormous international population which uses English to communicate, their connection to Arabic as a major marker has perhaps never been activated, or has taken on a lesser role in their current circumstances. Their lifestyle is different from those who have been born and raised in their parents' home countries, and their identity tends to be more hybrid due to their lives away from their home countries. Yet despite theorizing that, it is interesting that even the UAE nationals (see for example Adel 6.1.2 and Appendix 3) in this study showed signs of a fluid identity. This is a valuable finding in that this study took place in the UAE, where the rhetoric has been strong on the link between language and identity. However, in the study, I have found that one local young man, not only sees no tie between Arabic and an Arab identity, but furthermore, does not feel he has an Arab identity at all and tends to respond more as a hybrid than a full-fledged member of UAE Arab society.

It is this hybridity which may be another factor for why these particular students do not see one element marking their identity. Since most of them have had to move across geographical and sociocultural borders as migrants it leads to their hybridity. Although some theorists, as discussed in chapter 3, view this situation as mainly negative and believe those who encounter these issues are

struggling to reach a balance in their lives, I am not sure that today's Arab youth in the UAE are feeling such a struggle. Some of the concerns regarding migrants is that people are encountering both an L2 and a new culture. However, these participants are only faced with a different dialect of Arabic and a slight difference in Arab culture in the UAE. Therefore, I feel that the students have "third place identities" (Bhabha, 1994), which are not traumatic to them, and they have been able to negotiate the differences they have encountered. However, in so doing, they possibly divested themselves from some of their core feelings of identity, perhaps related to nationality or extended family.

7.3.3 The influences of globalization

The subject of globalization was included as part of this study due to its importance in the rise of English as a global language and how globalization has affected each of these participants. It also seems that globalization is also one of the reasons that many of those interviewed did not find Arabic to be the main marker of their Arab identity. As the UAE is perhaps the most rapidly changing Arab country, whose local population is a fraction of its expatriates, it faces the widespread effects of globalization on a daily basis. In the Arab world, many see globalization as a threat to Arab identity. And despite those who may not perceive globalization to be a huge threat, as discussed in chapter 1, nearly all Arabs agree that globalization equals "Americanization" (Najjar, 2005).

However, despite the negative view of globalization by many in the Arab world, the importance of globalization is that it allows people to be different. It allows them to operate in more than one way; it gives them the fluidity they need and desire. Students' perceptions of globalization run the gamut from viewing it as something negative, which is impacting Arab youths (Mohamed, 6.7) and Arabic (Yousef, 6.7), to something much less negative and a part of life that young people have choices about (Noor and Sara, 6.7).

When interviewed, most participants were able to find something positive about globalization. This occurred even for those who responded negatively about the issue on the questionnaire. When given the opportunity to expand on their comments, through the interviews, students were able to give a more complete view of their opinions. Their willingness to discuss globalization allowed me to

tap into a source, i.e., those actually living globalization, the ones who the UAE society is most concerned about in terms of losing their identity: the Arab youth. And although Arab society may view this segment of society as unable to stand firm in the face of globalization; I did not find that. I believe this study has revealed one group of Arab youth which is savvy and knowledgeable about what does and does not fit into their lives or their Arab identities. These young people realize they have the option to choose those parts of globalization which will assist them in life, and to ignore those items that come with globalization that might be detrimental to them in some way. Noor (6.7) was very clear that globalization could not impinge upon her usage of Arabic, either speaking or writing, nor could it stop her from thinking as an Arab. She acknowledged that globalization exists, but that she has the power to choose which parts of it she will use. When discussing globalization I never got the feeling that these participants saw it as something definitive that they had to accept or take on as part of their lifestyle. On the contrary, I found young people who clearly indicated that changing due to or because of globalization was a choice. When it came to globalization, these participants pointed out that everyone has the option to take on all that comes with globalization, i.e. the positives and negatives, or they have a choice. Adel and Lujaine (6.7) were especially candid about choice when it comes to the phenomenon of globalization, and that Arab youth can pick those parts of globalization which would better their lives. They recognized that globalization could be detrimental in some instances, but in the end choice was key in how they thought Arab youth could deal with this issue.

These findings are important because they mean that despite the worries over globalization and its damaging role on Arabic and Arab identity, the participants in this study did not all find the discourse of globalization to be as negative as Arab society has maintained. Even those, who made it clear during the interviews that globalization, did equate with a loss of Arabness, were still able to accept that the technology they rely on is by way of globalization as is the fact that they study in a multicultural international university in the Gulf (Yousef and Sara, 6.7).

7.3.4 The role of global English

Another reason for the lack of attachment to Arabic as the heart of an Arab identity among Arab youth today in this study is the role of global English. And whether or not it is seen as a negative influence on Arabs and Arabic, its part cannot be overlooked. It is a fact that global English is the lingua franca of today's world, and those who speak English as a second or foreign language far outnumber the native speakers (Crystal, 2003). These particular Arab youth in the UAE have lived with English their entire lives, or from the time they entered primary school. They have discovered a language that works for them at many levels, due to the cultural items that come with English from films to music and even the way English is taught. They are not turning their backs on Arabic, but they are often relegating it to certain areas of their lives.

Despite much of the general consensus both in the Arab world and beyond, that global English is definitively attached to globalization, the students did not tend to see that connection as a negative factor, even though one of the main factors that people worry about with regard to global English is loss of an Arab identity. For the majority in this study, English is just a part of life and a tool for communication. They have not labeled it as negative. Both Basma and Maysoon (6.2) point out the usefulness for both English and Arabic as languages for communication, as opposed to markers of identity. This is in direct contradiction to the Arab view of globalization presented in chapter 2 (2.2), which pairs it with global English and then points out that the two are destroying Arab identity and the Arabic language.

These students do not see English as harmful; nor do they think it has any potential to strip away their Arab identity. For them, English is just a language for communication, as is Arabic. These findings reported in chapters 5 and 6 seem to confirm the conceptual understanding of language as a resource proposed in chapter 3. The UAE government and the media's vociferous concerns about losing Arabic and Arab identity to global English, met with rejection from the interviewees. Basma (6.6) argued that using English doesn't "effect who she is as an Arab," while Maysoon (6.6) contended that using English a lot was not something she worried about in terms of her Arabic or her identity.

7.3.5 Education in the Arab world

As I interviewed the students and various themes emerged, the discourse of education became fairly central. Students are very aware of the amount of English they have studied. In fact, there was obvious dissatisfaction from some of them at their lack of strong Arabic skills in both reading and writing (Mohamed, Wafa, Elias, and Sara, 6.2). In addition to that, the interviewees were quite upset at the lack of quality Arabic teaching they received in private schools (Elias, 6.5). Since most of these students attended private American or British curriculum schools, the Arabic language training they received tended to be limited and according to those interviewed, of a poor quality. They all felt strongly that Arabic language teaching in the private English medium schools which they attended could have been improved.

Except for Basma, who felt very happy with her education in Saudi Arabia, every one of the other interviewees spoke bitterly about their Arabic language experiences. From the fact that most of it was grammar-based, involved rote memorization, or used old books and methodologies, not one of them expressed satisfaction with their encounters with Arabic lessons. That was eleven students out of the twelve interviewed, who had nothing positive to say about learning Arabic in the UAE private schools they went to.

The fact that this issue came up, from so many students in interviews, reveals that there are problems with how Arabic is taught in the region. This factor is, in many ways, pushing these youth away from obtaining a strong grasp of their mother tongue, and it could be due to the inferior manner which they believe their language is brought to them. Students' concerns ranged from how poorly their Arabic teachers seemed to be trained, to how Arabic classes only focused on grammar, and that learning the language was difficult and not fun. Students seemed to perceive all this difficulty with the language to be a good rationale for why they gravitated toward English, a language taught with colorful books, new methods, videos, technology, and all manner of novel and innovative approaches (Elias and Sara, 6.6). Much like globalization brought them the best of the western lifestyle in terms of technology (Sara and Yousef, 6.7),

global English in the classroom seems to have filled their learning arena with interesting and up-to-date ways of language learning.

In the end, it seems that Arab students in the UAE are learning and using English because they, and their parents, believe it is in their best interest and they are not concerned about negative effects on their Arabic. This is in contrast to concerns specifically about the long term effects of focusing on English in terms of the Arabic language and culture as discussed in chapter 3. For the majority of students who attend private schools in the UAE the language of instruction is English. Unfortunately, this is for most of their subjects, which leaves many of them with a contributing lack of vocabulary in Arabic for topics such as mathematics, science, or business. Other than for language class, Arabic is mainly used in Islamic class. However, in some private schools, due to the presence of Muslim students from non-Arabic speaking countries, even religion is taught in English. The problem with this system is that students never really develop fluency with MSA. It is a language studied or used in few classes and not the classes which young people look at as having potential for their futures. Arabic is the language of religion and on rare occasions social studies and history. But when students look at the courses which they have interest in for the future, such as mathematics, sciences, technology, and even business, those are taught in English. Therefore English becomes the language of contemporary life, the future and success, while Arabic is relegated to a nether region of speaking with family and for religious purposes. This lack of a strong connection or bond with MSA has likely led to part of their view of Arabic as the major affiliation to their Arab identities.

7.4 Summary of Arabic language and identity

In terms of the Arabic language being an identity marker, as noted above, about half the respondents on the survey indicated this to be a fact; however, their later responses in addition to the interviews seem to obviate the role of Arabic as a strong or pre-eminent marker for an Arab identity. This contradicts the discourse of Arabic and what some scholars continue to believe about Arabic being the defining feature of Arab culture and society. The Arab youth in this study did not reveal that Arabic is a unifying language nor a major identity

marker. These findings confirm the conceptual understanding of identity construction as being more open and fluid presented in chapter 3. The data, both from the questionnaire and the interviews, point to a less rigid definition of what marks an Arab identity, than that which is consistently portrayed in the discourse of Arabic in the region. Arabic was discussed as a “way to communicate” and as a “way to express ourselves.” Overall, the information that was gleaned through the survey and interviews revealed that students do not have a major connection or understanding of their Arab identity as wrapped up in the Arabic language. They have an innate flexibility with the two languages and use them depending on the conversation or who they are with. Some days at the university may be filled with more English, but on other days more Arabic. The two languages are seen as balancing each other within their lives, and using English has not changed their views on their Arab identity. They view their Arabic as a resource, a commodity, used to facilitate communication as discussed in chapter 3.

The general tone that emerged throughout this study is that these Arab youth are fairly certain they are made up of many parts, which combined give each of them their unique Arab ethnic identity. When given the opportunity to discuss their own identity, most of them did not see it as one-dimensional, but were able to point to a variety of elements that helped describe who they are as Arabs, thus, revealing the complexity of determining what constitutes an Arab identity.

7.5 Uses of Arabic and English

Research question 2 sought to determine if the participants felt that they used Arabic less than English on a daily basis and if they had any concerns about how much English they used versus Arabic. Due to the consistent discourse of Arabic, lamenting that Arabic and Arab identity are being ‘lost’ because of the encroachment of global English and globalization; these questions were important. I wanted to interrogate this situation from the point of view of those who use the two languages.

However, I am not interested in why they do what they do with each language. That was not at the heart of my study. I only reported on use because it exists,

and must be acknowledged. I was mainly interested in how far Arabic is needed for Arabness. I used this claim to cross-check; I was verifying that they do use English a lot. By getting that information from them, I learned that they don't have concerns about using so much English because if they did they would try harder to use Arabic. There is no real tension for these students, they aren't concerned, and they use English often because it is a language of communication.

Many contradictions emerged at different stages of the research process, revealing the continuous complexity of this situation. The participants had contradictory responses between their claims or feelings about their languages and what they were actually doing with their languages. There are things that people believe about themselves and their lives, but which are not what they do in practice. It was for this reason that the study examined their practices in addition to what they claim they do. For example to understand why a person, who claims to express him/herself best in Arabic, would then consistently agree that English is spoken "sometimes" with parents and siblings. One would think that in the realm of the home people are most at ease and at liberty to truly express themselves. I would assume that young people have spent most of their lives communicating with their parents and siblings, and I was therefore surprised that English was slipping into these students' conversations so easily. If the Arabic language has not become the singular language of the home, then it is not likely that it will become a stronger or more permanent language in the future. However, there does not seem to be any acknowledgment that what they are doing, i.e., choosing English over Arabic, is in anyway harmful to their spoken Arabic or their identity. This ability to choose either language and decide when they will use them reveals the prominence of agency for these individuals (Canagarajah, 2004). These participants are knowledgeable agents who choose languages and are able to justify their choices. These findings confirm the conceptual view of agency discussed in chapter 3.

Although the students did not point out a real preference for English, what came forth from the discussions is that English carries more interesting information and is more readily accessible, this is similar to what Ronesi (2011) found in her study (reported in chapter 3). By this they meant that things they

could find on the internet were superior in English, films that they want to see are in English, much of the music they have interest in has English lyrics, etc. It appears that English has been absorbed into their lives by virtue of the many things it brings to young people. They have chosen to engage with so much English because today's technological world revolves around English. For this current generation of young Arabs in the UAE, English has been inherent since they were very young and shows no signs of diminishing in usage. They are essentially living in an environment where they are "straddling" linguistic and cultural boundaries on a daily basis, as discussed in chapter 3.

Several of the students talked about how they grew up with Disney stories (Sara, 6.5) movies and characters on television (Appendix 3), while they were still in primary school. They even had books which were written in English at that time, and this may be an indication that Arabic could be suffering in terms of producing interesting and lively readings for young Arabic speakers, as their parents chose English over Arabic. However, it may also just be the parents' intense desire to ensure their children had a strong foundation in English. Since the appearance of English arrived so early in the lives of most of these students, there is very little concern, on their part, about its role in their lives. Most of them feel very comfortable with English and the amount they use it. Nearly all of those interviewed revealed that their writing in English is better than their Arabic (Elias and Sara, 6.5) and they felt better able to write and express themselves in English. Only Basma and Noor (6.5) showed any conviction in their Arabic writing skills. The reason Arabic has a limited place in most of their lives revolves around the many occasions they can use English.

7.5.1 Arabic and the family

The one area where Arabic still maintains some hold and prestige is when students speak to their parents or extended family. In those instances, most of the participants noted that Arabic was nearly always used. However, even in those situations there are times when English is spoken. Sometimes this occurs with siblings, depending on the topic. However, in several cases the students noted that they always speak English with their siblings and they really did not have a rationale for this behaviour, but it just seemed to happen. In one case Rania pointed out that her brother is very interested in boxing and this is

one of those topics where English is used because she doesn't know how to say "left hook" or "sucker punch" in Arabic. Other times conversations with siblings that involved university studies, school, or recent films might lead to the conversation moving to English. All of the participants acknowledged that when older people were involved, especially grandparents, they definitely used Arabic on those occasions, which echoes Ronesi's (2011) study (chapter 3), in addition to the argument that the family domain is crucial when studying plurilingual behaviour as role-relations are paramount, as discussed in chapter 3. Particularly in a collective society, there are rules which must be followed due to societal roles.

7.5.2 Why English is used so much: concern or opportunity?

The way the interviewees discussed their use of both Arabic and English revealed that they do not think either language is important enough for them to be concerned about it. For them, the two languages are resources and they use each one depending on a variety of factors in addition to various needs they wish to communicate. For example, the topic under discussion may warrant one language over the other; which is situational. The results reported in chapters 5 and 6 confirm this conceptual understanding found in chapter 3. As an illustration, taboo topics such as sex, are usually discussed in English as young Arabs feel that the words in Arabic are too heavy in terms of meaning. Other times it is when they wish to discuss something related to their studies that they switch to English. By having two languages they also have more opportunities to share ideas in both languages. They are able to let English speakers know more about their Arab culture through the medium of English. This factor was echoed by the women in Ronesi's (2011) study wherein students used both verbal and written English to challenge narrow minded views about Arabs. Generally, the feeling one gets after speaking to these students is that a language is just that: a language (Eastman, 1984). There does not appear to be any extreme views tied to the need to only speak Arabic or use Arabic more than English, or be careful in which venue each language is utilized. Instead, these participants show a maturity about their two languages that is revealed in how they are able to use both languages, how they are able to justify their need for both, and also how they decide when to use which language.

They seem to have reached a point where they understand their need for English, in terms of the situation in which they find themselves, i.e.: their studies, entertainment, and even daily life in the UAE. Even though the findings regarding how much English is used, even in the home, especially with siblings, were surprising, the students were not disturbed. They had a rationale for why they used English with family members and even with their parents, based upon the conceptual framework of situation as seen in chapter 3. From the topics under discussion, for which they do not have the extensive Arabic vocabulary they might hope for, to code-switching without giving much thought to what they are doing, these students consistently had reasons for using English in their conversations with other Arabic speakers. Much of this, points to a fluency and flexibility with both languages, which should be considered positively, as these students are bilinguals who switch from one language to another depending on a wide variety of factors, both social and situational. Furthermore, on their plurilingual campus where they study, they require English with many of their classmates. These youth are fortunate enough to have two languages in which they can converse; unfortunately it is yet to be proven that they are excellent writers in both languages, as many of them said they were not. However, their ability to switch fairly effortlessly between the two spoken languages is, and will continue to be, an advantage for their futures.

Perhaps the strongest rationale for why these students see English as something they need in their lives comes from their responses to the statement: “speaking English will give me better opportunities for the future.” Not one single student disagreed with this statement. This is in line with Norton-Peirce’s (1995) and Bourdieu’s (1992) contention that they seek to “increase their cultural capital.” These Arab youth are aware of what they need to succeed in today’s global market. They realize that global English is going to help them get ahead. As Noor argued, Arabs cannot hold back globalization or the need for global English and they only harm themselves when they choose to remain unilingual in a globalized world. Her point is well taken; the opportunities for those who speak English open up incredible prospects, especially for those in the Arab world and the Gulf region specifically. English is practically a requirement for daily activities in addition to studying at universities in the UAE.

