Parents’ Attitudes towards the Implementation of Arabic as an Additional Language in Dubai: An Exploratory Case Study

Reem J. Razem
The British University in Dubai (BUiD), Dubai, UAE

Abstract—As part of the Ministry of Education (MoE) language policies, the UAE government made Arabic a compulsory subject for non-speakers in all private schools. The UAE government stipulates that private schools must offer a core programme in Arabic as a second language. Thus, non-Arab expatriates are required to study Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) from Grade 1 to Grade 9. This qualitative case study aims to explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) in one of the private British schools in Dubai, wherein AAL has been rated ‘Acceptable’. This exploration is a snapshot of attitudes held by parents as key stakeholders in the triad of school, teachers, and parents’ partnership towards the learning and teaching of AAL- whether approving or disapproving of it. It will illuminate some of the arising issues related to potential gaps between the implementation of AAL (practice) and the MoE framework (Theory). Ultimately, this paper aims to uncover challenges and proffer recommendations. To enhance the implementation of AAL in schools, this paper will propose potential parental engagement initiatives that can yield valuable policy decisions.

Index Terms—Arabic language, second language learning, parental attitudes, parental engagement, case study, discourse analysis, educational policy

I. INTRODUCTION

In the UAE, the official language is Arabic, yet the percentage of expatriates who live in Dubai is 91.3% (Dubai Statistics Center, 2016). This demographic imbalance resulted in English language dominance as the Lingua Franca (Randall & Samimi, 2010). This created a deep concern towards Emirati cultural identity especially the loss of mother tongue, Arabic Language (AL). However, the UAE reflects its commitment to preserving and empowering AL to enable it to regain its status. The UAE National Agenda 2021 underlines that “Arabic will re-emerge as a dynamic and vibrant language, expressed everywhere in speech and writing as a living symbol of the nation’s progressive Arab-Islamic values” (UAE Vision 2021, 2019).

At the national level, several initiatives were proclaimed to enhance the learning of AL such as the establishment of a dedicated educational facility at Zayed University to promote the teaching and learning of Arabic for non-Arabic speakers (Sambidge, 2012). As part of the Ministry of Education (MoE) language policies, the government made AL a compulsory subject for non-speakers in all private schools (Randall & Samimi, 2010). The UAE government stipulates that private schools must offer a core programme in Arabic as a second language (UAE Government, 2018). Thus, non-Arab expatriates are required to study Arabic as an Additional Language (AAL) from Grade 1 to Grade 9, and schools should provide lessons four times a week (KHDA, 2019) (see Appendix A). The aim of AAL is to enhance “their (expatriates’) understanding of the local culture and give them significant opportunities and advantages in later life” (KHDA, 2016). Hence, the learning of AAL can be conducive of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of the local values, as it could offer better career prospects. Though AAL is not explicitly and officially mentioned as a ‘Policy’, schools that do not provide it are fined as it is considered a violation under the Executive Council Resolution No. (2) of 2017 (KHDA, 2017). According to Souza and Del Olmo (2019), language policy is what the government does officially through legislation and judicial decisions to determine how languages are used to meet national priorities, hence AAL fits this definition. Thus, this paper will discuss AAL as it pertains to language-related educational policies in the UAE.

Since AAL ‘policy’ has been imposed in a top-down approach, leading to a sense of disenfranchisement amongst numerous stakeholders, significant challenges arose (Heck, 2009), for example, the need for revamping the Arabic curriculum, providing teacher training opportunities in AAL, motivating students to learn it (Bell, 2016), and the challenge for the majority of expat parents (who do not know any Arabic) was helping their children in learning AAL (“Arabic in Foreign Private Schools” na). Moreover, parents voiced their concerns in the media over their children’s lack of proficiency after years of learning Arabic in Dubai schools (Clarke, 2016; Ahmed, 2012). This coincided with the KHDA’s school inspection reports which revealed that the majority of Dubai schools have reached an ‘Acceptable’ evaluation in teaching AAL (Knowledge Group, 2016). This highlights a need to explore the reasons behind the shortcomings of implementing AAL in schools.
As the MoE is constantly honing its educational policies to ensure that the programs developed in its schools comply with international standards, MoE has lately devised ‘The 2017 framework for teaching and learning AAL’ (See Appendix B) in private schools and determined three key parameters that reflect language proficiency: functions, context and content, and type and level of text (MoE, 2017). One empirical indicator that MoE has added as a national goal, which measures the progress in Arabic toward the 2021 National Agenda, is to ensure that 90 percent of students in the ninth grade have a proficiency in Arabic (MoE, 2017). Yet, this seems to target Emirati students only and indicate a significant policy gap as there is no specific government targets for the expatriate students.

Although schools, teachers and students are affected by language policies that are implemented, parents are considered the guardians of students, end-users and key stakeholders, and have certain academic expectations for their children. From the review of related literature, it is obvious that the vantage point of parents is rarely studied. In addition, “a bottom-up approach to education reform fosters sustainable and ‘deep’ educational change that is driven by a common social vision among key stakeholders” (Warner & Burton, 2017). According to Fowler (2013) “although students are the direct clients of most policies in education, …their parents are the indirect, behind-the-scenes clients. The parents become players in the evaluation arena much more frequently than their children do” (p. 255). Therefore, this study will explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of AAL.

