One Identity or Two? Saudi Students' Perceptions of the Effect of Learning English on their Mother Tongue and Cultural Identity: A Mixed-Method Study

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Abstract:

The aim of the study is to explore Saudi students' perceptions of learning English and its effects on their mother tongue (Arabic) and cultural identity. To achieve the aims of the study, a questionnaire including an open-ended question was distributed, and online interviews were conducted. Thirty-nine Saudi students, enrolled in international schools where English was the medium of instruction, answered the questionnaire, and twelve of them were interviewed afterward. Overall, the results revealed that the students preferred to use English to communicate and express themselves. Furthermore, the results revealed that they were aware of the importance of their mother tongue, their culture, and their Islamic identity as Saudis. However, the quantitative results showed that they used English in daily situations more often than Arabic, as well as during leisure activities, such as reading and watching films. Additionally, the students considered the English language to have more of an effect on their cultural identities than on their Arabic language. Therefore, Saudi students appeared to have developed the identity of English learners who fit into a wider global world and a Saudi Islamic identity in which religious values were highly respected and appreciated. The study provides implications for parents and educators, including an emphasis on teaching English to children from a young age, while emphasizing the importance of the Arabic language and culture.
Key Words: cultural identity, mother tongue, learning English

هوية واحدة أم هويتان؟ تصورات الطلاب السعوديين لتأثير تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية على لغتهم الأم وهويتهم الثقافية: دراسة ذات منهج مختلط

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أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المشارك بالكلية التطبيقية   أستاذ اللغويات التطبيقية المشارك بمعهد اللغة الإنجليزية

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المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تصورات الطلاب السعوديين عن تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية وأثرها على لغتهم الأم (العربية) وهويتهم الثقافية. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة؛ تم توزيع استبانة تتضمن سؤالًا مفتوحًا، وأُجريت مقابلات عبر الإنترنت. أجاب عن الاستبانة تسعة وثلاثون طالبًا سعوديًا يدرسون في مدارس دولية؛ حيث اللغة الإنجليزية هي لغة التدريس، وتمت مقابلة اثني عشر منهم بعد ذلك. كشفت النتائج أن الطلاب السعوديين يفضلون استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية للتواصل والتعبير عن أنفسهم، وأنهم على دراية بأهمية لغتهم الأم وثقافتهم وهويتهم الإسلامية السعودية. ومع ذلك، أظهرت النتائج الكمية أنهم يستخدمون اللغة الإنجليزية في المواقف اليومية أكثر من اللغة العربية، وكذلك أثناء الأنشطة الترفيهية مثل القراءة ومشاهدة الأفلام، وأن للغة الإنجليزية تأثيرًا على هويتهم الثقافية أكثر من تأثيرها على اللغة العربية؛ لذا، يبدو أن الطلاب السعوديين قد طوروا هوية متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية التي تتناسب مع العولمة، وفي الوقت نفسه، يحافظون على هويتهم الإسلامية السعودية التي تحظى فيها القيم الدينية باحترام وتقدير كبيرين. تقدم الدراسة توصيات للآباء والمعلمين تشمل التركيز على تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية للأطفال منذ الصغر، مع التأكيد على أهمية اللغة والثقافة العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الثقافية، اللغة الأم، تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

Introduction

The relationship between foreign/second language (L2) learning and identity has received significant attention in the existing literature (e.g., Ali & Hadi 2022; Kim et al., 2010; Norton, 2000; Richards, J. C., 2023; Sung, 2016). Norton (2013) identified identity as one's concept of the relationship between oneself and the world, and how this relationship is presented in different contexts. The main consensus in this area is that the nature of this relationship is complex, as various factors, such as gender, age, culture, and religion, amongst others, are involved (Norton, 2010). In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), it has been argued that learning the English language not only involves learning L2 knowledge and skills, but also entails constructing and reconstructing EFL learners' identities, which is a complex process (Norton, 2010). Cultural identity can be defined as.

individuals' nature and nurture which includes their experiences, talents, skills, beliefs, values, and knowledge, in other words, who they are, what their status is in their family, school, work, environment and country and, beyond that in the world as with globalisation the world is getting smaller (Altugan, 2015, p. 1160).