Therefore, despite the fears that some governmental agencies and the media continue to spread about a loss of Arabic, there is ample evidence that global English seems to be helping Arab youth. If they seek a job outside the Arab world they will definitely require English or another language.

Despite the fact that most of those interviewed claimed to be quite fluent in their own Arabic dialects, two students indicated that they would have been unable to have had the interview conversations we engaged in, if they had spoken in Arabic. Rania and Maysoon both specified they did not feel strong enough in Arabic in terms of the topics we discussed and the vocabulary they would have needed. This can occur due to a lack of consistent use of Arabic, which was discussed in chapter 2. Being surrounded by English from a very early age has led some of these young Arabs to have obvious gaps in their Arabic. It is these types of findings that as a researcher and language teacher, I find disturbing. I feel it is a shame that some Arab students in the UAE today do not feel as confident as they should in their mother tongue. English is not their native language; yet, each of them has an incredible facility with the language and its nuances, which is unfortunately not always present in their Arabic literacy. Despite this factor, very few of them seem terribly perturbed about this situation and, in fact, they don't look at Arabic as in anyway being the true marker of their Arab identity or that of anyone else. So from the viewpoint of the current younger generation in this particular study, this is certainly not a situation to be concerned about in terms of their Arab identity. In fact, they are not overly worried about their lack of literacy in MSA.

7.5.3 Concerns over use of English versus Arabic

Despite the overall view that using a lot of English is not a detriment to Arab identity or Arabic, for most, due to its place as a heritage language for these Arab youth, some students did voice concern about language loss.

The few participants, who claimed that English is used too much, had several viewpoints for why maintaining their Arabic was important. Sara (6.5) noted that having less Arabic made people unable voice their frustrations, because her own anger and frustration always come to her in Egyptian Arabic. Yousef (6.4) claimed that by using English all the time a person is expressing him/herself as

an American or British person. He saw code-switching as a weakness. Yousef seems to align himself with the importance of the link between language and inheritance (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997). For him, Arabs should hold on to Arabic as they are born into the language and therefore it should be central to their lives. However, as noted in chapter 3, when discussing inheritance, for some people language is just a superficial marker (May, 2008). Furthermore, based on Auer (2005), we have to keep in mind that sometimes code-switching really has nothing to do with identity construction.

Finally, Mohamed (6.6) worried about his written Arabic, especially in terms of his future job prospects. He further has concerns about any children he may have in the future and wonders how their Arabic will be in a world so focused on English in the classroom. His point about writing in Arabic is certainly one to be concerned about, since these students reside in an Arab country and in most of their home countries Arabic is still the language of business. Mohamed was also worried about his future family, and I think with good cause. In a world of global English, especially if he remains in the UAE, families need to work extra hard to ensure their Arab children obtain the needed Arabic they require to get along. However, these concerns revolve around the usage of Arabic and not Arab identity. Therefore, despite worries over the ability to maintain enough Arabic for a career or even for future generations, the notion of Arab identity is not necessarily compromised by a lack of Arabic, as evidenced in this study.

7.6 Summary of chapter findings

My findings reveal several reasons why Arabic tends not to be a major marker of an Arab identity for this particular group of Arab youth. It begins with the diglossic situation of Arabic, at the very start of their educational lives. As children they encounter MSA at school, in fact, learning a second language which is quite spectacularly different from the dialect they use at home. Beginning their academic careers with a language that is very different from what they speak often begins a lifelong problem with MSA. This factor is hardly an auspicious beginning for developing a strong enough attachment to a language to believe it is the sole marker of an Arab identity. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 3, inheriting a language does not always ensure any positive feelings for that language.

Global English is another factor which tends to preclude Arabic from being a major marker of an Arab identity for this group of Arab youth. This is due to the strong grasp on English that these students have. Essentially they are bilinguals, and this goes back to concerns discussed in chapter 3 regarding how are bilinguals or plurilinguals supposed to choose which language forms their identity? Since the participants in this study are bilinguals, in that they can speak fluently, and read and write both English and Arabic, their reliance on only Arabic as an identity marker raises problems. Since they can move seamlessly between the two languages, who then decides which language is their identity marker? In a globalized world of bilingualism and plurilingualism, it defies logic to believe that one language equals one's identity. And specifically for this group, English is not harmful at all. They see it and use it as a resource for communication. These Arab youth have experienced lifestyle changes as migrants living away from their home countries. This has led to them having hybrid identities which are informed both by what they encounter in the world and the experiences they live through. In addition, agency allows them to reveal their identities through different linguistic norms than those that are assumed to reflect their ethnicity.

The discourses of Arabic, globalization, and education were discussed as they effect the identity construction of Arab youth in the UAE because as conceptualized in chapter 3 discourses essentially are a means of identity construction. These particular discourses were all pertinent to how the participants viewed their own identity construction. The discourse of Arabic was originally founded upon the nationalist movements in the Arab world of the 1950s and continues today through the schools, nations, mosques, and families. However, despite its attempts at convincing Arab youth of its place in their Arab identity; those in this study remain skeptical. Globalization, though usually viewed as negative or "Americanization" by Arab society, has not been completely accepted by the students in this study, as many of them are able to differentiate between those parts of globalization which are useful to them and those parts which they can choose to ignore. Education was central to all the interview discussions and most of these students had concerns about the

dominant role of English in the classroom and the poor way that most of them saw Arabic as being taught in the private schools, which they attended.

7.7 Implications of the study for an understanding of the relationship between language and identity

This section will discuss the contributions this particular study has made to the understanding of the relationship between language and identity. The first thing that I noticed was that these participants had difficulty in articulating their identities; they responded differently on the questionnaires than they did in the interviews, and therefore this research was extremely challenging. These Arab youth revealed agency in how they constructed their Arab identities, while rejecting any attempts by others to determine what made them Arabs.

The immediate contribution of this study allows me demonstrate that my starting point has been backed up by the data. I began by interrogating and contesting the current emphasis on global English as being responsible for language loss and a sense of Arab belonging. The study shed light on whether young people, Arabic speakers whose educational lives are full of global English in the UAE feel that their sense of selves as Arabs is under threat. I was able to tease apart the concern over loss of language versus erosion of identity. I found that language is part of heritage in this study, but I also discovered that language loss does not equal identity loss. These students had many ways of expressing themselves as Arabs. Using English is not threatening their identity, nor is Arabic even a significant part of their identity. My study has in some way stripped apart the whole discourse of Arabic and Arab identity. That belief is founded on ethnolinguistic identity, which no longer holds for this group of young Arabs.

The findings of this study reveal that this particular group of Arab youth living in the UAE maintains an Arab identity that is made up of a variety of factors. Most of the participants were unable to claim one specific factor as the marker of an Arab identity, and that includes the Arabic language. It became clearer as I interviewed participants that the role of Arabic as an identity marker was first, not paramount in their opinions, and second, was not necessarily a requirement for an Arab identity. In today's world with globalization and global English being

a part of young Arabs' lives in the UAE, the role of Arabic is now a functional one, it assists in communication, as does English. But Arabic does not hold any type of special role in constructing an Arab identity, nor do the participants feel their sense of selves as Arabs is under threat due to English use. Their sense of identity is not one dimensional or based only on language, thereby indicating they follow a more post-structuralist approach to viewing identity: as fluid and including power and agency, which confirms the conceptual understanding as discussed in chapter 3. For this group, their identity is not foundational, but something that they are able to produce through the stories they tell which helps them explain their lives.

This study is significant because it addresses the need for more insight into the topic of language and identity in societies underrepresented in the literature. My study looks at the link between language and identity in the Outer Circle, where there remain gaps in studies. The results of this study have the potential to specifically contribute to an understanding of the roles of Arabic and English in education that inform the work of policy makers, decision makers, and educators in the UAE and the wider Arab world. The findings can provide a useful counter point to the existing rhetoric on language and Arab identity construction and thereby help with understanding about the extent to which EMI should be viewed as a concern afforded by the insights into the impact of global English that these young people offered through the study. The study does bring up some challenges to the broad role of EMI, since several of the participants did voice worries over language loss, which should be of concern to all.

There is certainly a need for more studies similar to this one, wherein the researchers understand the enormous complexity of looking at ethnicity, language choice, and identity. I think future studies would be well-placed in other universities in the UAE where the students do study in EMI institutions but their English is not as fluent as those of the participants in my study. Further research could determine if proficiency is a factor here. There may be different views of Arabic and Arabness found amongst students who do not use English as much or as well.

My research has shown complexity in view of the discourse of Arabic and Arab identity. This study has revealed a deeper theoretical understanding of identity and language in a globalized world. It has found that young Arabs in the UAE do use a lot of English and use each language at will. They use so much English not only because of EMI, but because globalization and global English are leading people to be plurilingual. This group is representative of what it means to be a young contemporary Arab. Language for this group is used as a form of communication, much more than as the major factor in their identity construction. In fact, in the UAE most Arabs are accustomed to conversing in English at some point. However, this does not stop them from being or feeling Arab.

These findings reveal that this particular group of students is not contesting their identity. They did not talk about power or hegemony or post-colonialism, which are terms used by many when discussing language and identity, especially Arabic and identity. What my research has found is that this influx of English in their lives is not problematic for these young people. There does not appear to be a struggle for these participants about where they belong; they are able to co-exist in the hybrid spaces which have opened up for them through globalization. In addition, they seem comfortable and able to take on a variety of identities without feeling they have abandoned their Arab identity. Language choices in this study are not borne out of sites of struggle, but are a normal part of living in a multicultural and plurilingual society, as is the UAE. This ties in with the concept in chapter 3 about the importance of agency in identity construction, and that we must not assume that agency only comes about through struggle, but can also come into play in normal circumstances. Furthermore, there is no struggle over which language they should be using nor how much English is used as opposed to Arabic. At the emotive level there does not appear to be any emotional significance attached to the use of either language.

This study has revealed that language choices and identity construction are not problematic in a plurilingual world, which we are headed towards, and people are finding it is quite easy to live in this manner. It does not mean that ethnic affiliations are destroyed; in this case the participants still affiliate strongly with

being Arabs. The structuralist ethnolinguistic perspective on identity looks at this situation as problematic due to its view of the tie between ethnicity and language as conceptualized in chapter 3. However from a post-structuralist perspective language choice is not a problem or a battle. People are making sense of themselves in a globalizing world, and their language choices are a resource, not necessarily a signifier or marker of an affiliation. In this particular study some of these students are even using English at home, which does not negate the role of family.

Furthermore, most of the participants felt that those who do not speak Arabic, yet identify themselves as Arabs, should be accepted as Arabs, even without the language. Some gave the rationale that anyone can learn Arabic, thereby giving entrance to non-Arabs. These results appear to confirm the concepts regarding “language expertise” and “language inheritance,” which were proposed in chapter 3. I am actually an example of one who inherited Arabic, without having any expertise in the language. My Arabic is not fluent; however, I feel strongly connected to my Arab heritage. Therefore this issue is clear to me. I ask how we can mandate that identity resides in a language, when there are those who have never grasped the language fluently despite having “inherited” it. This current generation of Arab youth seems to be more understanding and accommodating of the fact that an Arab identity does not necessarily demand fluency in Arabic. Furthermore, the participants indicated that if people act like Arabs and embrace and reveal Arab culture then they can be considered Arab. This finding further confirms the conceptual understanding in chapter 3 that a person’s knowledge of a particular culture, allows that person membership in the group. This finding is also in direct contrast to the discourse of Arabic found in the UAE and as discussed in chapter 2.

The participants in this study, a new generation growing up with globalization and global English, are much more open to the notion of what makes an Arab than their parents’ more traditional generation. For this group of students, there is a belief that if a person feels Arab and accepts and understands the Arab culture, then he/she can be considered an Arab, even without Arabic. How one behaves and tries to fit in and be part of the overall Arab culture, is something which these youth are willing to accept as being Arab. This belief is rather

revolutionary in the Arab world. This particular group of students may have a different understanding and acceptance of this phenomenon, but for any Arabs to accept the notion of an Arab being one who may not speak any or much Arabic, is quite novel, although this finding did have some similarity to Badry's (2011) study (see chapter 3). Since I have heard the discourse of Arabic so much during my life, I was quite surprised that Arab youth would be so open about who could be considered an Arab. However, much of this is probably due to the new world in which they are living, surrounded by plurilingualism brought on by globalization. Several of those interviewed talked about their cousins or family members who do not live in an Arab country. They feel certain that their family members, no matter where they reside, should be considered Arabs. Although they acknowledged, in some cases, their Arabic might be limited or even non-existent, they accepted the fact that one can feel Arab without having fluency in the Arabic language.

My contribution to this topic on language and identity in the Arab world is to push people to see that individual perspectives can reveal things through reality rather than through the rhetoric of Arabs and Arabic. It is too simplistic and structuralist to continue to say that Arabic is the equivalent of an Arab identity. Through this study, I challenge and offer an alternative way of thinking about the topic, both in terms of the rhetoric of Arabic, but also in terms of the theoretical understanding of the post-colonialist view (see for example Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 2011) that global English brings with it negativity and detrimental issues. My data gives concrete empirical evidence about the place of Arabic and identity and reveals English to be a language of opportunity and a resource but not necessarily a destroyer of Arab identity.

Finally, my work raises questions about whether or not there is a necessity to halt the spread of English or EMI in the UAE, since my study shows that using English does not stop people from being Arab. Using a lot of English is not influencing or taking away Arab identity, regardless of the many writers and scholars who attempt to make this point. These participants have allowed me to look at the place of English in the UAE in a different light. Instead of the grave concerns over the negative effects of global English somehow leading to an identity crisis in the Gulf, I discovered that using English is not something Arab

youth are concerned about. They do not have any major anxiety or worry over which language they use. These participants are multilingual speakers who have the ability to use different languages for diverse purposes. These students, in this particular group in the UAE, have found their place in our globalized world where both English and Arabic can co-exist, and they can still maintain their Arab identities. However,

The debate that Arabic and MSA are gradually being lost is a separate issue from Arab identity. What my study has shown is that it may be time for some in the UAE to relinquish their belief that Arabic and Arab identity are tied and have a special relationship. However, the concerns over EMI perhaps leading to a weakening of Arabic or the loss of Arabic, is relevant and should be addressed. If it is EMI which is leading to why some of these participants claimed that despite their Arab identity holding firm, they were feeling that their Arabic was not as strong as it needed to be, then it is the issue of EMI and Arabic language which needs to be further discussed. Overall, this study can provide important alternative perspectives on the ways in which language impacts identity.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusions and recommendations

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will conclude this thesis by considering the contribution this study has made to understanding the relationship between language and identity that it sought to interrogate among Arab youth residing in the United Arab Emirates. I will also make a number of recommendations for future research on the basis of my findings. Finally, I will end the chapter by reflecting on the research process and my personal learning journey.

8.1 Summary of the study

The purpose of this thesis has been to report on a study of Arab youths' perspectives regarding the relationship between Arabic and the construction of an Arab identity. My goal was to obtain an impression of how important or relevant these young Arabs believe the Arabic language to be in constructing their own identities. I undertook this study due to the current situation in the UAE; wherein, there has been an ongoing furor by the media, members of the Ministry of Education, and the public over a perceived loss of Arabic and Arab identity, due to global English and globalization. I wanted to investigate this situation to determine how representative it is for the Arab youth who use both languages. I wanted to discover if, in fact, university-aged Arab students saw their Arab identity as dependent on the Arabic language, or if they had other markers which help them construct their Arab identity, including English itself. By going to the source, the young people who use both languages and are at the heart of the current 'crisis,' I gained a clearer understanding of the situation from their perspective. By interrogating identity from a post-structuralist standpoint, I had an understanding of identity as fluid and flexible. From my analysis of the data generated, I discovered several interesting findings about this particular group's understanding of their Arab identity and the markers which they believe help them in constructing that identity.

Some of today's Arab youth in this study seem to be parting, in small ways, from the cultural norms in which they are expected to remain. With all the input they receive from the outside world in terms of technology, entertainment, and

the media they are offered a different world from the more traditional one they are often expected to reside within and whose rules for an Arab identity they are expected to embrace. Popular culture, through the media, is giving people the opportunity to see how different other people's lives are from their own. Today's world has more resources that allow people to construct identities, and the students in this study are able to utilize the resources in addition to being able to decide for themselves which parts of an Arab identity they wish to take ownership of.

The Arabic language, although very important for the older generations as a major marker of their Arab identity, doesn't necessarily hold the same meaning for the young Arabs in this study. The Arab youth in this study do not seem to see the connection between their native tongue and their Arab identity. For many of them language is just a means of communication. However, what must be noted from this study is the complexity found in young Arabs as they define their Arab identity. The participants gave multiple reasons for their Arab identity and revealed conflicting information between their perceptions about their identity and how Arabic was relevant, and their actual usage of Arabic and English.

These students are a dissimilar generation, they have lived and experienced very different things than their parents' generation, and consequently how they look at Arabic, English, and globalization is different. They are comfortable with the present world and its sometimes western notions, and therefore have no major fears or concerns about what it might do to their identity or Arabic. In fact, they seem quite strong in their ability to maintain their Arab culture, traditions, and language on their own or with their parents' guidance.

For young people, they show remarkable flexibility and resilience in their global world. They are not sheltered nor are they overly attracted to all of the novelty that comes through technology and entertainment. They seem to have found the common ground between their Arab identity and their ability to integrate themselves with what global English and globalization offer. They realize the opportunities are there, and they plan to take advantage of such prospects. However, most of them realize where their roots are and plan to remain

grounded within their Arab traditions, but without being narrow-minded about what that means.