The main purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the attitudes of parents towards the implementation of AAL (that received a rating of ‘Acceptable’) in one of the private British schools in Dubai. This exploration is a snapshot of attitudes held by parents as key stakeholders in the triad of school, teachers, and parents’ partnership (Sanders & Epstein, 2005) towards the learning and teaching of AAL- whether approving or disapproving of it. It will illuminate some of the arising issues related to potential gaps between the implementation of AAL (practice) and the MoE framework (goals). Ultimately, this paper aims to uncover challenges and formulate recommendations, which are elicited from parents. To enhance the implementation of AAL in schools, this paper will propose potential parental engagement initiatives that can yield valuable policy decisions.

Parents as end-users and key stakeholders are affected by the outcomes of implementing AAL in schools. Hence, the key research question is:

- What are the parents’ attitudes towards the implementation of AAL in a Dubai private school?
- The sub-questions that will assist in unpacking and answering the key research question include:
  - Do parents’ support the AAL requirement or not and why?
  - What roles are parents playing -if any- in supporting the teaching and learning of AAL?
- The data collection instrument used in the qualitative study is in depth semi-structured interviews. To answer the research questions and achieve their objectives, this paper will analyse and interpret collected data, discuss and report findings and their implications, and finally conclude with recommendations elicited from parents’ views.

Given the recent announcement of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum: “We have a national agenda for Arabic language, and we have issued directives to work further through studies and initiatives to cement the Arabic language as a language of life” (“Emirates 24/7,” 2018), this paper is considered timely. In addition, this research will explore a perspective that is under researched, given the dearth of scholarly research on expatriate parents’ attitudes of AL learning matters in the UAE and the Arab world. Furthermore, AAL implementation faces many challenges and the KHDA inspection reports allude to the need to enhance the teaching and learning of AAL in schools since students are not attaining expected proficiency levels according to the MoE framework. Therefore, exploring parents’ attitudes will bring insight into what they think works and what is needed for AAL to work. This will contribute to the existing literature and provide original insights from a different vantage point. While this study is contextualised within the context of Dubai school system, it could have resonance for many expatriates living in the UAE and GCC.

For the purpose of better exploring parental attitudes, an overview of three related conceptual frameworks is presented. These include: parental engagement and second language learning motivation, heritage and non-heritage learners, and language attitudes.

A. Parental Engagement and Second Language Learning Motivation

The notion of parental engagement, involvement or encouragement is perceived as multifaceted and multidimensional in nature. This aligns with Fan and Chen’s (2001) definition of ‘parental involvement’ which comprises five dimensions: educational expectation/aspiration for children, communication with children about school-related matters, parental supervision, parental participation in school activities, and general parent involvement. From their meta-analysis study that scanned the literature on parental involvement and academic achievement, the scholars concluded that a positive influence of parental involvement impacts students’ academic achievement and parental expectation/aspiration for their children’s education achievement as it also shows the strongest relationship with students’ academic achievement. Likewise, Gardner (2010) posits in his Motivation battery, the ‘Parental Attitude Model’, in which parents play a crucial role whether actively or passively in influencing their children’s motivation to learn a Second Language (L2), either encourage or discourage. Similarly, Dornyei (2005) conceptualized the L2 Motivational Self-System and included ‘Parents’ Influence’ as a factor that impacts learners’ motivation to learn languages. The seminal research of the aforementioned scholars resonates strongly with the purpose of this study and
the need to illuminate parental involvement as a factor that impacts students’ language learning motivation and achievement in AAL within the context of Dubai.

B. Heritage and Non-heritage Learners

Scholars in the field of AAL have acknowledged a crucial nominal definition as they classified students according to their background into three separate groups: “learners of Arab descent, non-Arab Muslim learners, and learners of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds other than the first two groups” (Husseinali, 2006, p. 103). Hence, the first two are commonly called Heritage Learners (HLS) versus Non-Heritage Learners (NHLs) (Husseinali, 2006). While HLS can affiliate themselves to AL through family, religion, or identity, NHLs assume no cultural or personal affiliations to AL. This is also linked to parental roles and encouragement to learn AAL. Parents who affiliate themselves to an Arab or Muslim background are generally more encouraging, involved and proactive in their children’s learning of AL (Martin, 2009; Zabarah, 2015). Since their attitudes towards Arabic culture, Arab people and Arabic language are mostly favourable, their children are being held accountable for their progress and the parental expectation is high in matter of AL academic achievement.