Anjanillah et al. (2021) found that EFL learners did not have only one identity, but rather multiple ones as a result of how English, as a language, is constructed worldwide. Nonetheless, it is widely attested that '[t]he language people speak is constructed by their identity and their identity is formed by the language they speak' (Gholaminejad, 2017, p. 64).

Due to globalisation and the worldwide domination of the English language, Saudi Arabia has established many international schools at which the curricula and instruction are mainly delivered in English. These schools have become targeted by many parents who live in large cities and who believe in the importance of education and competency in English. Thus, many middle- and upper-class families have enrolled their children in such schools and have begun to communicate with their children in English at home from a very young age. The observation that later became prevalent is that many Saudi children mainly preferred to communicate in English (Asiri, 2019; Mansory, 2019). This phenomenon has raised concerns amongst educators and parents regarding how this shift could affect children's mother language and culture (Fillmore, 1991; Nishanthi, 2020). Therefore, the aim of this research was to explore Saudi students' perceptions of the effect of learning English on their Arabic language and cultural identity.

Literature Review

The studies in the existing literature on learners' perceptions of the effect of learning English on their mother tongue and cultural identity present results along a continuum. On one hand, there are findings that show that communicating in English affects one's identity and culture negatively and creates social conflicts. For example, Moná and Rodríguez (2017) examined the construction of learner identity amongst a group of seventh graders in EFL classrooms in public schools in Colombia. The authors found that, even when students were reluctant to learn English, they could construct 'unstable and strategic identities' to impress their peers (Moná & Rodríguez, 2017). In other words, there were contradictions between the learners' investment in learning English and what they believed about learning English. This indicated that the identity of these learners was unstable and revealed contradictions; this was clear in the questionnaire and interview responses, as 85% of the learners indicated that English was important in life in order to have a better future. On the other hand, the findings of Benzehaf (2023) indicated that learners have positive views towards multilingualism and believe that multilingualism allow them to have a 'modern' cultural identity.

ꞌDespite the fact that learning English is perceived positively, learning English could promote a Western culture: Belhiah and Al-hussien (2016) examined high school students', parents' and teachers' perceptions of the impact of English as a medium of instruction on students' identities and their Arabic language proficiency. The results of this study revealed that most of the students preferred to read in

English, but that 90% of them preferred to write in Arabic. However, when asked about the preferred language for expressing feelings and emotions, half of the students chose Arabic, and the other half chose English. Some students were aware that the use of the Arabic language helped to preserve their culture and traditions. When asked about the language that they used to communicate with their families and peers, the majority of the students agreed that it was Arabic. However, some students felt that English was easier to use when communicating and expressing their feelings. They also linked the reasons for the use of English to peer pressure, the curriculum and school regulations. Finally, the participants believed that their exposure to Western cultures and values played a major role in promoting a Western identity. Finally, the researchers recommended that Arabic courses needed to be adjusted to provide learners with sufficient knowledge about the Arab culture and their heritage. The findings of this study point to the importance of exploring the effect of learning English on students' L1 and their cultural identity.

To avoid any undesirable effect on EFL learners' mother tongues and cultural identities, Cummins (2001) strongly recommended a home environment in which communication took place using the mother tongue. The study presented findings pertaining to the role of the children's mother tongue in educational development. The results of the study showed that, although bilingualism had positive effects on children's linguistic and educational development, the level of the mother tongue development fostered the development of the L2. The results also showed that it was easy for children to lose the ability to use their mother tongues during the early years of school, which in turn created a huge gap between the parents and the children once they became adolescents. Based on the findings, Cummins emphasised the importance of preserving the children's cultural and linguistic identity at home to help build their future learning.

Many studies have investigated students' preferences regarding the language of instruction at school in different contexts (Abdeljaoued, 2023; Ndamba,2008; Orfan, S. N., & Seraj, M. Y., 2022). As an example, Ndamba (2008) investigated the language of instruction that children in grades 1 to 3 and their parents preferred. To answer the research question, the researcher conducted interviews with the students and their parents, and a questionnaire was designed to obtain information from other participants. The findings of the study showed that most of the students preferred to read and write in English, but they felt more comfortable using their mother tongue when they spoke. The researcher believed that preference for English was transferred from the parents, as the surveyed parents believed that English was more important than was the first language (L1). The positive attitude towards English was further enhanced by the fact that English was seen as a gateway to future success. Moreover, the researcher believed that the reason that the parents had negative attitudes towards the L1 may have been due to their ignorance of the role of the mother tongue in learning. Finally, the author believed that future investigations should study ways of enhancing the skill levels in the L1 and the L2.