8.2 Contributions to knowledge

I began this study to discover what role, if any, Arabic had in the construction of an Arab identity. I believe the study has made a number of useful contributions to knowledge. It has highlighted some important facts about the relationship between language and identity generally, and more specifically about that relationship in the Arab world.

One important issue this study has revealed is that English does not appear to impinge on the ability of participants to claim an Arab identity, even if it has also shown that English is here to stay. What this study has shown is that Arabic is not the main factor required in the identity construction process of young Arabs in this particular study. However, the study has also revealed the need to be vigilant about the place of Arabic in the lives of young Arabs in the UAE. There were some concerns about the loss of Arabic brought up by these students. And although we must be careful not to conflate a loss of language with the loss of an Arab identity, it is still important that care be taken to ensure that Arabic, which is an important heritage language, does not continue to lessen in usage for Arab youth in the UAE. Although this particular study did not find many students who felt overtly negative about English, this may have been due to the location of the study at an English medium American curriculum university.

8.3 Recommendations

One thing we must keep in mind when looking at this particular group of participants, is that they are mainly migrants, have studied English for most of their educations, and finally have chosen to study at an American university. Therefore, they do not represent the majority of Arab youth in the UAE.

In our globalized world, it is essential to commit to further research on those who are migrants, because their numbers are growing and the way they look at their own identity is going to be different from those who remain at home. As Croucher (2004) argues, we cannot ignore the amount of people who move

across borders today, because that consistent movement lends to the “deterritorialization of identity and belonging” (p. 38). The majority of the Arab youth in this study were migrants and their experiences and views on identity were quite unique.

I think there are two possibilities for future studies. One could take place in the UAE with Arab students who have less proficiency in English, to determine if the strong English language skills, inherent in these participants, were part of the reason for the findings of this particular study. Secondly, another future study based on migrant Arab populations in other Arab nations would be important to gauge their feelings on the notion of Arab identity. This study could perhaps be duplicated in Qatar or Oman, both of which also have large numbers of Arab migrants living within them. Furthermore, in view of the many refugees who have fled Iraq and Syria over the past few years, with large numbers ending up in Jordan and Lebanon that too may be an interesting research area. However for refugees their personal views may be very different from those in the UAE who have settled here as migrants, not necessarily running away from war zones.

In addition to further research on migrant Arab youth, a study on the role of hybridity in constructing an Arab identity would also add value to research in this region. It would be interesting to focus on this issue with the many diaspora Arab groups we now encounter in the Arab world. The impact of war and upheaval in Iraq and Syria in addition to the continuing positioning of factions in the Arab Spring nations, has led to a growing number of Arabs fleeing their homelands to find security elsewhere. Those who have moved to other Arab nations would make fascinating studies on how they and their children will adapt to their new homelands, even if the country is Arab and Islamic, and how the children will view their Arab identity once they are older.

8.4 Personal reflection

From the outset of this study, as with any other research, I have to acknowledge that it comes with a number of limitations. When I chose the methodology, I did so after considering other possibilities such as: focus groups, email questionnaires, different types of surveys, etc. I considered the

possibilities carefully within the context of the study, and the final methodological choice was made based on logistics and practicality in addition to the types of information I was seeking. The approach I utilized had its strengths and weaknesses, but those can be modified for future studies.

Other issues which must be taken into account include generalizability and reliability of participants' memories. Since the study took place at a particular university in a specific local, the results may not be generalizable to a wider population. It is also important to note that the findings of this study were based primarily on participants' perceptions of their experiences.

There were quite a few outcomes from the surveys and the interviews that surprised me. I was quite amazed that several of the participants declared they did not have an Arab identity. That was elaborated on in chapter 7, and I believe I was able to clearly present their rationales for why they felt that way. I was able to understand their feelings from our conversations, and at that point I realized that perhaps these findings weren't so surprising after all. The lives that these young people live are conducive to sowing some confusion about where one fits and to what identity one feels he/she belongs.

Additionally, I was surprised that some of the interviewees indicated that they would have been unable to have the same conversations about their language and identity in Arabic. For them, the depth of the subject matter and the vocabulary required would not have been readily available in Arabic. I was a bit shocked by this because I had been under the impression, mostly due to my conversations with students, that they could discuss anything in both languages, as they felt fluent. But this finding revealed that their fluency in Arabic is not as strong as they would like to believe. Not only was I surprised, but quite concerned. It is sad to think that despite their excellent English skills, these young people may be losing their hold on their native language.

Although I have done research in the past and utilized interviews for my MA TESOL degree, this current study expanded my knowledge about carrying out qualitative research, helping me to develop as a researcher. This section will briefly outline my learning journey through conducting this study. I learned the

most and feel that I developed the most as a researcher through the interviewing process. I discovered that I had to be particularly careful about my personal feelings regarding the topic in order to not affect the data collection.

Overall I was fortunate in terms of my ability to carry out this study. Since I used students from my university and relied on my colleagues for assistance, I saved myself the administrative issues of dealing with other institutions. Therefore, I was pleased that the types of students I wanted to engage with in my study were available at EAU, and that my university's administration supports research.

Finally, my personal feelings on the subject of both Arab identity and the role of the Arabic language in constructing it probably came through in this study. This occurred because "writing about identity may allow the scholar to knowingly or unknowingly grapple with issues of personal identity" (Suleiman, 2006, p. 51). And furthermore, if I had "adopted a tone of ... complete objectivity [it] would in many ways contradict some of the ideas about identity (in particular, ethos)" (Riley, 2007, p. 2). Additionally, I also gave personal examples throughout the study, due to my belief that it helped clarify the subject from my own perspective. This is in keeping with Riley's (2007) claim that "there are times when only a personal example will do, either because it is the only example available, or because it represents the very source of the idea being expounded [upon]" (p. 2).

This experience was tremendous for me as a researcher. I know that I am still a beginner, but I feel strongly that what I have gained from this project will be useful in the future and help me be a better and stronger researcher. As a qualitative researcher I have grown and learned a lot. I am sure that the new skills I developed through this process will serve me well in future qualitative studies which I plan to pursue.

Finally, I am hopeful the research carried out in this study will stimulate further inquiry into this topic on language, identity, and globalization. As globalization continues to be a major factor in our world and EMI expands with it, there is certainly room to increase our knowledge on how they both influence and affect

identity construction, both in the Arab world and beyond. However, as mentioned earlier, it is important that any future studies regarding Arabic and identity be careful to avoid conflating the issue of losing Arabic language skills with losing one's Arab identity.

Appendix 1
STUDENT SURVEY

Language Use and Identity Construction among Arab Youth in the United Arab Emirates

Please fill out this survey by *circling* the most appropriate choice or *ticking* the blank that best describes your response. Your answers are confidential.

Academic year: Freshman Sophomore

Gender: Male Female

Your nationality: _____

Your native language: _____

Section I: Defining Arabness or Arab Identity

I consider my identity to be mainly an Arab identity

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

If yes, in what ways? Please tick all that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Nationality
<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ethnicity – Arabness
<input type="checkbox"/>	Culture
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family

I consider my identity to be based on my Arabic language

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>
To some extent	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why or why not, please elaborate:

The Arabic language is a defining feature of being an Arab

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

Why or why not, please elaborate:

I believe other factors determine my identity as an Arab

Yes	
No	

Please expand on what those other markers are that identify someone as an Arab.

Section 2: Use of Language

SA= strongly agree A=agree N= neutral (neither agree nor disagree) D= disagree SD= strongly disagree

	SA	A	N	D	SD
Speaking English has affected my interpretation of world events					
Speaking English has affected the way I relate to my family					
Speaking English has affected my attitude towards Arab culture					
Speaking English has affected my attitude towards Western culture					
Speaking English will give me better opportunities for the future					
Speaking English makes it difficult to maintain an Arab identity					
Speaking English makes me feel distant from my Arab culture					

With my friends I speak

	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
English				
Arabic				
English & Arabic				

With my parents I speak

	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
English				
Arabic				
English & Arabic				

With my brothers and sisters I speak

	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
English				
Arabic				
English & Arabic				

At the university I speak

	<u>All the time</u>	<u>Most of the time</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Never</u>
English				
Arabic				
English & Arabic				

Section 3: Language Use & Identity Construction

When it comes to my culture I consider myself

	Mainly Arab
	Equally Arab and Western
	More Western than Arab
	Neither Western nor Arab

I prefer to read newspapers in

	Arabic
	English
	Both English and Arabic
	Other

I find that I think better when I use

	Arabic
	English
	Both English and Arabic
	It depends

When it comes to expressing my feelings, I prefer to use

	Arabic
	English
	Both English and Arabic
	Other

The language that really expresses who I am best is

	Arabic
	English
	Both English and Arabic

Using English in my studies

allows me to express my ideas more easily
doesn't make a difference
makes it difficult for me to fully express myself

I consider myself belonging to both Arab and western cultures

Yes	
No	
Both	

Section 4: My views on globalization

Globalization has changed Arab culture

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

Globalization is harmful to Arab culture

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

Globalization is harmful to the Arab identity

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

Globalization is harmful to the Arabic language

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

I have concerns that I speak English more than Arabic

I strongly agree	I agree	I disagree	I strongly disagree
------------------	---------	------------	---------------------

In order to complete this research, I need several students who are willing to be interviewed on this topic and who are willing to discuss their responses to this questionnaire.

If you are willing to be interviewed, please put your first name, email address and a contact number below. Please note, all information that I obtain from you, both from this survey and through an interview will remain CONFIDENTIAL. Your name and ideas will never be made public. Thank you for your time.

Yes, I am willing to be interviewed:

First NAME: _____

Email: _____

Mobile: _____

Appendix 2: Interview themes & questions

Theme 1

Students' self-perceptions of having an Arab identity and what they feel it stems from.

(Questions 1 – 4)

How do you see yourself or understand yourself as an Arab?

Would you describe yourself as an Arab?

Why/why not? What aspects of yourself make you an Arab?

Is Arabic what gives you an Arab identity?

What other factors might determine an Arab identity?

Which ones are the most important for you? Why?

Theme 2

How do students use both English and Arabic and what sort of effects do they feel from the consistent use of English in their lives? (Questions 5-15)

Students generally seem happy to code-switch or code-mix, why do you think this is so?

Does switching languages feel as though you are losing touch with Arabic?

Are you very aware when you code-switch?

Are there any major reasons that you think cause you to code-switch?

Are there certain times when you only speak Arabic or English?

Can you tell me some of the scenarios where you choose to use a certain language?

Do you know why you choose that language?

Do you have any idea why you use English so much? (Remind them of survey responses #5-15)

As a bilingual you can make a choice about language, can you explain a little about how you think those choices occur?

Do you think that the way you use English and the amount of time you use speaking English is a problem for you as an Arab? Why/why not?

Does too much English speaking have any effect on your identity as an Arab?

Can you give me examples of when you code switch?

Theme 3

How is language use important/unimportant or an issue/non-issue in their identity construction as Arabs? (Questions 16-22)

How is language an important part of your identity?

Is speaking Arabic a major part of an Arab identity?

Can someone who does not speak Arabic fluently be considered an Arab?

Can someone who speaks NO Arabic be considered an Arab? Why/why not?

When you speak in Arabic do you feel that you are revealing your Arab identity?

How about when you speak English, does your Arab identity still come through to the person you are conversing with?

Most students indicated that the language which best expresses who they are is Arabic; do you feel this to be true?

If this is true in your case, is there a reason that you still use English quite often, even with family and those who are native speakers of Arabic?

Theme 4

What are the students' views and opinions on globalization? Is it positive or negative for them? Why/why not? (Questions 23-27)

What do you think of globalization?

Why do you have these feelings about it?

Does globalization affect your identity?

Does it affect your Arabic language?

Do you sometimes think something is bad for your heritage or culture, but not bad for you personally?

--If so, how do you step back or disconnect from this feeling when it comes to you personally?

Appendix 3: vignettes of interviewed students

Adel

Adel is a 19-year-old Emirati who is studying accounting at EAU. He arrived at the interview dressed in jeans and a shirt; he was not wearing the typical traditional Emirati white *kandoura* (long white cotton robe). He had a ready smile throughout the interview, except when discussing items which seemed to bring him some concerns. He attended an Arabic-medium private school in Abu Dhabi for 12 years before joining the university. Adel's English speaking skills are truly exceptional; he is almost native-like in his pronunciation and has an extensive vocabulary which he uses with great facility. He has had the opportunity to travel extensively around the world with his family, always acting as the interpreter due to his English. His many travels, love of reading in English, and his friendships with people from many nationalities, religions, and cultures have all affected his views on Arab identity, his own in particular.

Basma

Nineteen-year old Basma is from Saudi Arabia and is majoring in international studies. Despite being from Saudi Arabia, where wearing the hijab is mandatory, her long hair was not covered. Even though she completed all of her education, prior to university, at Arabic schools in Saudi Arabia, her English was almost flawless. Her ability to turn a phrase and use idioms, was quite remarkable for someone who did not spend her early years in English medium schools. When asked about her English she acknowledged that her parents had sent her to summer camps over the years to learn the language. It was apparent that those camps were quite successful for her. Although her family is from Saudi, Basma lives in an apartment alone in Sharjah, not in the dormitories, and has her own car. She said her parents are not as traditional as most in Saudi, and have entrusted her to take care of herself.

Elias

Elias is a 19-year-old from Lebanon, who is majoring in business. He looked a bit like a typical western college student in his faded and ripped jeans and a t-shirt with a rock band logo. Elias is Christian and grew up in the UAE. He has never lived in Lebanon, and only goes there to visit. He speaks a lot of Arabic,

partly because neither of his parents are fluent in English, his mother speaks Arabic and French, and partly because he feels strongly about the language. He also maintained that all his friends are from Arab countries, so he therefore prefers to speak in Arabic. He attended an American curriculum school in the UAE, but some of his classes were in Arabic until grade 9, those included religion, geography, social studies, and history. However, after grade 9 everything was taught in English. Elias's English was not extremely fluent. He has an excellent grasp of the language, but it is not as fluent as others who were interviewed.

Lujaine

Lujaine is from Iraq originally, but has lived in the UAE since she was nine. She is now 19 and majoring in accounting. Lujaine had very measured speech and gave a lot of thought to her responses. Her English is excellent and she claimed that at one time her Arabic had been better than her English skills. However, it seems that after grade 9 English as the medium of instruction "took over," and from then on her English became her stronger language. She is able to move easily between English and Arabic, but prefers speaking English with strangers as she feels it gives her more distance from them, while her Iraqi dialect seems more "intimate."

Maysoon

Maysoon is a 19-year-old mass communication student from Palestine. She arrived at my office in jeans and a simple sweater. Maysoon's entire life, in terms of geography, has been quite fragmented. Although she considers herself to be Palestinian, she was born in the United States, lived there for five years, and carries a US passport. She then moved to Jordan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and finally the UAE. She attended American schools all her life, while studying Arabic only as a subject in the Arab countries she lived in. She acknowledged that her formal Arabic was not strong at all, although her colloquial spoken Arabic is fine. She felt that her writing was much better in English and that she preferred reading and studying in English over Arabic. She said her Arabic writing was very weak, especially the grammar. She suggested that it was all the exposure to English in school, television and songs that led her to have better English.

Mohamed

Mohamed is an 18-year-old civil engineering student from Iraq. He came to my office and waited at the door after knocking quietly. He made sure to ask if he was welcome to come in for his appointment. Mohammed spoke very quietly and chose his words carefully as he talked about his background. His family moved to the UAE when he was very young and he attended Arabic schools. His English is fairly strong, and we had no problem getting through the interview. However, Mohamed said he usually speaks Arabic, and he prefers to do that. It bothers him at times that some of his Arab friends continually switch into English during conversations, while he tries to maintain his Arabic. He only speaks Arabic at home with his family, although he voiced some concerns that his younger brother tends to use a lot of English. Yet, despite his continual usage of spoken Arabic, he insisted that his English writing is much better than his Arabic. He is not sure why, but indicated that even though he was in Arabic schools, not much emphasis was placed on writing and the English courses he did take actually focused on writing.

Noor

Noor, is a 19-year-old young woman from Palestine, who is majoring in mass communication at EAU. She was born in the UAE and attended English medium schools until graduating from high school. She has excellent spoken English with barely a hint of an accent. She said people had commented on that before, but she just feels she is “good at languages.” She felt very strongly about her Arabic and insisted that she keeps it up by writing in Arabic; her favorite pastime is writing poems and stories. Noor also shared that she is a diabetic, and has been very vocal about the disease in the UAE. I asked her if it would be okay to share this information in my study, even though she has a pseudonym, and she very willingly agreed. She gives presentations at various conferences in the UAE and other Arab nations in both English and Arabic. She feels very strongly that she is a role model for diabetes, as she reveals how it is possible to live with the disease and carry on with life and attend university. Noor prefers to speak Arabic with Arabs and continues in Arabic even when her friends switch into English.

Rania

Eighteen-year-old Rania studies finance and is originally from Iraq. At first she did not make a lot of eye contact, but by our second encounter she seemed less intimidated by the entire experience, and looked at me more directly. She had moved to the UAE as a child and her academic background was spent in English medium schools. Although she voiced a preference for Arabic and thought of it as her mother tongue, she had to acknowledge that some days she uses more English than Arabic. Furthermore, she felt that her spoken and written Arabic were both weaker than her English. Rania can hardly recall when she didn't know English, as she pointed out that it all started with Disney cartoons and reading English books as a child. She conceded that even with her parents, both native speakers of Arabic, they often mix English and Arabic. Rania carries dual citizenship, Iraqi and Canadian, although she has never lived in Canada.