C. Language Attitudes

Several Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies have correlated attitudes with motivations to learn a Target Language (TL). Smith (1971) defines attitude as a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or a situation, predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. An attitude is relatively enduring because it is learned. Oskamp and Schultz (2005) explicate, “A child’s attitudes are largely shaped by its own experiences with the world, but this is usually accomplished by explicit teaching and implicit modelling of parental attitudes” (p.126). In the ‘Parental Attitude Model’, Gardner and Lambert (1972) postulate four main attitude dimensions, which include attitudes towards: learning languages in general, the TL culture, learning the TL in specific, and the speakers of TL. When students enter the class with favourable attitudes about the target language, people and culture, they are more likely be open to perceive, respond, and learn the TL. Therefore, favourable parental attitudes and feelings towards learning AAL are needed to increase the motivation of the students in language learning classes. For the purposes of this paper and as means to capture the construct of parental attitudes, these dimensions will be adopted in framing the interview questions and guiding the data analysis.

To capture the attitudes of parents towards AAL, there are two theoretical lenses that underpin the study at hand. The first emerges from the seminal work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) which culminated in the ‘Parental Attitudes Model’ and interlinked parents’ attitudinal constructs with children’s language learning motivation and achievement. Some of the many ways parent exert attitudinal influence are “through discussion, by encouraging participation in foreign language exchange programmes and excursions, helping the child with homework, encouraging the child to read material written in the foreign language and by making the target language country the destination for a family holiday” (Young, 1994, p. 85).

The second lens is related to the attitude towards the TL, which links to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s (1991) theory of language status and prestige and the notion of Linguistic Capital. Individual attitudes toward foreign languages are strongly influenced by the special status of a language and its perceived significance and prestige of economic, social and cultural capital. Within the context of Dubai and due to the demographic reality, AL status has been in the decline. Therefore, this study adopts Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) ‘Parental Attitudes Model’ and Bourdieu’s (1991) Linguistic Capital, as they all guide the study instrument, analysis and discussion.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review is composed of selected comparable, parallel and local empirical studies that include two or more of the following keywords: Arabic language, second/foreign language acquisition/learning, parent, influence, engagement, attitude. The studies were analysed and synthesized by applying Machi and McEvoy’s (2012) ‘The Six Steps of the Literature Review’ model. The relevant and current comparable studies that investigated parents’ attitudes towards learning a foreign language were conducted in Slovenia (Lesnik, Bremen, & Greek, 2013) and Catalonia (Wilson, 2012). On the other hand, parallel studies investigated parents’ attitudes and learning Arabic as a second/foreign/additional language in the USA (Husseinali, 2006; Zabarah, 2015; Sehlouli & Mousa, 2016; Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). However, local studies from the UAE context that partially discussed parents’ attitudes, include: Hamidaddin (2008), Taha-Thomure (2008), Al-Hilali (2014), Baker & Hourani (2014), the Knowledge Group qualitative report (2016).

The initial critical review of research revealed that most studies used quantitative methods and questionnaires as data collection instrument. Therefore, qualitative methods were rarely used. Moreover, three major variables emerged when approaching parents’ attitudes and second/foreign language learning: parents’ background, parents’ perception of language status and significance, and parents’ perceptions of their own roles in their children’s language learning.

A. Parents’ Background: Heritage versus Non-heritage

One of the parallel studies conducted in four states in the USA, concluded that parents’ heritage/ethnic background impacts their attitudes toward language learning which in turn impacts children’s learning of TL (Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). The scholars noted a discrepancy between the attitudes and expectations of Arabic heritage versus non-Arabic
speaking parents regarding learning AL. “Arabic-speaking parents were significantly more involved than the non-Arabic-speaking parents” (Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017, p. 14). This confirms Husseinalli’s (2006) results that parental attitudes toward AL learning play a crucial role as it highlights heritage and non-heritage learners’ differing interests. Alili and Hassan (2017) also concluded that while Muslim non-Arab parents wanted their children to learn Arabic so they would be able to read and understand the Qur’an, Arab parents wanted their children to maintain their Arabic identity and culture, and NH parents encouraged their children to learn Arabic for instrumental reasons, to access job opportunities both in the USA and Middle East. Hence, parents’ background can steer them towards encouraging or discouraging their children’s learning of AAL.

B. Parents’ Perception of Language Status

According to Wilson (2012), Catalan was considered unimportant compared to English, which is regarded as a dominant language with a very high status. The perception of the significance and utility of the language plays an important role in parental encouragement to learn that language (Lesnik, Bremen, & Greek, 2013). Similarly, Arabic is on demand as it is considered ‘a critically needed language’ in the USA and this is reflected by parents’ encouraging their children to learn it (Husseiniali, 2006; Zabarah, 2015; Sehlaoui & Mousa, 2016; Al-Alili & Hassan, 2017). In the UAE, the majority of parents had a favourable attitude towards learning AAL as they perceived it to be an essential language to learn while living in the UAE (The Knowledge Group, 2016). While heritage parents’ rationale for learning Arabic is the fact that it is the language of the Qur’an and the heritage language (Hamidaddin, 2008), NH parents stressed that the utility of the language is of most importance (Sehlaoui & Mousa, 2016). However, according to Al-Hilali (2014) and Taha-Thomure (2008), parents believed that Arabic in Dubai is not used outside the classroom and that it has a lower status compared to English.