It is worth noting that the study of language and identity is prevalent in research on heritage languages, as these studies usually address the ways that learning and communicating in English or French could affect the use of the mother tongue and the children's identity and culture. Spernes (2012) investigated students' experiences of being multilingual in Kenya; more specifically, the study explored how the prohibition of the use of the mother tongue (Nandi) could affect the children's identities. Although all the participants and teachers shared the same mother tongue, they were required to use either English or Swahili at school; they were not allowed to use their mother tongue except in mother tongue lessons. The researcher collected data from different resources, such as observations, focus groups, interviews, and written texts. The findings showed that, although the students appeared to be proud of their culture and identity, they agreed that their mother tongue was not appropriate for the school setting. They believed that Nandi should only be used with friends and at home. In addition, they stated that they felt fortunate to be able to speak more than one language. They also understood the importance of mastering English and Swahili to communicate with people outside of Kenya.

The construction of the English language and what it means in a global world has been explored by many researchers. Bunce et al. (2016) linked the construction of English to the three qualities of being modern, progressive, and consumptive. Firstly, the aspect of 'modernity' in English can be seen in its worldwide use, such as on the internet, in advertisements and on social media. Secondly, the 'progressive' aspect of English is reflected in people's attitudes towards the role of native English speakers in successful language-learning outcomes. Thirdly, the 'consumerism' aspect of English indicates that English is mainly used for commercial purposes (Bunce et al., 2016). This view of English provides a lens through which the students' motives for using English will be examined.

A few studies have been conducted in the Saudi context to investigate the relationship between children's identity and the use of English language. For example, Asiri (2019) conducted a mixed-methods study to investigate the effect of using English as a medium of instruction on children's mother language and cultural identity. The findings revealed that the use of English has a negative effect on the children's L1 and their identity. Additionally, Al-Qahtani and Al Zumor (2015) found that although some parents expressed a belief that English had a negative effect on their children's mother tongue, most of them had positive attitudes towards using English as a medium of instruction. The parents also believed that learning English at an early age is more effective.

In a nutshell, several studies have explored the effect of learning English on children's identity and culture. However, researchers are still keen to investigate this phenomenon from various angles to achieve a more precise understanding of it in different contexts. The current study investigated Saudi students' perceptions of the effect of learning English on their Arabic language and cultural identity and examined the patterns of language use in their daily lives. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Saudi school students use Arabic and English in everyday situations and when expressing themselves?

2. How do Saudi school students perceive the effect of learning English on their Arabic language, culture, and religious values?

3. From the Saudi school students' perspectives, what motivates Saudi parents to communicate with their children in either English or Arabic?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method explanatory design. The researchers first used a questionnaire to obtain the Saudi students' language preferences and their attitudes towards the use of Arabic and English. This was followed by conducting online interviews with structured questions to obtain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon.

Participants

This study used a purposeful sampling technique, as only specific participants were selected to participate (Creswell, 2012). Thirty-nine female and male students between the ages of 14 and 18 responded to the questionnaire, and 12 of them agreed to be interviewed online afterwards. The rationale behind choosing this age group is that awareness of identity can be reflected in this age since it is a very complex notion.

The participants were all Saudi students who were studying at international schools in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and who were competent in the English language. By being enrolled in international schools

since elementary school, the children are exposed to international curricula since early age which ensured their English language competency. Both the questionnaire and the links to the interviews were sent to the students' parents via WhatsApp.

Data Collection Tools

Questionnaire

The researchers used a questionnaire to investigate the students' patterns of English and Arabic use in their daily lives and their perceptions of the effect that the English language had on their Arabic language, culture and identity. The questionnaire was adapted from Asir's (2019) work and was modified to suit the purpose of the study. It was designed according to a four-point Likert scale (always, often, sometimes, and never), and included five sections that corresponded to a particular theme. These themes were:

(1) the use of English language in daily situations,

(2) the use of English language compared to Arabic during leisure activities,

(3) the effect of learning English on the Arabic language,

(4) the effect of learning English on cultural aspects, and

(5) the preferred language when expressing oneself.

