The Influence of Media on English Language Learners' Identity

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Background of the Study

Saudi youth often lack the level of education and do not possess the technical skills required in the private sector. Therefore, the kingdom government has consistently increased investment in vocational training and education, as well as infrastructure development. In order to stimulate the development and diversification of the economy, as well as create new jobs, the government announced plans to create six new economic cities in various regions of the country.

Language is the history of the people, the path of civilization and culture from the sources to our days. Now, many are concerned that by the beginning of the 21st century, we have forgotten how to speak and write normally in English (Al-Nasser 1612). Language is the soul of the people. By its nature, it cannot but reflect what is happening to man and around man. The coarsening of the language, its apparent impoverishment, and the decline in the tone of communication all indicate our spiritual and moral degradation. At present, it is impossible not to realize the influence of the media, especially electronic media, on forming a modern way of life and language. In the media, the language norm of the English language changes (Shukri 190–207).

Electronic media at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries have the opportunity to form language norms in all age groups of millions of people. There are three media subsystems: print, radio, and television, which consist of multiple channels that can spread around Saudi Arabia and its regions. Each subsystem fulfills its share of functions in developing the patriotic culture of the population (Al-Nasser 1612). Television deserves special attention, which today is the main source of both information and entertainment for most Arabs. Due to availability, the audience of television is several times larger than the audience of the Internet. Therefore, the special responsibility lies precisely with television. Unfortunately, our leaders, politicians, artists, and others do not realize the full responsibility for their words and speech behavior; they do not understand that many people (and not only young people) see them as role models. And we are daily forced to watch how our language is distorted and coarsened. It is on television that something unthinkable is happening today with the culture of speech (Mahboob and Elyas 1). Constantly, from TV screens, we hear much jargon, colloquial language, brutal language, and even profanity.

Problem Description

In 2005, the late King Abdullah presented a scholarship program that allows residents of Saudi Arabia to study abroad. Within the King Abdullah Scholarship Program (KASP) framework, students completed four months of English language training before commencing their studies. The program also included tuition fees, travel, medical insurance, and pocket money. For ten years, the Scholarship Program supported 90% of all students who had received a bachelor's or master's degree abroad (Chamberlin-Quinlisk 42–57). Although the Scholarship Program has supported hundreds of thousands of students since its inception, the fall in oil prices has forced the Saudi government to reduce the scale of the program, which has become tangible for both Saudi students and universities in English-speaking countries.

English language as the fundamental basis of Saudi Arabian civilization and culture has been subjected to all sorts of attacks many times in the history of Saudi Arabia. Researchers ridiculed the clogging of the English language with all kinds of words from other languages (Chamberlin-Quinlisk 42–57). Peter's reforms brought many foreign words of German origin to the language. The nineteenth century passed under the banner of introducing the English language into the everyday life of the Arab aristocracy. However, all these trends had no serious consequences and had no global impact on English language learners (Shukri 190–207). At present, we are witnessing unprecedented distortion and coarsening of the English language in the media, the Internet, and, as a consequence, in the speech of Saudi Arabian citizens. Today, in the period of information and psychological wars, English language learners and their identities are again under threat of destruction and distortion. The state of the language of culture is disturbing English language learners' identity and its implication for language education in Saudi Arabia today.

Review of the Literature

Media influences not only the population's literacy but also people's behavior. Violence, aggression, destruction, the absence of spiritual leaders, and obscene expressions exist at the same time that the mass media are enriching the language and keeping in touch with events.

The growth of the national self-consciousness of Saudi Arabian citizens occurred during the period in Saudi Arabia that was connected with the declared policy of publicity and the introduction of democratic procedures. The attainment of independence gave a new impetus to the national self-consciousness of Saudi Arabian citizens (Shukri 190–207). At the same time, this caused a crisis of identity between the English language and the Arabian-speaking population of Saudi Arabia (Chamberlin-Quinlisk 42–57). This circumstance is quite understandable because Saudi Arabia is not a society in which identity goes along the line of identifying oneself and society. Ethnicity in such conditions plays an important role, being the main supporting structure of identity as a whole. In a survey, the largest percentage of respondents opted for English language learning (more than 30% of

options were taken into account). The prevalence of the town over the underdeveloped areas of Saudi Arabia is also natural in terms of the number of those who chose English language learning—27% versus 21%—due to the greater tradition of the rural population (Moskovsky and Alrabai 1–10).

The situation is primarily because Saudi Arabia predominantly has an Arab population, which is relatively more traditional and tuned than, for example, the English contingent. This is confirmed by the fact that in the ethnic context, Arab and non-Arab representatives are more inclined to choose "national belonging" as important to them (Saqlain and Mahmood 190–207).

In the legislative acts of Saudi Arabia, the language policy is regulated, and the state language is the most important factor in consolidating the people of Saudi Arabia. The share of the adult population who speak the local language in the region is more than 46%; following the results of the implementation of the strategic plan of the Office of Language Development, the share of the adult population who speak the state language is 58% (Shukri 190–207).

Presentation of the Research Questions

1. What is the level of media influence on English language learners' identity and its implications for language education in Saudi Arabia?

Presentation of the Methodology of the Study

The complexity and importance of the problem considered required an interdisciplinary approach to the study of identity and implications for Language Education in Saudi Arabia; therefore, dissertation research data will be used. Data will be received from philosophy, history, sociology, political science, culturology, ethnolinguistics, sociolinguistics, and ethnopsycholinguistics. The research tasks will be solved through the use of the following methods:

Phenomenological and hermeneutic methods will be used when considering concepts of the world around us (the concept of the vital world) and the role of Language Education in Saudi Arabia in mastering vital peace (concept intentionality and intersubjectivity).

A constructivist and discursive approach is used to interpret representation and symbolic mediation of social reality (the theory of social construction of reality), national and ethnic identity (the theory of social constructs), and the actual use of language in a particular social context, namely, the formation of an identity.

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