C. Parents’ Perceptions of Their Own Roles

Wilson posits that “for decades now, researchers have been aware of the influence that parental encouragement, or lack thereof, can have on individual’s motivation to learn L2” (2012, p. 44). In her study, Wilson emphasizes the lack of studies that investigate the parents’ attitudes and their influence on their children. Likewise, Baker and Hourani (2014) explored the nature of parental involvement in Abu Dhabi schools and their findings highlighted the importance and value of parental involvement in enhancing the learning experiences of children. Yet, parents perceived their roles as recipients of information on the curriculum, pedagogy changes and their children’s progress. Henceforth, knowledge-sharing and curriculum updates from the school were needed, especially since parents voiced several gaps in knowledge and communication. Baker and Hourani’s (2014) findings pointed to parents being disenfranchised and recommended a need to bridge the gap by conducting workshops on parent roles and responsibilities -as interventions- and opening channels of communication to express concerns raised by parents. This concurs with Hamidaddin’s (2008) findings that all parents agreed that they show interest in their children’s learning, yet they believe that children’s learning is the responsibility of the teachers.

D. Situating the Current Study

From this review, a gap in the literature emerges from the lack of studies that undertake the angle of parents within a qualitative methodology and their impact on students’ motivation to learn AAL in Dubai context. An investigation of the attitudes of parents of heritage and non-heritage AL learners is therefore considered required. Accordingly, it is of great importance to explore parents’ attitudes toward the implementation of AAL as they have a direct impact on students’ language learning development and achievement, consequently it can either hinder or encourage the success of AAL.

III. METHODOLOGY

Since this study will consider the parents’ emotions, beliefs and attitudes and explore socially constructed meanings as parents’ interpretations of the world, the interpretivist paradigm emerges as the one that provides insights into and meets the requirements of the key RQ (Walter, 2013). Mertens (1998) emphasizes that the interpretivist paradigm aims to understand society by understanding the socially constructed realities. This resonates with the main purpose of the key RQ which is: to explore parents’ attitudes towards the implementation of AAL as it provides insight into their subjective perception towards the importance of AL and their own perceptions of their role in supporting this requirement. Therefore, because of its micro-level emphasis that aligns with the purposes of meaning making and deals with qualitative data collection methods and analysis, the interpretivist paradigm suits this study (Creswell, 2003).

A. Data Collection

Context and site: This qualitative single case study collected data from parents at a private British primary school in Dubai, in which AAL was given an ‘Acceptable’ evaluation by the KHDA inspection report (2017-2018) and the sample is considered convenience sampling.

Instrument: Because of time limitations, the instrument used was face-to-face 30 minute-interview, whereby semi-structured questions were developed and conducted by the researcher as a result of adaptations from Gardner and Lambert’s ‘Parental Attitude Model’ (1972) and Fan and Chen’s Construct (2001). The interview questions were
The interviews with the parents revealed some converging and diverging attitudes towards the implementation of AAL ‘Policy’, some of these attitudes aligned with the literature as it will be shown in this section. In addition, the demographic table of parents’ profile is presented in Appendix D. The findings of this research are bifurcated into two key themes as they relate to the theoretical underpinnings and the literature review: ‘Parental Attitudes’ and ‘Challenges’.

While all parents concurred on the importance of AAL and approved of its implementation with no contestation, they confirmed that they never knew of the 2017 MoE Framework and it was never communicated to them. However, all of them were content with the progress level of their children learning AL in school, which contradicts the local literature, confirmed that they never knew of the 2017 MoE Framework and it was never communicated to them. However, all of them were content with the progress level of their children learning AL in school, which contradicts the local literature.
their children exceeded them in their knowledge of the language. Parent 1 confessed that her kids superseded her in their knowledge of AL. Yet, given that AAL was ranked ‘Acceptable’ and having content parents, could imply that the lack of having a reference point (AAL framework) to benchmark the progress of students’ learning, keeps parents pleased with whatever attainment is achieved by their children. As a result, there is a need to investigate if the school is following the framework or not, and a need to address the gap in communication between the school and the parents while taking into consideration the criticality of setting up specific goals or targets for expat students learning AAL. Future research investigating this angle would unravel more insights.

**Parental Attitudes**

**Attitudes towards learning languages in general:** all parents were either bilingual or plurilingual and reflected a positive position towards learning languages, which supports previous research. The rationale was accorded by Parents 1, 2, 4, 6 as to better understand and respect other cultures and broaden one’s thinking from an early age. On the other hand, Parent 3 mentioned ‘social life and interactions’ and Parent 5 stated ‘travel’ as reasons to learn AAL. Consequently, attitudes towards learning AL in Dubai were highly favourable, and the reasons provided were cultural understanding, religious motivations, and career opportunities. Parent 1 highlighted: “I think it’s important to speak the language of the land we live in. Out of respect for the country and the people. It breaks down barriers and warms people of different cultures to the Arab world.” While Parent 3 mentioned better prospects in career opportunities, Parent 2 stated ‘understanding the Qur’an’ as a crucial motivator for her and her daughters to learn AL. Accordingly, these motivations mirror the ones provided by parents in the parallel and local studies.