Sara

Sara is from Egypt and at 18 is studying journalism at the university. She was the most animated of all the students I interviewed and acted very comfortable from the moment she sat down. Sara has lived her entire life in the UAE, but travels back to Egypt quite often to visit her grandmother. She attended English medium schools and contended that at one point her Arabic became very weak. Her English skills were quite exemplary and her vocabulary very extensive. She revealed that in school all the girls wanted to be like the teenagers on the Disney channel. Sara said she rarely spoke Arabic during those years and if anyone spoke to her in Arabic, she responded in English. Now that she is in university she has started practicing her Arabic writing and is trying to improve it. Part of this was due to the Arab Spring and her desire to be a journalist in both languages; she realized that being able to write to an Arab audience was important and therefore she had to improve her Arabic writing.

Wafa

Wafa is a chemical engineering student from Libya, who is 18. She moved with her family to the UAE when she was eleven. Prior to that she studied in Arabic; however, when she came to the UAE she attended an American school where Arabic was just a taught subject. Wafa wears the Islamic hijab and her clothes

were very modest. Wafa's English was excellent, and she said that her English writing is also quite good and much better than her Arabic. She indicated that she only liked to speak Arabic in her Libyan dialect, which is notoriously different from other dialects, and finds that very few people understand her. However, she is unwilling to speak in other dialects, so she chooses to speak in English. She argued that she only needed her Arabic to read the Quran, and therefore had no worries that she used too much English at other times.

Yousef

Yousef is an Emirati national majoring in business; he is 19 years of age. He arrived at my office wearing the traditional white kandoura and a red and white checked keffiyah on his head, with the aghal, dark braided rope, holding it in place. He had attended English medium schools, as very often Emirati parents believe this is the best way to ensure a good education for their children. Yousef had excellent English speaking skills, but had an avowed love of Arabic. Despite his love for Arabic, he admitted that his MSA was quite weak. He speaks the local dialect and several other dialects, but felt his writing was poor. He first noticed his reduced Arabic when he arrived at EAU and started worrying about his language and its relationship to his identity. However, his concerns pushed him to start writing his own blog in Arabic, which he seemed very proud of and it is helping him improve his Arabic writing.

Yusra

Yusra is a 19-year-old Christian from Syria, she is majoring in management. Yusra spoke excellent English and claimed that since she had attended English speaking schools her whole life, she felt very comfortable with the language. Actually, she pointed out that she rarely spoke entirely in Arabic; she always had to use English words to fill in the gaps in her Arabic. However, both her parents grew up in Syria and studied in Arabic, but the years in the UAE seems to have made all of them use English. She grew up in the UAE and insisted she very rarely visited Syria, which made her feel there was a rift between her and her Syrian culture and identity.

Appendix 4: original open codes

Ethics
Abrahamic religions
Food
Dress
Arab culture more conservative than Western
Listening to Arabic music
Orientalist music
Not average Arabic music
Arabs listen to western beat music
Arabic lyrics
Algerian music
Experiences are identity
I am Arabophone
Mediterranean
Muslim
Egyptian
Cuisine
African birthplace
Geography
Culture is music
Marriage
Marriage involves family
Colloquial Arabic
Twitter Facebook
Social media
Learned to type in Arabic
Write articles in Arabic
Tweet in Arabic
Read Arabic books
Concern with Arabic
Limiting languages stupid
English different and beautiful
Lucky to speak two languages
Arabic not just for joking around
High school not cool to speak Arabic
Youth tried to be Lizzie McGuire/Raven Disney characters
No Arabic until 8th grade
Father angry at no Arabic
Answered Arabic speakers in English
Went to Egypt
Saw museums
Realized importance of history
Importance of Arabic
Speaking Egyptian
College students still think Arabic not cool
Some college students realize Arabic to be used
High school where English spoken in all classes
Students speaking English even in Arabic and religion classes
Most Arabs understand Egyptian Arabic
Media sends out Egyptian Arabic

Since Egyptian revolution more interest in Egyptian Arabic
Tweets in Egyptian
Jokes about dictators in Egyptian
Joke that we speak in English with Arabic alphabet
When word unknown in Arabic type in English
Using Arabic keyboard with English words
Using English words, like computer, in English during Arabic conversation
Stuttering in Arabic conversations
Beginning sentences in Arabic, ending in English
Code switching just happens
Sometime code switching necessary
Conversations with friends in English
French words in Egyptian Arabic
Aware of code switching
Sometimes not aware
Speak Eng and Arabic with parents
Parents speak Arabic
Mother speaks in Eng when angry
Discussing university speak English
Discuss American politics in English
Egyptian politics in Arabic
Not practicing Arabic
Using Arabic more
Translating Tweets
Egyptian elections
No Arabic means missing inside jokes
No Arabic missing frustration
Thinking in Egyptian
No words in English describe frustration
Rant in Egyptian
Want to be an Arab need to work on Arabic
Should not destroy own language
No incentive from Arab leaders to improve Arabic
NGOs work to preserve identities
Outside people concern over Arabic
Person Arab if in heart feels Arab
Culture makes an Arab
Arabness from parents
Using Arabic
Process to improve Arabic
Blogging in English
Globalization fostering intellectual terrorism
Glob = colonization of the mind
No equal spread of cultures
No people in America saying "habibi" like Arabs say "babe"
Cultural glob catastrophe
Technological glob best thing for world
Cuisine affected by glob
Clothes affected by glob
Arab culture stopped evolving
Vacuum filled by western culture
West concerns with Islamism

Arabs should not care what west thinks
Youth in Arab world go with flow
Youth won't try to change anything
Glob made Arabic weak English stronger
Glob let me speak two languages
No mastery of Arabic
Understand Arabic, writing not good
Few youth work on maintaining/strengthening Arabic
Learned Arabic grammar
Forgot Arabic grammar
Only Arabic class in Arabic
Arabs tend to forget they write Arabic poorly
Arab youth think speaking is enough
Egyptian revolution effect
Being a journalist
Writing in Arabic to reach masses
Wish to write Eng and Arabic well
Write in Eng for international audience
Public officials in Egypt
Sorrow for those with poor Arabic
Need to be convinced at loss of Arabic
Parents speaking to children in English
Parents speaking bad English
Friends with bad Eng and Arabic
Give children the Arabic language
Definitely not only Eng with children
Teach children both
Anger with father in past
Now understands Arabic must be used
Mom tries to convince in Eng
Engagement
Grandmother
Arab culture get engaged
Egyptian girls want marriage
Would marry any nationality
For parents religion matters
Converts to Islam
Differences Muslim/Christian brothers
Conviction of religion
Different nationality good
Different culture good
Way of dress, okay personally, bad culturally
Clothes let culture go
Harem pants
Teachers in Abu Dhabi from UK
Govt hypocritical about Arab identity
So many western franchises
Starbucks
No Arab brand coffee
Hold own identity
Push out western culture
Born into Arabic family

Kurdish mom, lived in Baghdad
Language is key
Use English more
Globalized world uses more Eng
Educational system in Eng
Easier to use Eng
Eng not mother tongue, but easy
Islam big role with Arabic
Nationality not important
Passport not sign of identity
Origins important
Family makes identity
Origins history of Iraq and Arabs
Roots define
Decent colloquial Arabic
Can't express ideas in Arabic
Speak normal Arabic
Can't write Arabic well
English expresses more in writing
Better grasp on English
Arabic has different formal/informal
Learned Eng from Disney
Arabic mostly home
Films in English
Books as child English
Like to write in Eng
Switch to Eng when no word in Arabic
Can't translate Arabic poetry
Speak both with parents
School topics in Eng
Casual speech in Arabic
Code switching the norm
Code switching happens
Not much thought in it
Saying "yani" a problem when speaking Eng
Eng has affected Arabic
Eng has not affected identity
Eng does not make less Arab
English global language
Arabic not global
Preserving Arabic by avoiding Eng not good
Arabic language hard
Not much interest in Arabic
Arabic weaker
Arabs with no Arabic not authentic
Cousins raised in Chicago
No complete Arab identity
Arabic available in UAE
Arabic not suppressed, opps to use it
Arabic in environment
Arabic not vital
English vital

French and Spanish important now
Glob same since childhood
Watched Disney
Good to learn other cultures
Glob not bad
No need to protect cultures
Culture meant to change
Take things from different cultures
Culture not about preserving
Go with the flow
Some things can't change
Be flexible
Arabic not getting attention in schools
Eng is focused on more in schools
Arabic depleting
No Arabic writing courses in university
Higher levels letting Arabic go
Glob not making Arabic weak
Arabs don't think about identity
Either Arab or not
Arabs no conflict with identity
No effect on personal identity
Some people malleable
No need to rebel
Drugs, clubbing, drinking
Effect on Arab traditions
Effects on Arab conservatism
Actions don't change people
Drinking does not make you American
Identity does not change after 18
Could not have this conversation in Arabic
Conversation would not be clear in Arabic
No textbook Arabic
Arabic dialect
Arabic writing weak
Arabic writing not expressive
Feelings expressed better in English
Arabic words not known
Switch to Eng for important questions
Speak Arabic with grandparents/elderly
Eng might offend elderly
Older Arabs think Eng taking away Arab identity
Not in conflict with Eng/Arabic
Eng equipping people
English a must
Arabic fulfils religion and family duty
Arab roots are important
Living in Arab/Islamic country maintains roots
Marriage to Muslim and Arab background
Arab cultures similar
Conflict from different backgrounds
Westerners are in conflict with identity

Arabs see selves as Arab
Arabs are a variety
Arab world under pressure
Arabs in political issues
Identity not relevant
Nationality important for many Arabs
Arabs see differences between Arabs
Identity not different
Diffs in culture, traditions, even religion among Arabs
Core of Arabs same
Arabs hard headed
Arab rivalry among nations
Arabic heritage course in English
Mother Kurdish with perfect Arabic
English with siblings
More terms in English
Unconscious switching to English
Use Arabic daily
No day without Arabic
Passionate or angry use Arabic
More passion with Arabic
Super excited in Arabic
Speaking Arabic more spiritual
Arabic lectures about religion
Religious discussions too difficult to follow
Iraqi Arabic
Can't understand Moroccan or Algeria
North African dialects
Arabic dialects are different words
Iraq has words completely different from others
Egyptian understood because of films
Living in Arab/Islamic country no fears for Arabic
Glob not negative effect here
Cousins all over world, Arabic is effected more
No dressing like Arabs even here
Arab identity is choice
Giving up identity is choice
Giving up Arabic is a choice
Westernized after h.s. graduation
Average in Arabic speaking and writing
Fascinated by Arabic
Literature of Arabic influenced by English
New Arabic literature nothing like old
Personality changed by English
Looking into identity
Arabic declining
Blogging in Arabic
Hardship writing Arabic
Arabic writing improving
Sitting at café throwing out English
English to show how educated you are
Using English not showing education

Using English is shaky personality/identity
Culture, tradition, family, religion all influence identity
UAE a feminine society
Care about family and culture
No need to maintain culture and tradition exactly
We can be flexible with culture and traditions
Give own spice to culture, own touch
Personal touch what gives culture
Language part of identity needs to stay
Still learn other languages
Losing language is losing everything
Language is biggest part of identity
Arabic won't die out
Arabs are still Arab without language
Without Arabic torn between East and West
Copycatting others makes identity useless
Copying others makes culture useless
Not having Arabic could be due to political or economic reasons
Arabs without Arabic not at fault
Arabs without Arabic could try to appreciate Arabic
Taboo subjects use English
Using different language still taboo topic
Try to stick to Arabic
In university thinking about Arab identity
Stopped code switching
Controlling code switching
Code switching weakness in identity
You are the language in which you express yourself
Express better in Arabic
Expressing culture easier in Arabic
Hard to translate ideas
Arabic more malleable
Arabic allows manipulation of meanings
White khaliji
Not racism equals plain khaliji dialect
Plain dialect helps others understand
North African people hard to understand
Gulf region Arabs all understand Gulf dialect
Palestinians, Syrians, dialects overwhelming
All understand Egyptian because of media
Switch to Egyptian to be understood
North Africans use French more than English
English only at home for politeness/secretive
Send sibling for more coffee, guests
Campus many students speak English
Course content discussed in English
Speaking one language is killing translation
All English no need for translators
Language is expression
Language should express in mother tongue
Proud of Arabic language
Not matter of prejudice, but of identity

Continual other language weakens mother tongue
Language related to identity
Identity changes shifts from other languages
Stable identity required
Personality may change
Classmate female Saudi too western
Spent time in US
Unable to cope with Arabic
Losing her identity
Cultural values different from Arabs
Contradictory values, language, traditions
Identity comes through no matter my language
Arab speech visible in English talking
Grammar syntax different in Arabic
Clothes and language
Europeans can tell Arabs better than US
Germans and French prefer sign language to English
Americanization
Theory of Darwin
Survival of fittest
To fit, speak English
Be individual, don't think of others
Living in Arab country gives identity
Language is important
Culture is important
Traditions, values of being an Arab
Religion helps stay rooted to Arab culture
Speaking Arabic helps track identity
Being Arab always there, even without Arabic
Speech, gestures show Arabness
How Arabs carry themselves
Mixing English and Arabic
Mix being Arab with being Muslim
Islam part of our culture
Most Arabs celebrate Muslim holidays
Tradition keeps family first
Family, religion, culture
Arabic was better than English
High school English took over
All studies in English
Arabic and Islam in Arabic only
Writing in Arabic suffers
Speak Arabic with friends and family
Mix English with Arabic
Speak Iraqi dialect
With father only Arabic
Mix English Arabic with siblings
Arabic with grandmother
Speak English gives distance
Speaking Arabic is intimate
Dialect in Arabic more friendly, personal
Family topics in Arabic at home

Movies, things at school mixture
Switching just happens
Must consciously stop mixing
Learned English grade 4
English simpler for writing
English easier to express self
Arabic very complex
No mastery over words
Private English school affected Arabic
Being Arab is about feeling Arab
Arabs abroad have own communities
Culture remains strong
Family important for Arabs
Holding on to culture is personal choice
Globalization not forcing people to be
Young kids might copy TV – just a phase
Growing up realizing copying is silly
Glob cannot affect those living in Arab country
People choose parts of glob they want
People mature
Fuss over Arab identity not real
Glob and Eng not changing Arab identity
Attachment to Arab roots
Identity is identity
Finding yourself is silly
Feel very Arab when travelling abroad
Montreal people not welcoming
Judging people based on scarf (hijab)
Offended
Felt more Arab
Arabs don't judge tourists
Canadians judged Muslims
Westerners can't recognize Arabs without hijab
Man saw her aunt (scarved) crossed himself
How is this religion
Arab identity stronger abroad
Nothing Arab should offend people
Being a different religion does not offend UAE
90% of UAE population outsiders
Iraqis don't differentiate based on religion
At Iraqi embassy speak only Arabic
At US embassy only English
English on campus
With friends Eng and Arabic
Start Arabic throw in English
English just flows in
Not consciously using English
One day Arabic only day at home
English with cousins
Effort to speak Arabic at times
Worries about not enough Arabic
Harder to come up with the words in Arabic

Univ major only English words
No Arabic terms for major
Hard to give synonyms in Arabic
Not a main concern about Arabic
Arabic with family
Forgetting big words, but still speaking
Secure in Arab background and language
Using lots of Eng no effect on Arab identity
People around might date, wear too western clothes
People go to questionable places
Things some won't do
People can go with the flow
Some people don't mature
In Iraq no young people wear national dress
Wear abaya to mosque only
Emirati abayas fashionable
Family and religion affect us
Traditions, culture affects,
Glob not affecting
Glob not affecting dress, speak, act
Common language is good
Glob helps in progress
No need for fuss over identity and natures
People don't change without permission
Nothing changes without allowing it
Concern over children being raised by nannies
Not a problem, raised by nanny
Mothers teach values by example
Fathers don't need to be explicit
Young people know right from wrong
We should not assume they are not smart
Globalization as excuse for lack of parenting
Children with blackberries, spoiled
Technology is progress
Children don't need phones
Distracting to children
Not nurturing family relationships
Glob is affecting what parents think is okay
Arabic does not have to be focus of being Arab
Kurdish grandmother, learned Arabic, feels Arab
Kurdish grandmother feels an Arab identity
Grandma forgets tells stories in Kurdish, forgetting Arabic not end of her Arab
identity
Different diversities of Arabs
Speak Arabic most days, not as much as before
Mixing of nationalities
Need for English, even with Arabs
Lifestyle, clothing, food, many things make Arabs
Arabs have changed, between Arab and western now
We go to desert, try to do what grandparents did
Mostly though, western things: dinner, malls, cars
Arab identity a mix, no longer pure

Arab mix everywhere, but strong in UAE
Too many nationalities in small country
Facing different cultures, nationalities daily
In Iraq people more Arab
Iraq has not taken on western culture
Speak Arabic in Iraq
Iraq not as open to world
UAE open, too open
Speak Arabic with friends, some prefer English
Some friends don't speak Arabic well
Not just language makes an Arab
If they have culture, act like Arabs, they are Arab
Switching languages just happens
English just comes into the Arabic depending on situation
With family only Arabic
Different dialects with different Arabic speakers
Those Arabs who speak mainly English, spent time in West
British friend learned Arabic here
Studying in English easier
Books about math, science, physics, easier in English
Speaking in Arabic better, comfortable
No worries of using too much English
Arabic a part of identity, not all
Culture part of identity, religion, family
Arab identity cannot be removed by English
Writing better in English
Speaking better in Arabic
All projects in university in English
No Arabic classes, no practice
Concern for future job prospects with Arabic writing
Glob has changed Arab dress and language
No concerns for self
Concerns for future generations and children
Arab identity for future could be lost
Lost through schools in English, no one will go back to Arabic
No one to blame for glob, it just exists
Glob has affected college age students
Speaking English to Arab friends
Those around influence languages spoken
Youth get used to western dress and English
Even in Arab countries Arabs change
Locals dress western speak English
Choose westernized friends
English language and being western are 'cool'
Young Arabs show off by dress and English
Some young Arabs friends only with westerners
Parents can't influence current generation
Children get what they want from parents
Identity more than language
Choose to hold Arab identity
Others choose to act differently
Nationality not strong part of identity