The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part consisted of four demographic questions in which the students were asked about their ages, genders and whether they studied at an international school. The second part consisted of 27 attitudinal questions related to the aims of the study. The final part was an open-ended question: 'Would you like to add anything else?' This question gave the students the opportunity to add other views related to the effect of English on their identities. The questionnaire was reviewed by two experts to ensure the clarity of the items, followed by a pilot study with a group of participants to check the reliability of the questionnaire.

Interviews

The second phase of the study involved conducting structured, online interviews with the students. The aim of the interviews was to obtain a more thorough understanding of the phenomenon. Due to the fact that our participants are children between the ages of 14-18, we thought that utilizing structured interviews would elicit more required responses. The interview consisted of seven questions to obtain the students' views regarding the positive and negative aspects of learning and using English in communication. The students were also asked about the effect that using English had on their identity and about their parents' motives for using English instead of Arabic as a way of communicating with them. Finally, the students were asked to share ideas that could assist other students to improve their mother tongue.

Data Analysis

Questionnaire

After receiving the students' responses, the questionnaire data were organised and coded on Excel. The items were numerically coded and were given a value from 1 to 4, as follows: 1 = always, 2 = often, 3 = sometimes and 4 = never. The data were then transferred to SPSS for the analysis. A descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to identify the means, standard deviation and frequency of the responses. A one-sample t-test was then performed to investigate whether the mean scores for the themes were significantly different. Finally, the researchers used content analysis to analyse the responses to the open-ended question.

Interviews

The researchers used content analysis to analyse the data obtained from the interviews. The researchers first examined the students' responses to identify key points; these points were then classified to form broader categories.

Ethical Considerations

Since many of the participants in the study were under the age of 18, parental consent was ensured. All the participants were contacted via their parents, who agreed for their children to participate in the research after being given an information sheet about the study. The parents were then asked to send the questionnaire and the links to the interviews to their children. A

consent form was included at the beginning of the questionnaire and the interviews, which the parents were requested to complete by providing their information, their contact details, and their consent.

Results

The results obtained from the questionnaire and the interviews are presented in this section.

Questionnaire Results

Descriptive Results

The descriptive statistics provide an overview and describe the data obtained from the participants with regard to their patterns of using English and Arabic on daily basis, their perceptions of using Arabic at home and their perceptions of learning English. The descriptive results are presented in relation to each thematic item in the questionnaire. Table 1 below shows the rate of students' use of English in daily situations.

Table 1 The Use of English in Daily Situations

Items	%	%	%	%	M	SD
	Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**		
1. I speak English with my parents	7.9	26.3	52.6	13.2	2.71	.802
2. I speak English with my friends	23.7	52.6	21.1	2.6	2.03	.753
3. I speak English when I go out (e.g., to restaurants, cinemas, or hospitals)	23.7	39.5	26.3	10.5	2.24	.943

The results in Table 1 reveal that the students sometimes used English when they spoke to their parents (52.6%), while they often spoke English with their friends (52.6 %). In addition, 39.5% of the students indicated that they often used the English language in restaurants, cinemas, or hospitals.

With regard to the second theme, Table 2 below presents the descriptive results related to the use of English (compared to Arabic) during leisure activities.

Table 2 The Use of English (compared to Arabic) during Leisure Activities

Items	%	%	%	%	M	SD
	Always	**Often**	**Sometimes**	**Never**		
1. I like to read in English	68.4	10.5	21.1	0	1.53	.830
2. I like to read in Arabic	13.2	15.8	44.7	26.3	2.84	.973
3. I enjoy reading in English more than I enjoy reading in Arabic	60.5	18.4	15.8	5.3	1.66	.938
4. I prefer watching English channels	63.2	31.6	5.3	0	1.42	.599

| 5. I prefer watching English media (films, shows, etc.) | 76.3 | 7.9 | 15.8 | 0 | 1.39 | .755 |
| 6. I prefer listening to English media | 63.2 | 13.2 | 23.7 | 0 | 1.61 | .855 |

The results in Table 2 show that a high number of students preferred to use the English language instead of the Arabic language during their leisure activities. About 68.4% preferred to read in English, while only 13.2% preferred to read in Arabic. Moreover, 76.3 % of the participants preferred to watch English films and shows. Over 60% also indicated that they preferred to listen to English media.

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the Saudi students' views regarding the effect of learning English on cultural aspects, which was the third theme addressed in the

questionnaire.