**Attitudes towards Arabic culture:** parents perceived Arabic culture to be hospitable, welcoming, embracing, and tolerant. They expressed that they love the food, songs, and the way Arabs dress. This reflects a very limited understanding of culture versus a deeper understanding of Arab traditions, heritage and values. Despite this positive general perception, they all agreed that Dubai does not fully reflect Arabic culture. “It feels like you are living in Europe”, Parent 4 - who is of Lebanese origin - articulated. “It’s a home away from home”, Parent 1 -who is a British national- expressed. Parent 5 agreed that every expat lives in a bubble of their own culture and described Dubai residents as a ‘honeycomb’, “we are one, but still separated” as if every expat is living in their own ‘cell’. This could reflect a lack of interculturality, and some disinterest in learning about the local culture, history, people, and possibly the local language. This implies that AAL needs to encompass engaging parents with their children in deep culture learning to meet the UAE National Agenda Vision and AAL aims.

**Attitudes towards Arab people:** some parents revealed that they made friends with Arabs and locals. They described Arab people as kind, helpful, hospitable, ambitious, and emotional. Parent 5 confessed that she has very limited interaction with locals, yet she feels that her son’s generation is learning more about local culture than hers and mentioned the example of ‘Hag-Al Laila’ celebration. It can, therefore, be suggested that AAL is successfully presenting some cultural elements to expat children, and providing culture learning opportunities, which in turn meets the aim of this language ‘policy’.

**Attitudes towards Arabic language:** most parents disagreed with the perception of Arabic being a difficult language to learn. Parent 4 compared Arabic to Mandarin: “how come people can start learning Mandarin and not Arabic! If the will is there, you can learn anything.” Yet, Parent 2 explained that “because we are of Pakistani background, and we know Urdu, I believe this does help us in learning Arabic easily. A better advantage. So, for a non-Muslim it might be harder. So, I can understand why some would perceive it that way.” In contrast, Parent 6 found it very difficult to learn as she explains, “I think it’s very difficult, in writing, joining the letters and script right to left, even pronunciation. It is very different to Russian.”

In addition, parents’ perceptions of language status showed a consensus; they all regarded English as the language of prestige and utility. Parent 1 expressed her frustration for not being able to practice her Arabic and pinpointed that “the Arabic language day was a new thing for me. School should know and mark the occasion and celebrate it to embrace Arabic language, but nothing.” Parent 2 elaborated “I don’t feel there is a necessity to learn it”. Also, Parent 5 mentioned “even when you read the recruitment pages in Dubai, you see that Arabic is preferred but English is mandatory.” There are similarities between these perceptions of Arabic being in a lower status -relative to English within the context of Dubai- and those described by Taha-Thomure (2008). A possible explanation for this might not only be the lack of serious governmental action plans that can raise and revive AL but also the bottom-up action. Parent 5 denoted “learning a language is not the MoE, KHDA, schools’ responsibility, it is the nation’s responsibility. You have to start from grassroots level, you can’t start from tree tops. It won’t really work!”. This links to Bourdieu’s Linguistic Capital notion and language status, as Arabs are resorting to learn and speak English for prestige. This highlights a need for a possible future study that solely examines the status of Arabic in Dubai context by applying Bourdieu’s theory.

**Parents’ Background ‘Heritage and Non-Heritage’:** contrary to the existing literature, parents’ background showed very little noteworthy effect on their attitudes towards AL, people and culture (See Appendix D). Whether HL or NHL parents, they all reflected a positive view and employed their available resources (effort, time and money) to better engage their children in their AAL learning journeys. For instance, Parent 1, who belongs to a Pakistani Muslim heritage, and Parent 6 who is Russian NH, both started learning Arabic to help their children in their learning. In the same vein, Parent 2 -who is a Canadian of Pakistani Muslim origin- described living in Dubai as a motivator to learn
Arabic, which is the same reason mentioned by Parent 5, who is a non-Muslim Canadian. Further detailed research is needed to examine the factor of parents’ background on their attitudes towards learning Arabic in Dubai as it also links to Bourdieu’s linguistic capital theory.

**Parents’ role in supporting AAL:** parents perceive their role as encouraging their kids to learn by helping them do their homework, reading with them when/if they can, communicating with teachers, and giving their feedback. This finding is in agreement with the definition of active parental influence and supports previous studies.

**Challenges**

This discourse analysis identified some challenges to achieve the aim of AAL ‘policy’ as elicited from parents’ perspectives in Dubai context (a bottom-up approach). These challenges relate to contextual and subjective factors. The contextual factors include:

- the lack of conducive environment to practice Arabic,
- lack of interaction with locals,
- Arabic speaking friends’ preference to speak in English,
- lack of pragmatic need in the workforce.

On the other hand, the subjective factors comprise: the value given to learning and speaking Arabic and how it is being perceived. Further research, which takes these variables into account, will need to be undertaken.