Living in UAE more influence on identity
Where you grow up effects identity
Nationality of schools can change identity (Arab vs. Western)
English is not taking anything away
English is useful for future
Any future children will speak Arabic
Eng does not affect Arab identity
Use English when abroad
Palestinian is identity
Arab is broad term
Muslim is party of identity
Nationality first, Palestinian
If not wearing hijab, would say Muslim first
Culture, traditions, foods we eat, non-verbal communication all reveal Arab identity
Youth have lost Arabic
Youth do not know how to use Arabic
Youth has slang/dialect, but not standard Arabic
Youth uses English
Arabic writing good because practiced
Arabic main language for speaking
Lang is a part of identity
How we use our language describes us
Not speaking Arabic still allows a person to be Arab
Origins remain Arab
Arabic language helps a person feel more Arab
Nationality important for Palestinians
Palestinians want to belong to Palestine
Religion an important marker
Spoken and written Arabic good
Write poetry in Arabic
Can express in written Arabic better
Arabic richer than English
Code switching natural
Unconscious
Saying "okay" while speaking Arabic
Some dislike Arabic language
Sad that Arabs disrespect their language
Say Arabic useless, stupid, English is world language
Strong Arabic no worries about using English
Not wearing Arab clothing ok, losing Arabic lang not okay
Youth think English 'cool'.
Glob, modernization, things on the web, tv, all in English
Arabic put down
Media portrays Eng as better
Arabic must appeal to youth
Not appealing to youth in Arabic will result in them moving to Eng
Nannies from foreign countries with no Arabic
Nannies make children lose Arabic
With bilingual friends, only Arabic
Write speeches in Eng and Arabic
Lecture on diabetes in Eng and Arabic

Depends on audience, which lang to use
Arabic at home
Helping sister with English, correcting her
Family happy with Eng, but Arabic spoken at home
Some families encourage only English, thinking it 'awesome'
Children end up with no Arabic
Encouraging children that Eng is better
Writing poetry stronger in Arabic, more expressive
English poetry has feeling
Arabic hard to learn, grammar hard
Glob affects us, we choose which parts to take
Lack of trust of media as seen through glob
Glob helps us learn about others
Glob allows us to meet others from different places
Even Islam teaches we must accept other people
When we were young spoke Eng lots
Get older understand Arabic important
Fear maybe stops people from going back to Arabic
Fear of rejection, for being different
People decide to accept glob
Some of us use glob for technology, modernization
Some change through glob, only use English
Some people absorb glob in their lives replace their identities
The govts are responsible for too much Eng in schools
Govts should not blame glob for Arabic loss and identity loss
Govts put the laws in place, they control it
Loss of identity can be controlled
People need to stop worrying about not speaking Eng
Wearing western clothes does not remove identity
Palestinian clothes don't make me Palestinian
Major culture parts are way of thinking and language
Being an Arab woman has helped as diabetes ambassador in UAE
Others with diabetes can relate to me
Potential to help people
Being an Arab woman different than before
Arab women can be leaders now
Women get respect, people listen to us
Queen Rania is a queen and role model
She is Palestinian
She does good things for her country, Jordan
In the UAE of past, men went to sea, women handled everything
At that time, women were leaders, but it was not said
Now it is different, women are accepted in leadership
Because of media Arab women are misrepresented
Westerners should come for a visit to see Arab women
Brought up in Arabic environment
Learned English at 11
Communicated in Libyan dialect
Family tries to communicate in Arabic
Traditions are Arab
Celebrate normal Muslim holidays
Muslim first, then Arab

Can't call yourself Arab when speaking, reading, English
If not Muslim, Arabic would not matter
Koran in Arabic, so must hold on
As a child only Libyan dialect, weak MSA
Nationality is important, would say Libyan before Arab
Arab culture oppresses women
Arab culture uses religion the wrong way, against women
Example: Saudi women can't drive
Laws past as religious are not, laws cultivated through culture
Don't associate with Arab culture
Must follow religion, no need to follow culture
Changing culture not a problem
If culture changes, could get better
Western women have more rights, if that changes here, better
MSA not that good, but Libyan dialect strong with family
Written Arabic not good, English school from grade 6
Arabic with parents, mixture with sister
Speak English on campus
Will not speak other dialects to others, chooses English
Libyan dialect identity marker, does not like to use others
It is "weird" to speak another dialect
Speaking other dialect takes away Libyan identity
So few Libyans here, strong attachment to dialect
Arabs ask if Arabic even spoken
Code switching happens even with parents
Studying in English for years, mind programmed to English
Not practicing Arabic all time, forgets terms
Social gatherings, normal talk, all in Arabic
Scientific talk, university issues in English
Writing in English better
Tough to write in Arabic
Must write in MSA, not dialect
Do not read in Arabic
Younger sister finding Arabic harder
Sister whole life English schools, no grounding in Arabic
See kids now who barely know Arabic
Schools focus on Eng too much
Arabic classes too hard on students, too grammar
Arabic courses hard, failure probable
Kids don't like Arabic, too hard
Arabic classes teach useless things
Arabic classes no basics
Arabic teaching dull
Students zone out
Never learned anything in Arabic class
Did not see any purpose in what was taught
Told to write essays, never told how
Arabic classes make kids hate Arabic
Don't like how Arabic taught
English teaching methods more fun
Too much English no problem for Arab identity
Concerns that too much Eng will lose Arabic for younger generations

Kids speak more Eng than Arabic all the time, problematic
Own Arabic fine, not going to be lost
Religion more important than nationality in the end, marriage
Not a Libyan, no problem
Dialect not understood on campus
The Koran as linked to Arabic important, but not MSA itself
Need to be able to read Koran
Those who moved west, Arab-Americans, Canadian-Americans, still Arab
They are half-half, but can still be Arab, they choose
Some youth, parents both Arab, but they claim "American" or "Canadian"
If they want to consider selves Arab, fine, choice.
Arabic not important in being an Arab or feeling Arab
If they feel Arab in terms of culture or traditions, then Arab
Language isn't everything
Arabic holds only part of identity
Cannot tell someone he/she not Arab because speaks no Arabic
Mentality identifies an Arab and Muslim identity
Religion before language as identity marker
English easier to express self
English easier, written and spoken
Glob positive, helps people know their rights
Glob gives women ability to know rights, they don't question
People can use technology of glob to protect selves and rights
Glob empowers women
Media cannot sway you if you don't want to be
People choose to change
You only change if you want to, don't blame glob
Media doesn't make you lose identity, you choose to
Clothing is superficial part of identity
Your beliefs are what matter, your faith
Clothes and your friends are not identity
Wearing western clothes does not mean western mentality
Culture dynamic it changes over time
Glob let's people lose their identity if they want to
Girls take off the hijab or abaya, because they want to
Some people sneak behind parents' back to change
Youth who are oppressed may change, they don't feel part of their culture
Glob can help those change who don't feel attached to parent's culture
Government not emphasizing Arabic
English taught more interesting than Arabic
Why doesn't govt change Arabic teaching methods?
Help people actually learn Arabic and enjoy it
Methods of teaching Arabic terrible
Parents must instil beliefs, if not, change inevitable in children
Some parent oppressive
Daughters go overboard when they leave for university
Youth turn wild if oppressed for long time
Stopped believing hijab meant certain type of girl
Hijab means nothing, appearances can fool you
Appearance not indication of faith and belief
Westerners also affected by us, they not concerned
In high school many students of two different nationalities

Arab women confused about identity as Arabs
Arab women need to know more about their culture and rights
Men take advantage of Arab women
Women need to know their rights to be proud to be Arabs
West portrays Arab women as oppressed
Arab women have thoughts, can think, drive..
Arab women need to feel comfortable being Arabs
Give a good impression of Arab women while travelling
Show world real Arab women
Women don't want to change, afraid of change
Women afraid to stand up to men
Conversation with father about running for president of Libya
Father negative
Asked is this against Islam? No, then why a problem?
Men say 'no' without reasons and expect to be followed
Mother graduate from law school, knows her rights
Men use religion as an excuse, but really just men being men
Language, Arabic, values and culture, and Saudi nationality are identity
Nationality not first, mixture
Identity is not my language
Arab first, where I live
Identity made up of many things
Identity is combination of things
Identity is whatever surrounds me
Arab filter, keeps what fits identity
Experiences are identity
Proud of Arabic, because language of Koran
Being Muslim source of pride
Holy book scripted in Arabic
Write Arabic fluently
All years of school in Arabic
English learned during summers
Science, maths, social sciences, all in Arabic
Watching movies in English, reading, travelling helped learn English
Saudi dialect close to MSA (foos'ha)
UAE dialect has Iranian and Indian words
Code switching when excited
Words just pop up in either language
Arabic with family
With sister mixing Arabic and Eng, usually topic related, movies, studies
If elderly around must speak in Arabic
Terms in my major (politics) unknown in Arabic frustration
Disappointed when Arabic terms not known
Depends on where people from if chooses Arabic, Sudanese words are taboo
Chooses English to be on safe side
Choose the language that will avoid misunderstandings
No worries in speaking lots of English
Arabic fluent
Reads, writes Arabic fluently
No issues with grammar, others have problems with that
Learned to love Arabic from father not school
Reading all courses in Arabic strengthened understanding of grammar

People can read or watch movies to strengthen Arabic
Express political thoughts better in English
Family, friends, Arabic is the language
More meaningful word in Arabic
Written Arabic better than Eng
Beautiful Arabic script
Glob affected us, by trade, clothes, bag, studying in an American university
Glob affects where we eat, travel, what listen to on radio
Glob only negative short time when young: copying Disney female characters
Age 17, 18 realize importance of Arab identity and culture, bonding with parents
Family structure not as strong as could be in Gulf
Fathers working too much, mothers too busy with gatherings
Consumer society, not producers, so men must work hard
Women want everything
Kids get lost in middle
Not much bonding with parents
Parents needed to get kids through glob
Kids need to be nurtured until certain age, 18
Picking major at university first decision
Values are changing in Arab world
Way kids act today; don't want any
People balance between modernity and tradition
Values are internal
Appreciate the trust given by parents
Parents must give reasons to children for why can't do things
Parents must give time and energy to discussing with children
This is missing in today's Arab culture
Worse in the Gulf, losing parental input
Parents showing off consumer goods, not taking care of kids
Govts not worried about Arab identity, all about trade
Govts say Eng a problem, without Eng no jobs
Parents open-minded, not to extremes
Marriage would have to be Muslim, nationality not important
Mother's family all women treated equally to males
When abroad nationality matters, Saudi
Saudi women are protected, not unhappy or oppressed
Rules are made to keep us safe
We need consent of males to travel, for safety
Not driving is a problem, but all other issues are for us
Laws in Saudi are out of protection and love, not oppression
Some just arguing for sake of arguing
Values make you an Arab not language
Sharing same values makes a group
Even Arabs speaking Arabic don't understand each other's dialects
Describe self as Palestinian
Lived in Gulf all life: Bahrain, Saudi, Jordan
Muslim part of identity
Speaking Arabic only a part
Experiences are more reflection of identity
Nationality important especially because from Palestine
Language just a way of expressing self

Experiences, nationality, Islam are identity markers
Language does not make up personality or identity, just way to express self
Arabic not as good as English, especially proper Arabic (MSA)
Colloquial Arabic fine, proper Arabic weak
Written is even weaker than spoken MSA
Writing horrible, grammar errors
Exposed to more Eng through TV, songs, university, everything
Work on English more daily, not Arabic
Took Arabic as second language in school
Understands MSA, can watch news
Can speak Palestinian and Egyptian dialect
Code switching often, just happens
Word unknown in Arabic, switch to English
English mostly on campus
Friends from Egypt and Sudan, easier in English
Mostly Arabic with parents, especially mom
English with sisters
Arabic with brother, parents focusing on his Arabic
Parents saw Arabic weak in children, brother trying more
Eng usage not a problem in terms of identity
Eng just method to express self
Losing Arabic would be bad for Arab identity overall
Losing a language a shame for all
Arabic important for Islam
Arabic not necessary to be considered Arab, but depends on culture
Behaviour reveals Arabness
Actions more important than language spoken
Like to be identified as Palestinian
Listens to English music, hip hop, mostly English
Some Arabic songs, most English
Globalization has affected my opinions on mixing cultures
Parents would only want me to marry Palestinian, I am open
The media has an influence
Glob has affected Arabic in negative way
Exposure to majority of English media
Arabic almost died
Arabic not as strong as could be
Getting worse over time
Father worries about Arabic accent if she marries non-Palestinian
Outside of nationality same as different culture
Parents used to family tree of Palestinians
Friends from mixed backgrounds, no problems
Random combinations among friends
Express self better in English
Spoken and written
Mom's English not great, Arabic with mom
Arabic with grandparents
Concern over Palestinian heritage
Does not want to lose it if marries another nationality
No concern over clothing, outer symbols of nationality
Only religious symbol, "Allah" necklace
Actions and behaviour reflect culture more than language

Arab identity lost through overly nationalistic tendencies
Countries become like separate identities
Everyone so proud of nationality, becomes dangerous
Becomes a nationality competition
Arabs perceived as being separate entities instead of whole
Nationality negatively impacted Arab identity
Different dialects, cultures, nationality, all separated us
Racism between Arab cultures affects our unity
Parents send to English schools for best education
American education better than Arab
Government schools to some extent protect Arabic
Students take classes all in Arabic
People go to international schools to compete on global level
Palestinians tend to be more educated than other Arabs
Education all they have
Incident at American school in Saudi, teacher says "show me Palestine on map"
At a loss for words
Turning point, wanted to be able to prove identity as Palestinian
School in Saudi like a separate city
Like a small America
First time identity tested
Palestine literally not on the map
This is example of experience that forms identity
Could have said "I'm American, because have US passport"
Some Palestinian/Americans feel closer to US: US gave them something, Palestine nothing
US gave them a home and culture
Never been to Palestine, mom from Jerusalem, dad from Nablus
Two generations since we went there
How we are raised fosters sense of identity
Mother a proud Palestinian, encourages debate
Mother educates children on Palestine
Queen Rania bright educated
Rania does lots for Jordan and women
Arab identity part of my personality, not all
My personality includes lots of other things
What parents taught mostly Arab, but have learned lots from books, internet
Feel sort of western, internet influenced by western society
My experiences with other people influenced me
Not just an Arab persona
Speak Arabic with family, mixture with friends
Don't stick to Arabic just because I am Arab
Arabic not a marker for me
Those who feel Arab are Arab, no need for language
Not into culture and traditions
Not convinced of the whole Arab persona
Religion is still part
Culture and traditions not strong in me
My religious practices different from father, who is more conservative
Keep an Arab face when with family
Feel different when not with family, more myself

Dress local only to keep parents happy, they would be disappointed with me
Disappointed that I don't feel strongly Arab
Don't mix much with my siblings
Interaction with lots of different types of people
Can't mix with those who only stick to Arab culture/mentality
Friends have Arab passports, but are like me, don't mix well with other Arabs
Arabic good, studied for 12 years
Code switch often, easily, unconsciously
Anything related to major (engineering) in English
Arabic mainly at home
Only one in family with very good English
Interested in things in English, video games, books, movies
English does not make him different, what he reads in English is what influences him
Not convinced by traditional culture in UAE
Learned not to discuss or disagree with people about tradition/culture
Expresses self better in English
Never enjoyed Arabic, always grammar
Hated the grammar, studying Arabic in school terrible
Arabic methods of teaching are horrible
In English opinions elicited, never in Arabic
Write better in English
Terrible at speaking MSA, excellent in dialect
Still easier to express in English
Worried will have to live in Al Ain to work, more Arabic use there
No problems with amount of English used
Has no affect on his "identity" which is not even fully Arab
Neither language part of identity, they are just way to facilitate communication
It is wrong to say Arabic is my identity
Speak in English when myself
Even with friends mostly English; friends from all over
Globalization has affected everything
Depends on how people react to it.
For me it is positive
Family extremely conservative, glob gives me opportunities
Gave me English
Don't need an identity label
Some people are negatively affected by glob, but not my case
People choose to keep their traditions and culture
People can change their culture and traditions, so what?
If people want to stick to traditions, then they can
If people don't want tradition, why can't they leave it behind?
Losing Arabic is bad for the language, but not bad for the person
Arabic is being used less daily, but it is just a language, a means of communication
You can communicate in English just as well as in Arabic
Can't share true feelings of identity with family
If abroad describe self as from UAE
Would fit in better in Europe than here
Tradition forces sameness, wants to be an individual
Fear if marriage, must marry local
Wants to break free, get away from life in UAE