Table 3 The Effect of Learning English on Cultural Aspects

Items	%	%	%	%	M	SD
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never		
1. I like to know more about English occasions (such as Halloween) than Islamic occasions (such as Eid Alfitr and Eid Aladh)	0	7.9	28.9	63.2	3.55	.645
2. I enjoy celebrating Western occasions (such as Halloween) more than Islamic occasions (such as Eid)	0	0	23.7	76.3	3.76	.431
3. I know more about international celebrations such as Bonfire Night and April's Fools Day than Saudi celebrations such as the Saudi National Day, Janadriyah and Saudi Founding Day.	2.6	13.2	28.9	55.3	3.37	.819
4. I am more interested in learning about English traditions and customs than learning about Saudi traditions.	2.6	2.6	42.1	52.6	3.45	.686
5. Learning the English language affects my knowledge of Arabic traditions.	5.3	10.5	31.6	52.6	3.32	.873
6. I understand English jokes and memes better than Arabic jokes and memes.	26.3	26.3	31.6	15.8	2.37	1.051
7. Using English in school instead of Arabic will affect my knowledge about Arabic traditions.	2.6	5.3	28.9	63.2	3.53	.725
8. Learning English causes me to know less about Arabic-speaking countries.	10.5	7.9	23.7	57.9	3.29	1.011
9. Learning English leads to the neglect of Arabic traditions and customs.	0	5.3	15.8	78.9	3.74	.554
10. Learning English makes me want to learn more about English-speaking countries.	15.8	23.7	34.2	26.3	2.71	1.037

The results in Table 3 show that a high number of students understood English jokes and memes better than they did Arabic ones. However, the majority of the students believed that learning English did not affect their cultural aspects. As the table shows, more than 70% of the participants stated that they did not enjoy celebrating Western occasions more than they did Islamic occasions, while 63.2% also indicated that they preferred to know about Islamic occasions as opposed to Western occasions. In addition, the results suggest that 78.9 % of the students believed that learning English did not lead to the neglect of Arabic traditions and customs. A high percentage of children (63.2%) believed that the use

of the English language as a medium of instruction in schools did not affect their knowledge of Arabic traditions.

With regard to the language the students used to express themselves, Table 4 below displays the students' preferences.

Table 4 The Preferred Language when Expressing Oneself

Items	%	%	%	%	M	SD
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never		
1. Speaking English affects my Arabic language in a negative way.	13.2	13.2	34.2	39.5	3.00	1.040
2. My parents encourage me to speak Arabic.	28.9	26.3	10.5	34.2	2.50	1.247
3. I speak English when I want to express myself.	39.5	23.7	23.7	13.2	2.11	1.085
4. My parents encourage me to speak English.	15.8	18.4	34.2	31.6	2.82	1.062
5. I feel shy speaking Arabic in front of my friends.	7.9	7.9	5.3	78.9	3.55	.950

The results suggest that 39.5% of the students believed that English did not affect their Arabic language in a negative way. By contrast, 34.2% of them believed that English sometimes affected their Arabic language negatively. As can been seen, there was little difference between the percentage of students who believed that English did not affect Arabic in a negative way and those who believed the opposite. Moreover, 39.5 % of the students indicated that they preferred to use the English language to express themselves. With regard to the parents' role in encouraging their children to speak either English or Arabic, it appeared that the parents encouraged the use of Arabic at home more than they did the use of the English language. This can be seen in the table, as 28.9% of the students revealed that their parents always encouraged them to speak Arabic and 26.3% indicated that their parents often encouraged them to do so. The data also reveal that the students did not feel shy about speaking Arabic in front of their friends (78.9%).

Table 5 The Effect of Learning English on My Arabic Language

Items	%	%	%	%	M	SD
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Never		
1. I am capable of understanding the Arabic terms related to Islam such as (زكاة, فريضة, مناسك, الخ)*	52.6	26.3	18.4	2.6	1.71	.867
2. I find it difficult to understand complex Arabic terms such as (قمرة، كوكبة، تفوق)*	5.3	18.4	42.1	34.2	3.05	.868

The results in Table 5 show that most of the students were able to understand the Arabic terms related to Islam, as 52.6% indicated that they always understand these terms and only 2.6% said that they never understood them. Nonetheless, 34.2% of the children revealed that they never understood complex Arabic terms.