**V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study has shown that all parents expressed an overall positive attitude towards the AAL implementation in this school and reflected their support for an initiative to offer Arabic classes to expat parents so they would be able to support their children in learning the language while in school and enhance their cultural understanding of the place they reside and work in. However, all parents were unaware of the AAL Framework and some were surprised of the non-existence of an AAL policy. There was also a consensus amongst them on the need to engage expat parents and students in Arabic immersion experiences with the local culture. Therefore, addressing the gap in language policies related to AAL will require a comprehensive action plan and crucial policy decisions. Hence, an explicit language policy that recognizes the benefits of encouraging the learning of AL among expats “would likely complement government strategies to protect and promote Arabic since it would create a far greater number of competent Arabic language speakers” (Calafato & Tang, 2019, p. 28). The implications of this study and its findings are presented as recommendations:

**A need for an AAL policy:** Devise an explicit policy for AAL, with clear goals and tools to enhance its implementation as it reflects the significance of AL and commitment of the government. This policy should be positioned within the overarching UAE National Agenda 2021 and is envisioned to include the following components:

- **Communication:** Schools to follow the MoE Framework and communicate it to parents.

- **Culture and language:** Curriculum developers to fine-tune AAL curriculum for expatriate students and embed deep local culture learning experiences to make it authentic.

- **Parents engagement:** Create parent education programs that explain the value of Arabic or and demonstrate ways to help children learn AAL and succeed in school. Engage Arab and local parents in assisting expat parents to learn more about the culture and AL by devising interactive cultural programs based on volunteerism or community service program. Offer immersion experiences and interactions with local culture as it should also be part of the curriculum.

- **Arabic Language National Initiative:** Government to offer free beginner Arabic classes to all expat parents at school premises. Schools should be awarded for doing so and parents’ achievements should be highlighted and celebrated in the local media.
## Guidelines on Arabic subject:

|                  | Grade | Year |
|------------------|-------|------|
| Arabic as a first language | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 |

6 lessons per week | 5 lessons per week | 4 lessons per week

| Arabic as an Additional Language | 4 lessons per week | Optional |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| (For those who are registered in the school/KHDA under any other nationality) | | |

- Arab students are expected to follow the standards set in the National Curriculum Document for Arabic first language and use the MoE prescribed textbooks as the main resource in their curriculum.
- Non-Arab students are expected to follow the curriculum standards and expectations set in the 2017/2018 MoE framework for Arabic as an additional language.
- The offering of Arabic in the Early Years is not mandatory but encouraged. It is expected that schools that choose to do so will follow the standards and expectations of the MoE for Arabic in this phase of the school.
Appendix B. The Ministry of Education 2017 Framework for Learning Arabic as an Additional Language

Framework for Learning Arabic as an Additional Language

Introduction

Over the years, the United Arab Emirates has accorded much attention to Arabic language. The UAE leaders have promoted the learning and using of Arabic language as they consider it a fundamental pillar of the Emirates national identity, its people's history and its deep-rooted traditions.

This framework represents an important step toward fulfilling the needs of learners of Arabic as an additional language. It is also consistent with UAE's National Agenda for 2017 with regards to the priority of improving the learning of Arabic language.

This framework focuses on enabling non-Arabic speakers who are learning Arabic to communicate in real life situations inside and outside school. This framework is based on the standards set by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and based on international principles and expectations applied in the teaching of foreign languages to non-native speakers. The framework is also adapted to meet the UAE's expectations in the teaching and learning of Arabic in a manner that suits the learners' capabilities and their learning environment. All private schools that do not adopt the Ministry of Education curriculum are expected to apply this framework.

This framework illustrates the levels expected to be achieved by the learner in each of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and the achievement of these levels to the number of years spent in studying Arabic, regardless of the learner's current grade.

This framework identifies three main fields for each level: general outcomes, language proficiency levels and performance indicators in each of the four language skills during the nine years of studying Arabic as an additional language.

The most distinguishing element of this framework is that it details the progress in language proficiency according to three key parameters: functions (to ask, inquire, narrate or describe), content and context (personal, social or general issues), and type and level of text (word, phrase, sentence or paragraph).

Accordingly, this framework constitutes an umbrella for learning Arabic as an additional language in private schools in the UAE and it is in line with the Ministry of Education requirements. We hope this framework will contribute to encouraging schools and teachers to prepare and execute advanced study plans which include clear and practical tasks and activities, inside and outside the classroom, in line with the expectations of this framework.

Appendix C. Parents’ Attitudes Towards AAL: Semi-Structured Interview

About the Study

Consent Form

Dear parent,

I am conducting a research related to the implementation of Arabic as an additional language in schools. You are invited to participate in a short interview that tries to explore parents' perspective. Your participation in this study is voluntary; however, it is very important for us to learn your opinions. Your responses will be strictly confidential, and anonymity is safeguarded. The data from this research will be coded and reported only as a whole. Pseudo names will be used and your privacy will be of paramount importance. If you have questions at any time about the procedures, you may contact me at xxxxxx or by email at xyz@hjkl

Finally, I thank you very much for taking the time and effort to participate in this interview.