There are other young Arab males in same situation as him
Arab in name only
Raised in UAE away from country, among different nationalities, cultures
Not raised in home town
Lived between different countries
No roots, blending
Born in UAE, but family from Syria
Follow some western traditions, don't feel weird with that
No need to follow everything Arab
Feels international
Traditions would only follow marriage, parents would have to approve
We don't follow specific traditions of Syria
Arabic is first language, but mixes
With family mixes English Arabic
Don't have perfect Arabic, sad
Both parents studied everything in Arabic in Syria
Daughter studied all in English in UAE, only Arabic class
No specific reason for feeling Arab
Born in Arab country, family Arab, raised here (UAE)
Stuck between east and west
Environment influences who we are
Most friends are Armenian, speaking English
Spoken Arabic okay, written not good
Last time wrote Arabic two years ago
Try to read Arabic books in summer
Parents not concerned about her Arabic
Parents realize raising children between/among different cultures
Worried will lose Arabic
Constantly speaking English
Can't come up with words in Arabic
Arabic plays a part in identity, but not all
Arabic part of our history, and roots, losing Arabic losing some of those roots
People are identified by their language, by others
When I speak Arabic I am revealing my Arab roots
If I lived in Syria would speak much more Arabic, everyone speaks it there
Here in UAE everyone speaking in English
Govt here should introduce more Arabic
Why does govt put so much English in schools?
Govt can't blame anyone for losing Arabic, but selves
Arabic should be taught first and English as second language, along with other languages
Globalization allowed my family to travel here
It does affect, when I go to Syria feel like a stranger
Everyone so traditional, I feel weird
Traditions, culture, language all is different
Don't want to go back there
Surrounded by so many different things, lose who we are sort of
If we all are speaking English, then what identifies us?
Globalization makes us all kind of boring, kind of similar
Many young people detached from home traditions and culture
Our family does not do anything traditionally Syrian
Glob is a choice, you choose to be affected

It is good in that it introduces new things
You learn things
People need glob to understand the world
People can still maintain their traditions
My identity is my own list, things I follow: religion identifies me right now
Christianity is part of my identity and how I live my life.
Religion the one tradition you can't lose
Wherever you go, religion goes with you
Young people are losing their religion, not going to church and classes
Religion is personal and I want to hold on to it
Glob bad for family bonding because everyone is busy
Young people today think only about money
Born raised in Arab country, Arabic language, feel Arab
Language makes us Arab
Speak good Arabic
MSA Arabic not so good
Very poor Arabic writing
Can read Arabic, writing not so much
Arabic teachers were bad
Most courses in English
After grade 9 nothing in Arabic except Arabic class
Not really aware when code switching
Sometimes can't find exact Arabic word
With friends Arabic, whole group speaks Arabic
Prefers to talk in Arabic
Speaks Arabic with parents and family
Parents not that good in English
Family is what holds them to Arabic
Sister tries to speak English with him, he refuses
When discussing major (management) mostly in English
Not worried about his Arabic, uses it often
Glob not harmful, you choose what you want from it
Glob not forcing you to do things
Behaviours are choices not glob
People choosing western culture, Arab traditions will vanish
Being born in UAE, not attached to culture of Lebanon
Has not picked up any local culture
Religion not part of identity, if I choose to be good will be
Christian student: no organized religion here
Knowing English not bad, but holding on to your own language is a
responsibility
Schools teach Arabic poorly
Even without Arabic you can be an Arab
Not just language reveals identity
Behaviour part of identity
Behaviour shows where you are from
It's more behaviour than language
Being Lebanese is a marker, proud of it
My nationality is a marker
Starting to visit Lebanon more
Attached to Lebanon
Some Lebanese youth speaking only English even when know Arabic

Appendix 5: Axial Codes

Identity is not related to language

Language is only a tool for communication

Language is just a way to express ourselves

Arabic not an identity marker

Any person can learn Arabic/don't become Arab

Born with an identity not a language

Arabs known for generosity and many other things other than language

Identity is the sum of everything in life, not just language

Identity is made of many factors (sub-heading)

Experiences

History

Origins

Traditions

Family

Culture

Religion

Expressions

Behaviours

Mentality

Nationality

Appearance

Identity is related to language

Identity needs language

Everyone must master native language

Language is a big part of identity

Older generations see Arabic as identity marker

Arabic is the language of the Koran

Arabs are called Arabs because of Arabic

Without Arabic an identity is still Arab

How you feel makes you Arab

Culture makes you Arab

Traditions make you Arab

Commitment to being Arab, no need for language

Knowing Arab history and events makes you Arab

English language use not problematic

English is easier for expression

English writing expresses better than Arabic

No concerns over speaking lots of English

Choice for best education opportunities

English is the language of the world

Family grounds me as an Arab

Arabic holds on through the family

Code switching occurs even with parents

English language use is a problem

People lose their roots

Arabic suffers
Parents using too much English
Speak English even with siblings

The following could all be rationales for why their identity is shifting and changing rather than remaining stable:

Globalization is important/positive

Family and parents' identity protect against globalization
Globalization does not force change on people
Cultures are meant to change
Helps people learn about people

Globalization has negative issues

Arab identity is lost
Arabic being lost
Arab youth are changing
People lose traditions and religion
"intellectual terrorism" and "colonization of the mind"

Arabic in primary/secondary school

Arabic teachers poorly trained
Arabic only for religion and Arabic in private schools
Difference between spoken and formal Arabic
Educational system not behind Arabic
Educational system for Arabic needs to change
Methodologies in Arabic poor
Arabic is taught with mainly grammar, difficult, not fun
Arabic not vital like English

Gender and power

Arab women fear change
Arab women confused about Arab identity
Arab women need to know their rights
Globalization empowers women
Arab women are leaders today
If I get married parents will be involved

Appendix 6: interview with Yusra

Speaker key

LD Laila Dahan

YU Yusra

Color key

GREEN: other markers of an Arab identity

YELLOW: what do Arab youth perceive as an Arab identity, how significant is language?

RED: do Arab youth have concerns over how much English versus Arabic?

BLUE: do Arab youth feel they are using Arabic less than English on daily basis?

GRAY: detachment from culture, traditions, country

TEAL: globalization

OLIVE: code switching

LD Thanks for coming, I appreciate it.

YU You're welcome, I hope I will be helpful.

LD First of all I am trying to determine what makes people, Arab, so would you say you are Arab? And what makes you Arab?

YU Because, like, I was raised between different kind of people, you know, different cultures, different origins and stuff, and I was, I'm never, you know, I wasn't raised in my home town. So it's like I live between different countries and, I don't know, I feel like I don't have my roots, you know? I don't know where I belong. So it's like I'm blending in with everyone. So...

[Does not seem to have a strong sense of who she is; unable to make a concrete determination about being an Arab. Raised in different countries, cultures, experiences. No roots, blending]

LD Where's your family from originally?

YU They're from Syria, but we live here. Like, we rarely go there.

LD Right. So you don't feel that Arab is a word that really identifies you. Do you have another word that identifies you? I mean, people say where are you from?

YU I just... I just say it because, you know, I'm born there, and that's it. Syria. You know? So I don't know. Like...

LD So you don't feel like an Arab, necessarily?

YU Like, if I... I follow some American, western traditions, I don't feel, like, weird. You know, oh my God, no, stick to Arab and stuff. No, whatever. You know? Even the... [Doing western things not a problem]

LD So you feel kind of international in the things that you can do?

YU Yes. [Feeling international]

LD Okay. So what kind of things, in terms of culture, traditions, which countries do you all follow? I mean, do your parents do traditions of...?

YU Traditions would be, like, maybe marriage, like they should know who is he, or they should approve of him, you know, it's not, like, who I want always. You know. It does depend on who I want, but they should approve of him also, you know, Because... it's, I don't think it's more traditional. I think it's like, they're, you know, I'm the little daughter, so they have to, like, take care of me and stuff. But we don't, I don't think we follow specific traditions in Syria, like, maybe Arab, you know, like... they take care of the children more than other, like, I heard an American style, they just kick their children they are at the age of 18 and 21, I don't know, but I think like in here they, at some point they still care about their children, how, how their future will be, so...
[Traditions, marriage]

LD So you think that part of your family is more Arab... [part of family, more 'Arab']

YU Yes.

LD And they will hold on to you as long as you need them.

YU Yes.

LD Okay. So what about Arabic, then, since you don't necessarily fear, feel Arab, is Arab... which one is your first language? What is your first language?

YU Arabic.

LD Arabic.

YU We speak Arabic but mix, like, English and Arabic, like...

LD English and Arabic.

YU I don't speak strict Arab, everything Arabic. Sometimes I feel weird, you know, Because always talking English, English, English. When I come home I speak Arabic and then I say some wrong words and everything, it's like... I don't, like, have perfect Arabic, which is sad.

[Not perfect Arabic, English daily, some concern over limited vocabulary in Arabic]

LD So that's your mother tongue? The puzzling, is that what you were raised with, Arabic?

YU Yes, I was raised with Arabic. Raised in home with Arabic

LD Both your parents were speaking Arabic?

YU But, you know, American university, American schools, so... [overtalking].

LD So you never went to Arabic schools?

YU No. We only take, like, one subject, in school, which was Arabic language.
[Only took English courses in school, never went to Arabic school. Arabic taught as subject.]

LD Did your parents study in Arabic?

YU Yes, yes. My parents studied in Syria. [parents studied in Arabic only, learner English later]

LD Okay.

YU All Arab, everything is Arabic.

LD Well, then you all grew up here?

YU Yes, and they learned English on their own. [parents learned English on their own] Not on university, yes.

LD So at home even you speak English sometimes?

YU Yes, I speak, but, like, they respond to me in Arabic. [She speaks English at home, parents respond in Arabic]

LD Okay. Well. Do you have brothers and sisters?

YU Yes.

LD Does everyone speak English and Arabic together?

YU My sister English, my brother mostly Arabic. [Lang spoken in home divided] I don't know why, just...

LD Perhaps it's a boy thing. So do you think, I mean, since you don't seem to think you have a serious Arab identity, do you think your Arabic has anything to do with your identity? Does it make you who you are, because since you don't feel...

YU I don't know, to be honest. I'm not, like... I don't feel like, yes, I'm an Arab. Like, in what way? I don't find, like, this specific way, why am I an Arab, you know? Just Because I'm born here, family is here, and raised here, that's it. You know? [Being born and raised in the UAE by Arabs, seems to be her only hold to Arabness] [No clear or strong feelings of being an Arab. No feeling that Arabic is holding her to anything, as she already does not feel very grounded as an Arab.]

LD So those are the only things you can find that make you an Arab?

YU Yes.

LD What if, like, you meet an outsider or westerner or something? How would you describe yourself?

YU I don't know. I still, like, as if I'm stuck in between, you know? I can go, like, I'm from west or something, or from the east, you know? Stuck in between. It's like, I don't know. [Feels stuck between east and west, no clarity in where she belongs].

LD So your environment, do you think, has influenced greatly who you are?

YU Yes. [The environment in which she finds herself is what she believes influences her and makes her who she is.]

LD Okay. So a lot of our students, I know, code switch and use Arabic and English, you already say you do that at home, so do you do that here, at university...?

YU Yes. [Code switching going on at university and at home]

LD Also?

YU Yes.

LD Do you have a lot of only Arabic speaking friends? [Overtalking].

YU No, actually I spend time with my Armenian friends. Because my Mum's Armenian, so, all Armenians know each other, and spend time with each other, so... they speak Armenian so I pick up some words and they speak mostly English if I'm around, you know, so it's like I... I don't have a chance to speak Arabic with them.

LD Do you speak Armenian?

YU A little bit, yes.

LD Is your Dad Armenian?

YU No, my Mum. But Mum doesn't speak Armenian.

LD Okay. Do you have a lot of English speaking friends? I mean, other than the Armenian group, like, do you have, like, friends from different cultures and nationalities?

YU They're, they're mostly Arabs. [Most of her friends are Arabs]

LD Mostly Arabs.

YU Yes.

LD And do they ever say anything about your Arabic, or your Arabic's fine?

YU No, I mean...

LD You get along, you talk in Arabic...

YU Yes. [Spoken Arabic is fine, she can get along with her friends.]

LD That's fine. How's your written Arabic?

YU It's okay. Like, I haven't written Arabic in so long, in so, so long. We did not write much in school and now in uni I write only in English.

LD Is your English better?

YU Yes. [Her English is better than Arabic when she writes. More years of practice.]

LD Yes. So when was the last time you wrote in Arabic?

YU High school. Over a year ago.

LD Yes? So you don't really find...?

YU Well, I don't really need it these days. [No need for written Arabic, has not written in over a year.]

LD You don't need it?

YU Yes, I try to read Arabic so that, you know, I don't lose it in summer, yes, this summer I read a book, but then I stopped. [Tries to read in Arabic on occasion.]

LD Why'd you stop?

YU Because I started uni. [Starting university took her away from trying to continue with her Arabic reading]

LD Okay. But would you go back, I mean...?

YU Yes.

LD In summer you'll try and read Arabic?

YU Like, I try to pick up an interesting subject so that I won't get bored by reading it. [Hopes to get back to Arabic reading in the summer.]

LD Are your parents concerned about Arabic in the house?

YU No. [Her parents are not concerned about how much Arabic is used in the home.]

LD No. They feel that you all have the spoken?

YU They, they don't, like, they don't complain a lot. It's because, like, we, we study in American universities, what do they expect? [Due to their US higher education, she feels her parents cannot be concerned. They are studying in Eng, where would they get the opportunity to use their Arabic further?] You know, they can't do anything about it. They're raising us between different cultures, so... [The sense of being raised 'between cultures' is part of her rationale for lack of Arabic usage]

LD Okay.

YU They can't blame us, you know?

LD So, so when you do all this code switching and mixing, does it ever make you feel like you're going to lose your Arabic? [She does worry she could lose her Arabic.]

YU Yes.

LD Do you worry about it?

YU Yes.

LD Yes? How come?

YU Because like if I constantly speak like this then, well, what am I going to end up with, you know? If someone asks me you're from where, yes, Syria. And they speak Arabic and then I don't know what to respond. Like, what am I going to say? And then they go, like, what, you don't speak Arabic? Well, if I said no, they're going to go like how come you're from Syria, you know? So... it's just the passport. [Concerns that consistently using English will make her weaker in Arabic. Worried about going back to Syria and being unable to communicate, only her passport will reveal she is an Arabic speaker, ie an Arab.]

LD Passport, okay. So do you make choices to speak these languages, I mean, at certain times, or do you just mostly speak English, or...?

YU No, it... I just like, I'm really... I don't know how to say it in Arabic, so I just say it in English. [Code switching when she does not know the word in Arabic.]

LD Okay.

YU That's... like, it goes out by itself. It's not like I want to speak English. Just... I don't find the words, I don't know how to say this, I just say it in English. [Code switching not something she thinks about, it just happens, usually when she doesn't know the word in Arabic]

LD Do you find that a lot with your major?

YU Pardon?

LD The words you've learned in your major, are they hard to say in Arabic?

YU Yes. [Difficulty with knowing Arabic words for her major at university]

LD Yes.

YU Lots of them.

LD Okay. So do you think language, then, could you say that language is an important part of people's identity? Who they are?

YU Yes, I think it does play a part, [Yes, Arabic plays a part in people's identity] but I don't think, like... I mean, it does matter, I mean, if you are Arabic and you don't know how to speak Arabic, it's, like... it's part of the history, you know, of the Arabs, so how come, like, if you don't speak it then it's like you're losing an essential part of the Arab roots and stuff. [Not speaking Arabic is losing part of Arab roots]

LD Okay. And if someone comes, say, for instance their parents raised them in the west or in Europe or something, and then they come back, and they feel like an Arab but they can't speak Arabic. Would you consider them an Arab? Or do they need to have the language?

YU If they... they should, like... like work hard to learn it or something, if they really want to feel like, you know, identified as an Arab, you know, because I think over here they all go, like, if they see someone speaking English they go like, yes, this person's not an Arab. You know? But then when they speak Arabic we're, like, yes, this person is an Arab. Like, they just spoke Arabic, so I think, like, you can identify people from their language as well. [Speaking Arabic is something people should try to do if they want OTHERS to consider them Arabs. She is claiming others will consider a person an Arab if they have the language] [You can identify people from their language]

LD Okay. No, but do you speak... you speak a lot of English outside? Do people know that you're an Arab? You're not even sure you know you're an Arab.

YU If I've spoken Arabic, yes.

LD Then they would know.

YU Yes.

LD Okay. So when you, when you use Arabic, do you think that you're revealing some sort of Arab identity in that way?

YU Yes, I do, actually. Like, when I speak Arabic, I feel like, yes, you know, I have roots. So yes, it does, makes me feel good, it makes me feel Arab. [Speaking Arabic helps her feel Arab, some roots, revealing an Arab identity]

LD Okay. Because maybe that helps, when, since you feel kind of rootless.

YU No, I mean, like, if I lived in Syria, among all... they barely speak English there. [But speaking Arabic would only really be helpful in her identity if she lived in Syria. In a country where mostly Arabic is spoken.] Like, if you speak English it's like oh my God, you speak English? You learned, you know, you know? So I think if I learned there I'd feel like an Arab. Because I'm surrounded with people who speak Arabic. So I'll speak with them Arabic if they don't understand English, and then over time I'll start to improve, you know? But right here, I have, like, where... where should I improve? Everyone is speaking English. [Here in the UAE everyone speaks English]

LD Yes, that seems to YU the problem here. And we also have the government saying here, different government in the Arab world saying Arab identity is being lost because of English and globalisation. Do you agree with that?

YU Ever since the war here, the... when everything... Britain, I think, when they took, took over in UAE, right, so I think ever since they came they started introducing English in those schools and stuff, right? So I think it's the government's fault, I mean, if they don't want to lose their Arabic roots, then they should introduce more subjects in Arabic, starting from high... not high school, actually, kindergarten, you know? [Govt should not allow English into schools so early. Arabic needs to be included in more subjects from earlier age, ie KG.]

LD Yes.

YU Because, like, I remember when I started it was all in English. Everything was in English. The only thing I had in Arabic was the language itself, the Arabic language course. That's it. It's therefore, they can't go, like, we're losing it and they complain about it, but they can't... [When she began school it was all in Eng, Arabic only taught as a subject.]