Inferential Results (One-sample t-test)

A one-sample t-test was performed to investigate whether the mean score for each variable exceeded two. This hypothesised value was used because it was the midpoint of the Likert scale score, which ranged from 'Always' (1) to 'Never' (4); a 95% confidence interval for the mean was computed for each variable. Table 6 presents the t-test results for the mean score for the use of English in daily situations and during leisure activities.

Table 6 T-test Results for the Mean Score for the Use of English Language in Daily Situations

and in Leisure Activities

Questionnaire Themes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
The use of English language in daily situations	2.3684	.66459	<.001	.36842	.1500	.5869
The use of English language during leisure activities	1.7412	.37508	<.001	-.25877	-.3821	-.1355

Test Value=2

The results indicate that using English language in daily situations had a higher mean than using English language during leisure activities, with a statistically significant difference (p < .001). This indicates that the children used English language in their daily situations more often than they did during leisure activities.

Another t-test was run to compare the mean score of the effect of learning English on children's Arabic language to the effect on cultural aspects. Table 7 presents the t-test results for the mean score for the effect of learning English on the children's Arabic language and on cultural aspects.

Table 7 T-test Results for the Mean Score for the Effect of Learning English on the Children's Arabic Language and on Cultural Aspects

Questionnaire Themes	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
The effect of learning English on my Arabic Language	2.3816	.45670	<.001	.38158	.2315	.5317
The effect of learning English on cultural aspects	3.3079	.47726	<.001	1.30789	1.1510	1.4648

Test Value=2

The results above show that the effect of learning English on cultural aspects had a higher mean score than the normal score of 2 (M=3.30). This indicates that the children believed that English had an effect on cultural aspects.

Open-Ended Question Results

Only five students responded to the open-ended question: 'Would you like to add anything else?' Most of the participants mentioned that learning English did not affect their Arabic language. In addition, one participant mentioned that 'although it is important to learn English; however, it should not affect our mother language'. The result of the open-ended question supports the findings of the questionnaire items in that they all show that Saudi students were aware of the importance of learning English, as well as the importance of competence in their mother tongue and their Saudi culture and identity.

Interview Results

The analysis of the students' interviews provided more details about their attitudes towards their language preferences and their use of the English and Arabic languages. The interviews consisted of seven questions to which 12 participants responded.

The purpose of the first question was to determine students' views regarding the positive aspects of learning English. They were asked: 'In your opinion, what are the positive aspects (if any) of learning

English?' It was found that the students had positive attitudes towards learning English. Several participants responded that learning English helped them to communicate and would give them better job opportunities in the future. For example, one student stated, 'English is the official language in the world, so learning and understanding the language can help [me to] communicate in a lot of countries and with so many nationalities. Moreover, another participant responded, 'English is a more international and diverse way of living, it allows you to have better job opportunities. This shows that the students believed that learning English was essential and helpful in many ways.

The next interview question addressed the students' opinions about the negative aspects of learning English. Three of the participants believed that learning English did not have any negative aspects, while nine of them mentioned that learning English might have a negative effect on their mother tongue. One of the participants reported, 'It often overshadows a person's native language, Arabic'. Another participant stated, 'Arab kids nowadays seem to know English more than their native language which is Arabic. It is important to learn English, but it is more important to learn Arabic because it reflects who we are. This shows that the students were aware that learning English may have a negative effect on their native language.

In addition, the third and fourth questions aimed to explore the children's attitudes towards the effect that communicating in English had on their Arabic identity and religious values: 'Do you think communicating in English with your family at home could affect your Arabic identity and your religious values? Why?' and 'In what way could communicating in English with your family at home affect your Arabic identity and your religious values?' The results of this study revealed that five participants believed that communicating in English did not affect their Arabic identity or their religious values. For example, one of the participants stated, 'Speaking English is the same as speaking any other language and it will not affect your identity or your religious values'. However, another participant believed that communicating in English might have both positive and negative effects: 'It can affect both positively and negatively. Positively like how you can be open to new ideas and cultures and new types of education and negatively by taking that openness to extreme levels and using it against your Arabic identity and religious values'. Three other students expressed the same view.