Signature: ---------------------

In-depth semi-structured case study interview questions

1. Preliminary questions: The Parent Profile

   - Sex: M/F
   - What is your nationality?
   - What is your mother tongue?
   - What is your ethnic or heritage background (Arab/Muslim)? your parents?
What other languages do you speak? What level?

- Other languages you can
  - Speak
  - Understand
  - Read
  - Write

- Have you studied Arabic before? In school? Private lessons? Islamic school? On your own?

- How long have you been learning Arabic?

Child/ren Profile
- How many children do you have studying in this school?
- What years are they in?
- Gender? m/f
- How many years have they been learning Arabic?
- Do they enjoy their AAL lessons?
- Why (why not?)

Attitudes measurement questions (adapted from Gardner and Lambert’s Attitudinal Construct)

Parents' Awareness of MoE Framework for AAL
- Are you aware of the 2017 MoE framework for AAL in schools?

Parents’ Attitudes towards learning languages in general
- What do you think of learning languages other than English? (Value second language learning)

Parents’ Attitudes towards the TL culture
- What do you think of Arabic culture?
- What do you think of Arab people/speakers?

Parents’ Attitudes towards the speakers of TL
- Living in Dubai, do you think learning Arabic is an asset? For you or your child? And why?
- In your opinion, in what ways learning Arabic language will assist you in intercultural communication/understanding of this region ‘GCC’ ‘Arab World’ ‘Muslim World’/self-actualization/achievement ..

Parents’ Perceived Difficulty of Arabic Language
- Some people perceive Arabic as a difficult/complex language to learn? What do you think? How to overcome this difficulty?

Parents’ Perceived Roles and Involvement in AAL
- Are you learning Arabic with your child?
- Are you helping your child in learning the language/ reading/ in doing their homework?
- Is your child getting help (out of school tutoring) to learn Arabic? (it reflects how much they are investing in it/interested).
- Have you thought/considered learning Arabic/joining Arabic courses?
- Where, when, how. how have your attitudes changed (if they did) after learning some Arabic?

Parents Perspectives on Suggested Policy Recommendations
- What do you think about this statement: “There should be a governmental initiative to offer Arabic language courses to expatriate parents for free or at a nominal cost?”
- Would you encourage your family, friends, others to learn Arabic in Dubai? Why?
- What do you suggest to improve the implementation of AAL in schools?

APPENDIX D. PARENTS’ PROFILE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

| Parent no | Gender | Nationality | Heritage Background | Parent Language | Kids in school | Other languages | Learnt Arabic | Kids like/dislike Arabic because… |
|-----------|--------|-------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1         | F      | British     | Pakistani-Muslim    | English        | 4             | Urdu           | For a year   | Like the teacher – enjoys languages |
| 2         | F      | Canadian    | Pakistani-Muslim    | English        | 2             | Urdu           | No           | One daughter likes the teacher, the other doesn’t |
| 3         | F      | American    | Indian-Non-Muslim   | Hindi          | 1             | English        | For three months | Loves the teacher |
| 4         | F      | American    | Lebanese-Arab-Non-Muslim | Arabic       | 3             | English, French | In school=13 years | Son likes the teacher, Daughter doesn’t |
| 5         | F      | Canadian    | Indian              | Kutchi         | 1             | English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marthi | Studied Arabic in the UAE from grade 1-8 | Lessons are engaging and relevant to son’s interests |
| 6         | F      | Russian     | Non-Arab Non-Muslim | Russian        | 2             | English        | Is learning Arabic now | Teacher is good |
APPENDIX E. TRANSCRIBE INTERVIEWS

Transcribed Interviews

Parent 2: Profile

- British mother of two
- English is their first language
- Predicts Middle Eastern heritage
- Speaks languages (Middle Eastern and Arabic spoken at home)
- Has seen Arabic in class for a year as an optional subject every term (for 1 hour per week)
- Two children
- Daughter: age 2; name: Sarah
- Daughter: age 3; name: Amna (in 3 years learning Arabic)

Attitudes towards learning languages: she enjoys learning languages and the idea of being bilingual.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: she enjoys Middle Eastern culture and is interested in knowing more about it.

Attitudes towards learning: she enjoys learning languages and is motivated to learn more about the Arabic culture.

Attitudes towards learning languages in general: it is very important and it will help people understand the region. It is especially needed for kids as it has a great grounding.

Significance of Arabic: has a strong understanding of Arabic and its culture. It is a home away from home, both in daily life and at home, and it helps her to feel connected and learn more about the Arabic culture.

Parent 3: Profile

- American mother of one daughter
- English is their first language
- Indian Muslim heritage
- Mother tongue is Arabic
- Has studied Arabic for 3 months
- Child: age 1 year old

Attitudes towards learning languages: she enjoys learning Arabic and finds it easy to learn.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: she enjoys Middle Eastern culture and is interested in knowing more about it.

Attitudes towards learning: she enjoys learning languages and is motivated to learn more about the Arabic culture.

Attitudes towards learning languages in general: it is very important and it will help people understand the region. It is especially needed for kids as it has a great grounding.