LD [Overtalking] the angle.

YU Yes, they can't blame the generations that are coming, because they're teaching them, they're telling them what to learn, what not to learn. You know, they're responsible for the, you know, the courses and stuff. [Govts, ministries are responsible for allowing so much Eng]

LD I mean, you've become now pretty much a true bilingual, so... do you think that's possible? I mean, they could somehow figure out a way to get this...

YU Yes, they should. [Bilingualism is a possibility]

LD Into their schools, where people could be bilingual.

YU Yes. Why don't they, like, teach everything in Arabic and provide English as another language? Yes, why everything in English, and Arabic just, you know, a language so that you can learn, you know? It's... it should be the basics of all the courses, and English as a language that you would like to learn, besides any other language. [Everything should be taught in Arabic, Eng should be a foreign lang]. [Arabic should be the basic language for all courses]

LD Yes, it's very strange how they did that here. Globalisation, what effect has it had on you, do you think globalisation's had any effect on you?

YU On... globalising?

LD Any of it, you know, technology, the language, any of those things?

YU Okay. So globalisation makes people travel more, right?

LD Yes.

YU Okay, so we travelled here. So I think, like, it does affect at some point, Because I'm not living there, I live here, so I... like, the way I live is different, like, when I came back to Syria once, I was, like, summer holiday and we went there. I went there and I was, like, I felt like a stranger, you know? Everyone is, like, so into those traditions and, you know, and everything. And I was so, like, you know, free, and I don't fit to the traditions, that I felt weird, you know? So I think it's like the traditions, the culture, the language, everything is different. [Glob makes her feel like a stranger in her own country. Traditions seemed strange, the culture, the lang, all felt different, even though her country.]

So when I went there it was so different to an extent that I don't want to go back there, you know?

LD Really?

YU Yes. Because, like, I'm used to here. You know? I'm not used to sticking to one thing, you know? Just knowing about everything. So I think, like, when someone knows about everything, when they are introduced to all kinds of cultures, like, they... they just, they start to lose who they really are, you know? So...

[Those who are surrounded by different cultures all the time, 'lose' who they are.]

LD Do you think it's a bad thing?

YU I think it is, I mean, what makes you different, you know? If, if everyone is the same, then what does, what makes you different? If you don't speak Arabic, let's say, but everyone speaks English. Everyone, even the people who are not American or English. You know, Arabs speaking English, everyone speaking English, then what, what identifies you?

LD So you think globalisation can make us all kind of similar?

YU Yes, we get boring.

LD And we'll all be kind of the same?

YU Yes. I mean, everyone knows everything. You're introduced to everything, you can get access to everything. You know, nothing is like, this person knows how to do this, this person knows how to do this. Everyone knows how to do this. You know, it's something, like, anything, whatever kind of work or hobby or challenge or language, any kind of thing, everyone is being able to access anything. So it's like everyone is becoming the same. You can't find different people any more. [Glob makes us all similar, we all know how to do the same things.][People can access all the same things, she then sees people all getting to be similar]

LD Except when you go back to the old home countries, right? Do you think you will go back to Syria to stay?

YU I don't know. I don't want to go back.

LD You don't want to go back?

YU No.

LD So do you think there's a lot of young people who, you know, feel detached from their home traditions and culture...

YU Yes. We have been away from our homes too long, especially when we live here in the Emirates. [Feeling detached from a homeland or country.]

LD Because they've lived here for so long?

YU Yes. But I don't know, it's... like, if someone asked me what are the traditions, I just don't know. You know? Like, I'd... I'd know that, like, not Syrian traditions, like Arabs... [Not overly familiar with Syrian traditions, more about general Arab traditions]

LD In general.

YU You know, and they just... yes, general stuff. But not like specific things.

LD Do your parents do a lot of things to...?

YU No, they don't. We, we don't. Like, we're a totally different world. You know, why would we carry the Syrian traditions down here, you know? Seriously. [No feeling of a need to maintain traditions from home country.]

LD It's a lot of work. So do you think there's anything that might YU bad for your traditions or cultures and, you know, don't bother you at all, personally, but do you think that there are things that are happening to the traditions and cultures generally, that might YU bad?

YU In Syria, or in [overtalking]?

LD In the Arab world, maybe, or things that are... Because of globalisation?

YU Yes, I mean... I mean, like, there's some countries, they still have their traditions, right? They still maintain them, so... I think it's the country itself, the government. I mean, you can go to Africa and find people still living in those small houses and so I think it's the person who wants to change or not. I mean, those people who stick to their old traditions, that means they... they want to be like this, they want to stay. Even if there's, like, influences from outside, they choose to remain on their traditions. [Glob is a choice, not put upon people]

So even if, even though globalisation does affect the people and stuff, but I think it's, it's a choice. It's more like a choice. [Glob as choice]

LD It's a choice. So it's not really a bad thing, then, with you? You have the decision to make, or...?

YU It is, right, and it's good, I think. Like, it's good, the perspective, like, you, you get introduced to new stuff. So you know what's going on, you know about this, you know, specific topic, you know. You know more about something, if someone spoken a lot of different stuff. But I mean if you... like, you stick in a corner, you just... you won't know anything around you. Especially like in this, like, globalisation thing. You know, everyone is knowing everything. If someone just sticks to a corner, they won't know whatever is going on. It's just like you have to catch up or something. [People need glob in order to understand the world.]

LD So you feel like people need it? Everyone needs it.

YU Yes.

LD Do you think that people can personally hold on to their traditions and their cultures and...?

YU Yes, I think if they are, like, they are affected by globalisation, they can, at the same time, you know, maintain their traditions between each other. You know, the families let's say, but with everyone else they don't have to share, you know? If they

want to know about, know more about everyone else. [People are capable of maintaining traditions and cultures]

LD They can still do that, right?

YU Yes.

LD So what other things, do you think? I mean, if you can't say that you have an Arab identity, what do you think defines you, can you call yourself? What are you, cosmopolitan, or international person, or... how do you define yourself? What your identity is?

YU To be honest, like, I feel like I'm identifying myself. You know, it's like I have my own list to follow, you know, it's like I don't follow anything. I just have my own rules, my own way of thinking and stuff. I think it's religion too. Like, the thing that identifies me right now is my religion, you know? [Her identity is made up of her own pieces, things she has put together]. [Religion is also part of her identity]

LD Okay.

YU Christianity. That's it. [Interesting that a Christian student has a strong pull to religion, we think of Islam as having a stronger pull]

LD So yours is Christianity, so that... you know, listen, it's... you know, these are interesting things for my study, you know, because we have our, from our Muslim students say that Islam defines them, it's interesting that you feel like that.

YU Yes, like nothing else...

LD Quite a few have defined...

YU Identifies me, then it's only... the only thing that really does is Christianity, you know? Because it's something, like, it's not like a tradition where you can lose it... [Religion is not a tradition that can be lost]

LD Right.

YU When you go somewhere else. It's something you carry it around wherever you go. And you, it's always, like, with you. You know? At what's... yes. [Religion can be carried around, with a person always]

LD Is it something that you can practice much here, or is it something just with the family, or...?

YU Actually, it is, like, there are churches here, we keep going from time to time, but globalisation... gets, it gets people really dizzy, so it's like, I feel like over time people go less to church, you know? Not only Christianity, in all religions, like, people are losing their religion. Through globalisation. [Glob is affecting religion in a negative way]

LD Do you think?

YU Yes. Not only traditions, you know? It's not the only thing that people are losing, but their religion too.

LD In what ways?

YU In, like, let's say there are some churches, they give church classes, like, about the religion and stuff. Over time, in our church, like, the one in Sharjah, less students start to come to the classes, like, they started, like, telling everyone, like, come, why aren't you coming? Staff, the professors and staff, and less, less students are coming every year. [Personal view of church classes with less students appearing each year, here in the UAE].

LD Really?

YU Yes.

LD From the beginning of the year, they're getting less each time?

YU Yes. Like, there were a lot.

LD Like university students, or all kinds of students?

YU It's like high school, you know, it starts from KG [?] elementary, and then when you graduate from there, you still help them, you go there, you, you help the kids, you start teaching them.

LD Okay.

YU So yes, less, less people are coming. Like, I don't even go anymore, Because I don't have time. You know?

LD So you think that's globalisation probably, or...?

YU And like, it... it gets you busy at some point. Like, it does get you busy.

LD It does. So it stops people maybe, even, from their spirituality...

YU Exactly.

LD Like having to turn in one more paper, or do some work.

YU Exactly.

LD So is that something that worries you?

YU Yes.

LD Long term, about...?

YU It does, but I don't think, like, I'll lose it. I would say, it's not like I'm saying you shouldn't go to church, like church doesn't matter, but it's like it's good to go from time to time, you know?

LD Yes. So, really, for you, religious, religion is a personal thing, I mean, it's something that you hold on to?

YU Yes. We should hold onto this tradition.

LD It's not based on a church or...

YU Yes.

LD Other people telling you?

YU Yes.

LD Okay. So, I mean, that's part of your identity. That's interesting. Any other things? I mean, do you identify with anything else in your life?

YU I see my role as a woman kind of important. I think globalisation has been good for women, they start working, they, they have a part, you know, they have a huge role, besides being a mother, at the same time as, you know, outside in the world. But at the same time, they don't raise their children any more, they took it to an extent, you know? There's no in between. You can verify people who are able to manage their time, so globalisation is good and bad. Because, like, it's... I think it breaks the families apart, because they start, you know, working and studying... I mean, I, I must, I am, I study, you know, I barely see my family, especially, like, when I have so much to do. I just come home as a hotel, you know? And sleep. And then I go back to uni, you know? [In some ways glob good for women, they can work][Glob also has bad effects, women don't stay with their children as much or as long][She sees glob as having a personal effect on her, it keeps her so busy that the family time seems to be lost]

So it's, like, you get really busy with yourself, you just don't have the bond, you know, with your family and stuff. So that's why, like, our family goes out, like, twice a week, together, so that's... [Family bond weakening due to glob keeping everyone so busy]

LD Really?

YU You know, we don't feel like, you know, strangers or something.

LD But that's nice.

YU Yes.

LD That you do that.

YU Yes.

LD So that's regularly, everyone goes out together?

YU Yes.

LD That's a good idea.

YU Even though, like, I'm not in the mood and stuff, but I'm glad they do it, Because if they don't, I don't think I'd ever sort of go to, out together, like, if my parents don't do those programmes, going out and stuff, I don't think any of us would propose one.

LD Yes. It's probably because you feel busy.

YU Yes.

LD Overwhelmed. Your parents are both working also?

YU Yes. My, both my parents are architects, but my Mum left her work to raise us, and now, but now she's teaching arts, in a school. But my Dad is an architect. My brother works. My sister, still no job. It's been a year .

LD Yes. She graduated from here?

YU Yes. Not from this university, no.

LD Okay.

YU So, yes.

LD So there's a lot of things facing you out there?

YU Yes.

LD Okay. Anything else you would like to add? Anything that you think might help my understanding of young Arab people's identity or lack thereof?

YU I think that the way that, lately, how the generations think is, like, about money. Like, they... all they think about is money. They want to finish here, because they want to work and get money, you know? And they want to get their Masters degree because I want money. You know? They think, like, from the moment they get hired they're going to get all the money they need. They just don't think about it, like, as something you work hard for. [Youth today focused mainly on money. Everything too easy for current generation.]

Like, everything is so easy to get. That's how it is now. They, everything, it's... like, let's say our parents, they used to work hard to get something. Now it's like everything is in front of us, we just take it, and they still ask for me.

LD That's true.

YU Yes.

LD So does that worry you?

YU Yes.

LD I mean, is that something bad about this generation?

YU Yes, yes, because, like, every time, let's say, here in the university, like last year, we were the freshmans, and then now, we saw the next freshmans, they're just getting tinier and stupider. And they look like too spoiled.

LD Really?

YU You know?

LD Getting worse?

YU Yes, they're too, too spoiled. [Youth, Arab youth spoiled in the UAE]

LD You all are protected more, or... You haven't lived the hard life as much as maybe your parents did.

YU Yes, exactly. Like, we don't... it's not we don't appreciate, we don't, like, I don't know, I'm not finding the words, like, we don't understand the real meaning of hard work. [Young people don't appreciate hard work or understand it]

LB Yes. I get that. Is there anything further you would like to add today, about yourself or your identity as an Arab?

YU I don't think so, not now.

LB Okay. We'll turn this off. Thank you.



American University of Sharjah Office of Research

Appendix 7: Consent Form

For questions about the study, contact:

Laila S. Dahan, principal investigator, Department of Writing Studies, AUS, POB 26666, Sharjah, UAE. Phone number: 06-515-2404; email: ldahan@aus.edu.

Description: You are invited to participate in research study regarding how Arabic speaking students view the role of English and Arabic in their lives, how they manage and use both languages, and finally how Arab students determine their identity with regard to their native language. Questions will include: how do you manage between using English and Arabic, do you think the Arabic language is a major marker of your identity, and more. The project is being carried in out in order for me to write up my PhD dissertation for the University of Exeter (UK).

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire and if you agree to be interviewed after that I will contact you for an interview. The first interview will last about half an hour, the second an hour. I will audio tape our second interview, but only I will ever have access to the data on those tapes. Any information that you share will be coded and you will be given a pseudonym (a different name) so that you will always remain anonymous both in the dissertation and in any future presentations I make on this topic at conferences or publish.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks associated with this study. The only benefits of the study will be in terms of producing a dissertation and hopefully further interest in AUS as a university that appreciates research. I cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this study. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your grades, standing at the university, etc.

Time Involvement: Your participation in this experiment will take approximately 2 hours.

Payments: You will receive no payment for being involved in this research.

Your Rights: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. (*If applicable:* If you agree, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study.) Otherwise, Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you have questions about your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anononymously, if you wish— the Office of Research, American University of Sharjah, Main Building, Mezzanine Floor, P.O. Box 26666, Sharjah, UAE; Tel: +(971) 6 515 2208.

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Protocol Approval Date: _____

Protocol Expiration Date: _____



Appendix 8: AUS IRB Application Form

1. **Date of application:** 7 December 2010
2. **Title of research project:** Language Use and Identity Construction among Arab Youth at an English medium University in the United Arab Emirates
3. **Name, e-mail address and telephone number of principal investigator:**
Laila S. Dahan, ldahan@aus.edu, 515-2404
4. **Name(s), e-mail address (es) and telephone number(s) of co-investigator(s):** None
5. **Source of research funding** (write none or self, if applicable): None
6. **Abstract:** In up to 200 words, this section must answer these questions:
 - (1) What is the purpose of the research?
 - (2) What strategies will be used to protect human participants of the research?
 - (3) What are the benefits of the research?
 - (4) What are the risks to human participants?
 - (5) In what ways are benefits greater than risks?

This proposed study for my PhD dissertation at the University of Exeter (Exeter, UK), will be undertaken at AUS to investigate how Arabic speaking students, who have excellent spoken English skills, understand and interact within the confines of their relationship with their native language and English and how they determine what identifies them as “Arabs”; ie what markers do they use. This research will look at students’ perceptions in two ways: first through a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews.

The participants will be informed by me about the nature and consequences of this study. They will also be advised that their participation is entirely voluntary and that any information they share will remain confidential. Each participant will be given a consent form to sign prior to the beginning of the interview stage. Student names will be changed in order to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. All records having to do with each student will be coded with a number.

As I will be ensuring all the above mentioned safe guards and strategies, I believe there is very little potential risk for these student participants. I think the participants will actually enjoy being involved in this research project as many of our students like to speak about their experiences and share what they have been through. I have discovered this from teaching freshmen students for the past seven years. The purpose of this research will contribute to some of the gaps in the literature on how students manage

their lives through English and Arabic and furthermore how they describe and discuss their identity as Arabs in a world where global English is expanding and encroaching in every area of their lives. In this way, the benefits of this research will outweigh any potential risks.

7. Participant selection: [Describe participants of this research and how they will be recruited. This includes number of participants, age, sex, minority status, health status, and inclusion and exclusive criteria for participation. (For US federally funded research, also include a discussion of efforts being made to include women and minorities in the research, or provide a justification for their exclusion.) Include copies of all recruitment materials.]

The proposed participants in this research will initially be about 100 Writing 101 Arab students at AUS who are between the ages of 18 and 20. From the initial group, 20-25 will be chosen for semi-structured interviews, based on their agreement to be contacted for an interview, which will be an option on the questionnaire. The following criteria will be used to determine inclusion in the study:

- They are currently enrolled in Writing 101 at AUS.
- The students will *not* be any of my students.
- They self-identity as Arab.
- They are bilingual in Arabic and English.
- The students chosen to be interviewed will be found based on their willingness to be contacted for an interview.

8. Research procedures: [Provide a detailed description of exactly what will be done to and with participants. Include information about methods and procedures used, who will conduct procedures and measurements, what data and how data will be collected. Indicate the number and duration of each contact with each participant. Indicate whether (and which) personnel identifiers will be attached to data. Include copies of questionnaires or handouts used in experiments.]

I have four research questions which have been approved by my dissertation advisor and which I intend to use in order to guide this study. The questions are as follows:

- Do Arab youth in the UAE reveal or feel that they are using Arabic less than English on a daily basis?
- Do Arab youth have any concerns about how much English they use versus Arabic?
- Do Arab youth in the UAE feel that the Arabic language is the major identity marker for being considered an Arab?
- Do Arab youth have other markers for their identity, rather than or in addition to the Arabic language?

In order to investigate these research questions I will utilize two types of data collection: a questionnaire and interviews. I am the only person who will be involved in the data collection and the analysis and as such, no one else will have access to the data.