Furthermore, the purpose of the fifth and sixth questions was to explore the parents' motivations to communicate in English and Arabic with their children at home. A number of participants indicated that their parents communicated with them in English to help them to become fluent in English. Three participants also indicated that their parents used English to help them to understand difficult Arabic terms, which indicated that some children were more fluent in English than they were in their mother tongue. Two participants also indicated that their parents used Arabic to help them to improve their Arabic language, while some participants believed that their parents used Arabic as a means of communication at home to preserve their Arabic identity. This indicates that some parents were aware of the importance of using Arabic with their children.

Finally, the purpose of the last interview question was to investigate a variety of useful ways to improve the children's Arabic language. The participants were asked, 'In your opinion, what can be done to improve your Arabic language?' Most of them suggested reading Arabic books, including reciting the Holy Quran. However, two participants believed that watching Arabic series and using Arabic instead of English to communicate with people could help to improve their Arabic language.

Table 8 below summarises the categories and the key points in the qualitative data.

Table 8 Qualitative Data Key Points

Categories	Key points	Frequency	Percentage
Positive aspects of learning English	Communication	9	75%
	Job opportunities	3	25%
Negative aspects of learning English	None	3	25%
	Losing the mother tongue	9	75%
The effect of English on Arabic identity and religious values	None	5	41%
	Affects the Arabic identity but not the religious values	3	25%
	Affect actions and values	3	25%
	Both negative and positive effects	1	9%
Parents' motivation to communicate in English	Fluency	6	50%
	Clarifying Arabic terms	3	25%
	No response	3	25%
Parents' motivation to communicate in Arabic	Protect identity	7	58%
	Improve Arabic language	4	33%
	No response	1	9%
Ways to improve Arabic language	Reading and writing	7	58%
	Watching Arabic shows	3	25%
	Communication	2	17%

Discussion

In this section, the findings of the study will be discussed in accordance with the three research questions. The results of both the quantitative and the qualitative data will be discussed and drawn upon in response to each research question.

Research Question 1: To What Extent Do Saudi School Students Use Arabic and English in Everyday Situations and When Expressing Themselves?

The results of the questionnaire revealed that the Saudi students generally used Arabic and English equally in daily situations, particularly at home with their families. However, the results showed a greater use of English with friends, as well as when going out and during leisure activities. The t-test results indicated that the students used English more often in daily situations, such as in communicating with family members and friends more than they did during leisure activities like reading books and watching TV. The interpretation of this is twofold. Firstly, the equal use of English and Arabic at home indicates that the Saudi students were aware of the importance of the two languages in their lives. Arabic was their mother tongue; they perceived it positively and realised its importance, as demonstrated clearly in the qualitative data responses. This could also indicate that their families are also aware of the importance of both languages. Conversely, English is an international language that contributes significantly to their

education and was perceived positively as a language that offers better opportunities for future success. The findings are in line with those of Ndamba (2008), who investigated students' preferences regarding the language of instruction at school. Most importantly, the findings agree with Ndamba's findings in that a positive attitude towards English was directly associated with future success. The results also provide insights pertaining to the relationship between beliefs and practices. That is, the Saudi students' use of English and Arabic reflected their beliefs about each language and the contexts with which the languages were associated and for which they were best suited.

Research Question 2: How Do Saudi School Students Perceive the Effect of Learning English on Their Arabic Language and Cultural Identity?

The results of the questionnaire showed that around 40% of the students thought that learning English never affected Arabic in a negative way, while 34% of them thought that it sometimes affected their Arabic language negatively. Similarly, 52% of the participants indicated that they could always understand Islamic terms, but that it was sometimes difficult for them to understand complex Arabic terms (42%). A possible explanation for this might be their continuous exposure to English terminology while reading English books, as a high number of students mentioned that they preferred to read English books instead of Arabic books (60%).

The results of the online interviews showed that many of the students thought that learning English might lead to the loss of competence in their mother tongue. However, these results indicated strong beliefs with regard to the cultural identity. In other words, the Saudi students believed that learning English might lead them to adopt Western cultural views, but that it would never affect their Islamic religious values. Conversely, they indicated that learning English was not related to the formation of a new identity, as English was only a school subject or a major. They reported that they were not different people when communicating in English, and that the L1 and the L2 were simply two means of describing one person.