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THEORY AND PRACTICE IN LANGUAGE STUDIES

859

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Attitudes towards Arabic language: do we not think Arabic is needed so much in Dubai? Arabic themselves speak English. If you can communicate then there is no problem. It would not be good to learn about Arabic culture and everything that the people, the tradition, yes, yes, learning Arabic in Dubai is helpful.

Significance of Arabic: My daughter learning Arabic is going to help her in the future. You see, I myself have been living here for so long and I do not speak the language. I know few words like salam, tabbakh, but that’s it. I believe that my daughter needs Arabic and that’s why we’re going to get her up. She will be aware of the roots of Dubai and because she is brought up here. She’s learned my language. There is no language tuition for her coming here, or outside or maybe English. If someone has not done this to an extent, her learning Arabic in Dubai means they have learned it. It will help her get better jobs and higher paid salaries.

Parent difficulty of the language: Everyone is, you know, to learn it. I think it is about what I can and can’t do. If you want to do it, you will do it. If you’re interested in doing something you will give it 100% of your effort. I want to encourage my kids, I would like for them to see it that way. It is not difficult, it is a sweet language. I love Arabic songs and learning to Arabic.

Parent’s Profile:
- American mother of three; son in 3s and twin daughter and son both in year 3.
- Twin learns Arabic in school 2 years.
- Lebanese heritage–not Muslim.
- Mother tongue of mother is Arabic but mother tongue of wife is English.

French as a third language:
- Arabic was taught throughout the childhood.
- Kids enjoy their Arabic lessons but not so keen on learning Arabic now. He was interested in Arabic for a couple of years.

Daughter doesn’t like Arabic, wants two years. It is still not able to form sentences. Could be the teacher or her own difficulties in learning language?

Improvements and suggestions:
- It’s very important to offer classes for parents. They should be for free then they might enhance it and charge for more

Parent’s Attitudes towards learning language in general:
- It’s very important to support learning language in general and the more the learners. Everyone should learn them, English and Arabic, English and Spanish and transition; learning language gives you a better understanding of culture, respecting other cultures, statues in brain growth and conditional for younger ages.
- It’s not a good opportunity to give huge leverage over others in a word competition, the more skills you have and the more languages you speak, the better chances you get.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture: I think Dubai is very global city. In terms of people there are many nationalities living together, respecting each other, you can see Asians, Europeans and kids. As for me, you can see the conservative and the new-conservation ethic is. It’s a balance, so Arabic heritage is reflected unless you go and visit places that reflect Arabic heritage and traditional and cultural cities. Other than that, you feel like you are living in Europe.

Attitudes towards Arabic speakers: Arab people are very hospitable, kind and emotional, fun to be with, very unconditionally and not like that, and you would talk with open arms, very friendly. They’re thinking to build a better future for their kids. They take on boards of education and attention, very high pressure too.

Attitudes towards Arabic culture:
- If you speak Arabic English and expect people should communicate in that language or English, that’s a problem. Living in a world where there are so many people of different language you should have more the other language being fluent for only English or Arabic is an obstacle. If you have one of those people who know more than one language because this shows you a multilingual, and this would be, having tolerance and respect for people, if you reflect it, if you just pass one language and you are not ready to understand or learn another language it reflects a limited mind set.

Significance of Arabic: I believe that my kids learning Arabic is at high priority level and not just basic understanding as their language heritage – will be very important for their future. I am sure that governments will soon and present the language and in the future my kids will feel they’re lacking. Our kids have both worlds, the global output and aspiration but at the same time they have a deep understanding of their roots and culture. This will not hinder their global outreach or learning.

Parent difficulty of the language: I think that what is called here a language. This is just an excuse. I know for instance that in Dubai, if you want to get the diploma, you talk Arabic and become proficient in it; it’s a lot of know many English speak in turn to learn translation, which is not a really easy language to learn as it is. From the English start and pronunciation, you have more people can start learning translation and not a skill if the X you learn them a language is something you can learn.

Improve the Parent’s Needs: I can help my daughter now in learning words using books with Arabic and English text and help her in writing the Arabic words for a little help. Maybe at some point in time I will learn to speak, especially if I do not have the time.

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Reem J. Razem is a PhD in Education candidate at the British University in Dubai, specializing in second language acquisition and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). She obtained her Master’s in education from Murdoch University, Dubai, UAE in 2018, her Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language (TAFL) certificate from Georgetown University, USA in 2008, Cambridge CELTA qualification from Wollongong University in Dubai, in 2006, MA in American studies from the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan in 2003, and her B.A. in political science from the University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan in 2001.

She currently holds the position of Lecturer in the School of Arts, Media and Mass Communication at Curtin University, Dubai, UAE. She also worked as a Lecturer at the University of Wollongong in Dubai, Middlesex University, the Canadian University of Dubai, and as a Research Coordinator at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai. Previous publications include: Co-authored a chapter on political developments in the UAE in ‘The Year That Was: 2004’ book (Dubai, UAE: Gulf Research Center, 2005), and published an article titled ‘Arab Freedom Report Still in Chains’ (Dubai, UAE: Gulf in the Media, Gulf Research Center, 2005).