The questionnaire, which is not finalized, is attached. Once I receive permission from the IRB that I may initiate my project, I will contact all my colleagues in the Department of Writing Studies to enlist their permission and assistance in allowing me to give out the questionnaires in their Writing 101 classes. My email will tell them about the project and why I am carrying it out as well as give them an idea of the time frame involved in having students complete the questionnaire. Once I obtain permission from my colleagues, I will ensure that I am available on the times and days to hand out the questionnaire, explain it briefly to the students, and collect them at the end of the class. I will be especially careful to inform students of the need for volunteers for the interviews and ask that they give a phone number and email address if they are willing to participate; this will also be written on the end of the questionnaire. After I receive responses from those students willing to participate in the interview process, I will contact them. I will plan to meet with each of these students individually for a short time in my office, just to discuss the project in more depth, review the consent form, have the student sign two copies of the consent form in order for the student to have one copy and I will retain one copy for my records. At the end of this meeting, I will inform the student that I will be calling him/her to come in for an interview. This first meeting will probably last less than half an hour.

I will keep the completed questionnaire for the students who volunteer for the interviews. However, I will not keep the student's name on it. I will assign each of the 20-25 interviewees a code number. This will help protect their privacy but ensure that I am aware of who said what during the interviews, which I will also keep as a coded number and not with a name.

Once the students have agreed to be interviewed, I will set up a schedule that suits each of them best and conduct the interviews in my office. The door will be closed with a sign on it indicating interviews are in process and we are not to be disturbed. I am hoping the interview data will help clarify student's response to the questionnaires. The major goal of these interviews is to let the participants elaborate on and clarify their initial responses to the open-ended questions on the questionnaire. However, I am also hoping their responses will go beyond that and the opportunity to discuss this issue will allow them to open up and reveal their true personal feelings regarding the issue of English versus Arabic and how they feel their Arabic is faring in this environment, and especially what markers they use for determining their Arab identity.

Each interview will be different just by virtue of the fact that each student will respond in diverse ways and focus on certain issues others might ignore. However, there will be an outline for the questions which will be standardized. This ensures that each student responds to the same questions. The length of each interview should be approximately one hour. I will audio tape each interview in order to be sure I have accurate data.

Once I have the completed questionnaires and the information obtained from the interviews, this will give me the required information for interpreting the results and developing a strong basis addressing and responding to my initial research questions.

In order to ensure all my students' information remains confidential, all the documentation in the study will be coded, this includes the questionnaires, interview notes and the cassette tapes. I will keep a list of the participants' actual names and their code number in a folder at my home; this will keep it far from the other research documentation in the office, which will be coded. I will give each student a number between 1 and 20 or 25, depending on how many decide to take part in the interviews.

9. Compensation and costs: [Discuss whether participants will be compensated or given inducements for participation in this research. If monies will be offered, specify the amount and payment schedule. Identify all costs to participants.]

There will be no monetary or other compensation to the participants in this study. The total amount of time they will give to this study comes to about an hour and 45 minutes. This will include the 15 minutes in class completing the questionnaire, the first half hour meeting with me and the one hour interview. My hope is that this chance to discuss their feelings about how global English and Arabic fit into their lives and how they determine their identity will in some way be exciting and rewarding to them.

Participants will not have any costs for this endeavor.

10. Risks to participants: [Describe all risks—whether physical, psychological or social. It is important to consider risks associated with breach of confidentiality. Describe strategies, activities and facilities used to minimize risks. Describe procedures for follow up if participants are found to be in need of medical or psychological assistance.]

In reviewing this research I do not see anything inherent in it that would bring about any unusual physical, psychological or social risk. I am only collecting data, through a one time questionnaire in the classroom and there will only be one lengthy interview between myself and the participants. The questions in the interviews will only seek to answer my research questions and as such I do not find them to be menacing in any way. Most students will have read in their WRI 101 course several essays about identity and bilingualism and therefore will not be confused or intimidated by the topic. Therefore, I really do not have any qualms about how the participants will react to the questions and believe they will enjoy the possibility of an outlet for their many ideas on this subject. Of course, I am well aware that as researchers it is incumbent upon us to avoid causing any type of harm to our subjects, and I will do my utmost to ensure that does not happen. I will take every precaution to make sure that any and all information obtained from my participants is kept confidential and that no one will have access to it other than me

By utilizing a code number for each participant I will ensure that their names are not ever discussed with my dissertation supervisor or others and that they will remain anonymous and only appear as numbers or 'invented' names in my final dissertation. If any students share information with me that is of a sensitive nature, but has no bearing on my research project, I will not share that with anyone as it is my duty to ensure their confidence is protected.

In the event that I believe a participant requires medical help, my first call will be to the Clinic on campus. The Clinic is in the LAN building where my office is located; this would ensure a very speedy response in the event of an emergency. If over time a participant shows that he/she might require some psychological assistance, I will call the Learning and Counseling Center for their assistance. Having worked in Student Affairs at AUS for two years, I am very familiar with how that office operates and the help it can provide to our students.

11. Human rights: [List which human rights could be violated by the proposed research and demonstrate how none of these will be violated.]

As a student of political science (MA '90) and one who has read a great deal about human rights, I see no possible human right that would be violated if I carry out this research.

12. Benefits: [Describe the direct benefits of the research to the participants in this research, and the benefits of this research to society in general.]

I believe there are a variety of benefits that will come out of this research. In terms of the student participants, they will benefit from the chance to reflect and discuss in some detail the role global English and Arabic play in their lives in addition to an opportunity to really think about what defines them and their identity as Arabs. I also hope that this will be a start for them to understand and learn about research and hopefully encourage further interest in being a part of research projects here on campus.

Many in the Gulf region and the UAE specifically, are very concerned with the reliance on English and fear that the continual use of this second language will have detrimental effects both on the Arabic language and the Arab identity of those who use it so often. This study is designed to yield evidence that will substantiate or negate the concerns of those in the region who believe Arab identity is being lost with the influx of English. This study will determine whether these concerns are valid, or if the students in the study will show that they are not worried about losing their Arabic and have a more flexible interpretation of what defines them as Arabs, other than their language.

13. Procedures for obtaining informed consent: [Describe how consent will be obtained from participants. Include a copy of the consent form you propose to use. (The Office of Graduate Programs and Research can provide sample consent forms for your review and modification. Also, a sample consent form is nested on the Office of Research website at

<http://www.aus.edu/gpr/research/>. It is very important to discuss the safeguards you will use against coercion.]

After a student agrees to take part in the study, by virtue of including his/her phone number or email on the questionnaire, I will send the student an email requesting a convenient time for an initial interview. At that meeting I will discuss the study and the consent form. In the email to the students I will attach the consent form allowing them to review it and bring any questions to the meeting. At the initial meeting two consent forms will be discussed and signed, with the student keeping one copy and I will keep the other. The consent form is attached to this document.

The students used in this study will not be my students during the spring 2011 semester; therefore I do not see any possibility for coercion. However, during both my meetings with the students I will make it abundantly clear that they have the right to withdraw from the project at any time and they will not be required to give me an explanation. I will also make it clear that they will never have to answer any questions that make them feel awkward or embarrassed. However, I am also hoping none of my questions will elicit those feelings.

14. Confidentiality of data: [Describe what will be done to protect the privacy of participants and to maintain confidentiality of identifiable information. Provide information about data storage (including location and duration), persons who will have access to data, and when or if data will be destroyed.]

I explained this initially in Question 10 and I am well aware of my role in protecting the confidentiality of my participants. To ensure their confidentiality, all participants will be given a coded number and will be identified by that number throughout the research. I will be the only person who sees this data and will maintain the names of participants at my home.

The analysis and writing up of this dissertation will be done at my home. Therefore, all the paper data will stay at my home and will be unmarked and kept far apart from the consent forms. My work on this project will be done at home, usually alone in a room designated for me and my research, therefore no one else in the house will have access to the data. I will keep updates of the data on an external hard drive which will have a password. My dissertation has a planned completion date of 2013, so I estimate that I will need to access the data for another three years. Once the dissertation is completed, all paper-based documentation will be shredded and the cassette tapes (unmarked) will be destroyed.

15. Public release of data: [Will data from the research be released to others at some time? If yes, what additional steps will be taken to protect confidentiality?]

[If your research includes an analysis of already existing data (secondary data), also answer the following:]

Hopefully the data from the research will be reported in my completed PhD dissertation and long term, perhaps a chapter or an article will emerge from the dissertation. I may also use some of the data for presentations at conferences.

Regardless of how the data is presented, I will ensure that the identities of my participants will remain anonymous. I will do this by altering information such as names and giving each a pseudonym, this will ensure confidentiality but will not compromise the data. These strategies along with those steps I plan to use during the collection process should help maintain and protect confidentiality of all the subjects.

Questions 16, 17 and 18 do NOT apply to my research.

16. Description and source of secondary data: [What is the source of the data, and what are the data about? (For example, the data source is Medicaid Records and data are patient hospital admission records.)]

17. Public data: [If secondary data are publicly available to anyone without restriction state that. If not, describe access restrictions and any confidentiality agreements required by the provider of the data.]

18 Personal identifiers in secondary data: [Do secondary data contain personal identifiers? Do the data contain elements that might permit deductive disclosure of identify? Does a name/ID linking file exist? If so, who has access to this file?]

19. Signatures:

Principal investigator	_____ ¹
Co-investigators	_____
Department Chair	_____
Dean, School/College	_____
Coordinator, Office of Research	_____

Checklist of items to include with application:

- ✓ Signed and completed application (if student, include faculty signature)
- ✓ Copy of written research protocol, grant application, thesis proposal or other research proposal

¹ Only full-time AUS faculty can be listed as principal investigators. The department chair signature is for the department of the principal investigator.

- ✓ Consent form
- ✓ Recruitment materials, fact sheets or other materials to be distributed to research participants
- ✓ Focus group or interview guide (if applicable)
- ✓ Signed AUS ethics certificates for all people involved in project



Appendix 9: Certificate of ethical research approval

Graduate School of Education

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: LAILA SULEIMAN DAHAN

Your student no: 580028402

Return address for this certificate: American University of Sharjah, Dept of Writing Studies, POB 26666, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate in Education: TESOL

Project Supervisor(s): Sarah Rich

Your email address: lsd205@exeter.ac.uk or ldahan@aus.edu

Tel: 971 6 515 2404 or 971 50 7161512

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:.....date:.....

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must **not be included** in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no: 580028402

Title of your project: Language Use and Identity Construction among Arab Youth at an English medium University in the United Arab Emirates

Brief description of your research project:

This study will be undertaken at the American University of Sharjah (UAE) to investigate how Arabic speaking students, who have excellent spoken English skills, understand and interact within the confines of their relationship with their native language and English and how they determine what identifies them as “Arabs”; i.e. what markers do they use. This research will look at students’ perceptions in two ways: first through a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews.

The participants will be informed by me about the nature and consequences of this study. They will also be advised that their participation is entirely voluntary and that any information they share will remain confidential. Each participant will be given a consent form to sign prior to the beginning of the interview stage. Student names will be changed in order to guarantee anonymity and confidentiality. All records having to do with each student will be coded with a number.

As I will be ensuring all the above mentioned safe guards and strategies, I believe there is very little potential risk for these student participants. I think the participants will actually enjoy being involved in this research project as many of our students like to speak about their experiences and share what they have been through. I have discovered this from teaching freshmen students for the past seven years. The purpose of this research will contribute to some of the gaps in the literature on how students manage their lives through English and Arabic and furthermore how they describe and discuss their identity as Arabs in a world where global English is expanding and encroaching in every area of their lives. In this way, the benefits of this research will outweigh any potential risks.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The proposed participants in this research will initially be about 100 Writing 101 Arab students at AUS who are between the ages of 18 and 20. From the initial group, 20-25 will be chosen for semi-structured interviews, based on their agreement to be contacted for an interview, which will be an option on the questionnaire. The following criteria will be used to determine inclusion in the study:

- They are currently enrolled in Writing 101 at AUS.
- The students will *not* be any of my own students.
- They self-identity as Arabs.
- They are bilingual in Arabic and English.
- The students chosen to be interviewed will be found based on their willingness to be contacted for an interview.

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

- a) **informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). An example of the consent form(s) must accompany this document.** a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

After a student agrees to take part in the study, by virtue of including his/her phone number and email on the questionnaire, I will send the student an email requesting a convenient time for an initial interview. At that meeting I will discuss the study and the consent form. In the email to the students I will attach the consent form allowing them to review it and bring any questions to the meeting. At the initial meeting two consent forms will be discussed and signed, with the student keeping one copy and I will keep the other.

The students used in this study will not be my students during the spring 2011 semester; therefore, I do not see any possibility for coercion. However, during both my meetings with the students I will make it abundantly clear that they have the right to withdraw from the project at any time and they will not be required to give me an explanation. I will also make it clear that they will never have to answer any questions that make them feel awkward or embarrassed. However, I am also hoping none of my questions will elicit those feelings.

b) anonymity and confidentiality

I am well aware of my role in protecting the confidentiality of my participants. To ensure their confidentiality, all participants will be given a coded number and will be identified by that number throughout the research. I will be the only person who sees this data and will maintain the names of participants at my home.

The analysis and writing up of this dissertation will be done at my home. Therefore, all the paper data will stay at my home and will be unmarked and kept far apart from the consent forms, which will be locked in my office. My work on this project will be done at home, usually alone in a room designated for me and my research, therefore no one else in the house will have access to the data. I will keep updates of the data on an external hard drive which will have a password. My dissertation has a planned completion date of 2013, so I estimate that I will need to access the data for another

three years. Once the dissertation is completed, all paper-based documentation will be shredded and the cassette tapes (unmarked) will be destroyed.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

I have four research questions which have been approved by my dissertation supervisor and which I intend to use in order to guide this study. The questions are as follows:

- Do Arab youth in the UAE reveal or feel that they are using Arabic less than English on a daily basis?
- Do Arab youth have any concerns about how much English they use versus Arabic?
- Do Arab youth in the UAE feel that the Arabic language is the major identity marker for being considered an Arab?
- Do Arab youth have other markers for their identity, rather than or in addition to the Arabic language?

In order to investigate these research questions I will utilize two types of data collection: a questionnaire and interviews. I am the only person who will be involved in the data collection and the analysis and as such, no one else will have access to the data.

I have already received permission from the American University of Sharjah's IRB committee to proceed. Therefore, once I receive permission from the University of Exeter that I may initiate my project, I will contact all my colleagues in the Department of Writing Studies to enlist their permission and assistance in allowing me to give out the questionnaires in their Writing 101 classes. My email will tell them about the project and why I am carrying it out as well as give them an idea of the time frame involved in having students complete the questionnaire. Once I get permission from my colleagues, I will ensure that I am available on the times and days to hand out the questionnaire, explain it briefly to the students, and collect them at the end of the class. I will be especially careful to inform students of the need for volunteers for the interviews and ask that they give a phone number and email address if they are willing to participate; this will also be written on the end of the questionnaire. After I receive responses from those students willing to participate in the interview process, I will contact them. I will plan to meet with each of these students individually for a short time in my office, just to discuss the project in more depth, review the consent form, have the student sign two copies of the consent form in order for the student to have one copy and I will retain one copy for my records. At the end of this meeting, I will inform the student that I will be calling him/her to come in for an interview. This first meeting will probably last less than half an hour.

I will keep the completed questionnaire for the students who volunteer for the interviews. However, I will not keep the student's name on it. I will assign each of the 20-25 interviewees a code number. This will help protect their privacy but ensure that I am aware of who said what during the interviews, which I will also keep as a coded number and not with a name.

Once the students have agreed to be interviewed, I will set up a schedule that suits each of them best and conduct the interviews in my office. The door will be closed with a sign on it indicating interviews are in process and we are not to be disturbed. I am hoping the interview data will help clarify students' responses to the questionnaires. The major goal of these interviews is to let the participants elaborate on and clarify their initial responses to the questions on the questionnaire. However, I am also hoping their responses will go beyond that and the opportunity to discuss this issue will allow them to open up and reveal their true personal feelings regarding the issue of English versus Arabic and how they feel their Arabic is faring in this environment, and especially what markers they use for determining their Arab identity.

Each interview will be different just by virtue of the fact that each student will respond in diverse ways and focus on certain issues others might ignore. However, there will be an outline for the questions which will be standardized. This ensures that each student responds to the same questions. The length of each interview should be approximately one hour. I will audio tape each interview in order to be sure I have accurate data.

Once I have the completed questionnaires and the information obtained from the interviews, this will give me the required information for interpreting the results and developing a strong basis addressing and responding to my initial research questions.

In order to ensure all my students' information remains confidential, all the documentation in the study will be coded, this includes the questionnaires, interview notes and the cassette tapes. I will keep a list of the participants' actual names and their code number in a folder at my home; this will keep it far from the other research documentation in the office, which will be coded.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

In order to ensure that all information collected for this study remains secure and confidential, it will always be kept locked in a cupboard in my home, which is in a very safe and secure area on our university's campus. When my thesis is complete and the information no longer required I will ensure that all information, both electronic and written is destroyed.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

In reviewing this research I do not see anything inherent in it that would bring about any unusual physical, psychological or social risk. I am only collecting data, through a one time questionnaire in the classroom and there will only be one lengthy interview between myself and the participants. The questions in the interviews will only seek to answer my research questions and as such I do not find them to be menacing in any way. Most students will have read in their Writing 101 course several essays about identity and bilingualism and therefore will not be confused or intimidated by the topic.

This form should now be printed out signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: _____ until: _____

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):
.....**date:**.....

N.B. To Supervisor: *Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.*

GSE unique approval reference:.....

Signed:.....**date:**.....

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

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