The t-test results showed that the students believed that English had more of an effect on their cultural identity than it did on their Arabic language. These results were contradictory because the students reported that English did not affect their cultural identity in the interviews, while the questionnaire revealed a different view. Erikson (1963) believes that people are constantly exposed to new situations and responsibilities; therefore, their identities evolve dynamically. Erikson holds that a person's identity is formed throughout the course of their life and is influenced by their views, careers, and relationships. This can be related to the work of Moná and Rodríguez (2017), who found that learning English might affect one's identity and culture negatively and create social conflicts. Similarly, we can consider that the participating Saudi students were completely aware of the importance of their mother tongue, culture, and religious values, but that their practice was contrary to their beliefs because English was more prevalent in their daily lives. That is, the Saudi students might have been constructing strategic identities that matched the wider global world.

These findings will be explained by considering what English means in a global world. Following Bunce et al. (2016), who linked the construction of English to the three qualities of being modern, progressive, and consumptive, we can say that the Saudi students used English as a modern language and as a language that they could use on social media. Finally, Saudi students clearly used English in a consumptive way because they also used it for commercial purposes, such as shopping online, in their jobs and so forth.

In line with Gholaminejad's (2017) findings, the participants' responses showed that learning English did not affect their Arabic Islamic identity. While many of them stated that they mainly communicated and expressed themselves in English, both languages were considered to be a means of expressing one person, not two. The students considered English

to be a language that was used for academic purposes. This could be attributed to the notion of 'academic dependency', which means that science is mainly dependent on English and that many academic books are written, and lessons are presented in English (Alatas, 2003). Thus, the Saudi students' perceptions of learning English reflected the three qualities listed by Bunce et al. (2016), as well as their beliefs about English as a form of academic dependency.

At present, one can see that people tend to have a sense of dual identities because of globalisation and technological development (Caldas-Coulthard & Iedema, 2008). This makes it challenging to classify people according to groups, for example, according to class, race, or gender. People shift from one to another of their multiple identities based on the roles that they play in different contexts; consequently, they view themselves based on the identity dimension that is activated in a particular context (Wu, 2011). Thus, the Saudi students seemed to have developed two identities, namely the identity of English learners who fit into a wider global world in which the English language and culture are prevalent, and a Saudi Islamic identity that strongly emphasises and appreciates religious values. This claim was also proposed by Anjanillah et al. (2021), who stated that the English language contributed to the development of multiple identities for English language learners.

Research Question 3: From the Saudi School Students' Perspectives, What Motivates Saudi Parents to Communicate with Their Children in Either English or in Arabic?

The answer to this question was mainly derived from the interviews results. The students noted that their parents might be using English at home to help to facilitate their fluency in English. Another reason for the parents to use English was to explain the meaning of complex Arabic terms. Other reasons for using Arabic included the parents' desire to improve their children's Arabic language and to demonstrate their belief in its importance for the development of their children's mother tongue and the Arabic culture.

Unlike Spernes' (2012) study, the results in the present study revealed that the Saudi students aged 14 to 18 were highly aware of the two languages that they had acquired, as well as their parents' patterns of language use at home. This awareness further extended to the recommendations they suggested for improving their Arabic language, as they believed that reading and writing in Arabic, watching Arabic series, and communicating with friends in Arabic would improve their competence in their mother tongue.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

The study explored Saudi students' perceptions of learning English and its effect on their mother tongue and their cultural identity. With regard to patterns of language use, the results revealed that the Saudi students preferred to use English for communication and when expressing themselves; they viewed English positively and believed that it was crucial for their future success, as indicated by the qualitative results. Furthermore, the results showed that the Saudi students had strong appreciation for their mother tongue, their culture, and their identity. In addition, the quantitative results showed that the students used English in daily situations more often than they did during leisure activities such as reading and watching films, and that they considered the English language to have more of an effect on their cultural identity than it did on their Arabic language. However, Saudi students understood the importance of Arabic language as their mother tongue. Based on the results, we concluded that the Saudi students appeared to have developed two identities, namely an English identity and a Saudi Arabian Islamic identity. Therefore, it is essential for parents and educators to emphasise teaching English to children from a young age while also emphasising the use of the Arabic language at home, as well as teaching children about their religion and Islamic values.

We recommend that future studies should explore the phenomenon with participants from a younger age group to provide implications for the parents of younger children. Furthermore, future studies might investigate the differences between the beliefs and the practices of both parents and children to shed light on any contradictions in identity construction. Finally, future research might explore data from Saudi students who are enrolled at public schools in which Arabic is the medium of instruction to compare the perceptions of the two groups.

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