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## **LINGUISTIC HEGEMONY AND ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**Summary.** Linguistics hegemony, linguistics imperialism, and linguistic colonialism are serious issues that have not gained enough attention in applied linguistics research. English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in non-anglophone countries is a type of linguistics imperialism (Phillipson, 2018). EMI policy has led to adverse outcomes in several aspects such as low achievement of learning outcomes, challenges to students' identity, limited access to educational resources, unjust treatments, and unfair assessment in undergraduate programs. This research study investigates the views of students and academic experts using questionnaires and interviews. The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings of this study demonstrate the lack of educational justice and the strong connection between linguistic hegemony and the colonization of consciousness. The findings show that participants in EMI programs do not engage in authentic, rigorous, and fun learning. Decisions to use EMI are either based on fallacies regarding the nature of language, on fuzzy assessment of educational priorities, or both. We strongly encourage applied linguists, language policymakers, and university administrators to play significant roles in challenging English hegemony and English supremacy to promote educational justice, equal opportunities to learn, and fair treatment in EMI undergraduate programs around the globe, especially in non-anglophone countries.

**Keywords:** language of instruction; language rights; linguistic hegemony; linguistic imperialism; mother language education.

### **Introduction**

Higher education forms the cornerstone in developing research and providing nations with their most needed and best cadre for achievement and competition in a rapidly changing world. Some national languages cease to exist as media for education and/or communication among their native speakers under the hegemony of other languages, mostly colonial, at a very escalating and alarming rate. Undoubtedly, that makes a great loss, not only in terms of communication but also in heritage, identity, and culture (Macedo, Dendrinis, & Gounari, 2015). By the same token, when a highly established international language, as in the case of Arabic, with tens of millions of speakers around the world and with a very wealthy linguistic and scientific

heritage over the centuries, is deprived of its function as the medium of instruction in higher education among its native speakers, the long-term effects could be disastrous.

English language supremacy has led to vital outcomes in different sectors such as health, business, and education, even in English-speaking countries. Padilla et al. (1991) realized that the English-only movement in the United States has negative outcomes on psychosocial development, intergroup relations, learning outcomes achievement, and psychometric and health-service delivery systems for many Americans who are not proficient in English. Padilla et al. stressed that the public interest is best served by affirming a position in opposition to English-only. English-only is socially divisive and poses a threat to the human welfare that psychologists espouse in the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists. The current paper examines the students' and educational experts' views regarding the EMI policy in medical, science, and engineering colleges. The researchers used two instruments: questionnaires for students and interviews with the educational experts.

### **Linguistics Battles**

In the era of globalization, language assumes an essential role as the vehicle of marketing and distribution of ideas and values. Though implicit and invisible, linguistic battles could be more critical in the long run than battles of ideas. The latter would find strong challenge and opposition, while the former would be welcomed and encouraged. English works as a par excellence role of Trojan horse for the western, more specifically American, culture and ideology in the rest of the world (Gao & Rapatahana, 2016). In addition, it operates as a sweeping linguistic power encroaching into the roles of native languages of the people and gradually occupying more of their territories (Mackenzie, 2021). English, as the bearer of culture and ideology, imposes on learners its native speakers' cultural discourse and functions as a reference point for assigning terminology and discourse of expression in different fields under its domain (Mensah, 2021).

Language has a subliminal effect on the minds of its learners, especially those who have access to specific fields exclusively through it.

They develop dichotomous genres in different languages: one for social life and interpersonal communication and the other for a professional career. Such dichotomy becomes more rigid and may fossilize over an extended period and exposure. Therefore, control of language would eventually break hegemony over ideas and symbols (Lai, 2021). According to Tsuda (2017), the dominance of English today causes not only linguistic and communicative inequality but also feelings of anxiety and insecurity, especially on the part of the non-English-speaking people in a rapidly globalizing world. Such a feeling is evident in contexts where English is used in the place of the native language as the medium of instruction (Al-Kahtany, Faruk, & Al Zumor, 2016).

Local efforts directed towards dominating the minds of native elites of many foreign countries are associated with the massive global efforts of many American agencies all over the world. Though the US was not a major colonial power, it emerged as the most influential player in the postcolonial era. Pennycook (1994) stresses that the United States consolidated its power through a vast array of institutions – political, economic, academic, and cultural. In Oman, Al-Issa, (2020) found that language planning, as carried out by the elites, is top-down and ideologically oriented and motivated, as it favors specific knowledge and traditions while marginalizing and oppressing others.

## **Hegemony**

Williams (1977) defined hegemony as a whole body of practices and expectations: our assignments of energy, our common understanding of man and his world. It is a set of meanings and values that are experienced as practices, and appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes reality for most people in society, a sense of absolute experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for society members to move in most areas of their lives. In other words, hegemony could simply mean different ways of life that we perceive as neutral and submit to without question. Phillipson (2011) viewed a close intertwining relationship between ideology, hegemony, and legitimating.

Perley (2021) clarifies that linguistic imperialism is a process by which speakers of a perceived prestige language suppress. Linguistic imperialism marginalizes the speakers of subordinated languages. Also, to a set of situations enacted by privileged groups, linguistic imperialism requires a set of conditions that sustain ideologies of power and unequal social relations in favor of the speakers of the perceived prestige language.

English played a hegemonic role during colonialism at the hands of the colonialists themselves, then at the hands of the native Euro literate elite and their colonial mentors in the postcolonial era. The linguistic hegemony of English reached a point where language learning has been perceived as 'English' language learning. The learning of other languages has been marginalized. Hegemony dominates consciousness and affects one's understanding of reality. Phillipson (2018) commented on several such unsubstantiated claims regarding language acquisition that he called fallacies, among which is the claim 'early is better when it comes to learning English as a foreign language'.

### **Linguistic Colonialism**

Through colonialism, European languages and cultures were forced upon indigenous people at the expense of their languages and cultures. As a consequence of these colonial policies, there are more French-speaking, English-speaking, and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa than anywhere in the world. Such dominance is a very salient form of linguistic and ideological hegemony (Bamgbose, 2011).

The close link between the history of colonialism and the spread of English has become indisputable. Pennycook (2002) stressed that as a consequence, English Language Teaching (ELT) had become a product of colonialism not because it is just colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English, but because it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that are still part and parcel of western culture. The feeling of superiority of native speakers of English over the non-native speakers has been transferred into a dichotomous, if not a racist relationship (Holliday, 2018). Currently, we can

see linguistic colonialism in several ELT textbooks. Due to the hegemony of English, ELT materials have suddenly turned into a cornerstone international business with huge financial investment. Ulum and Köksal (2020) found a strong correlation between the ideological and hegemonic practices included in globally and locally written ELT textbooks.

Just as was the case of the colonial claim of 'mission de civilise' for the benefit of the colonized people, ELT materials, as one product of colonial language policies, claim the same (Pennycook, 2007). The major effect of colonialism was to destroy colonized countries and societies and halt their natural progress by excluding the native people from any say in making the decisions that controlled their lives. We can see the micro policies of colonialism, the constant dismissals, inequalities, putdowns, and racism. Some Euro-literate elites still insist on the role of colonialism and postcolonial policies in modernization and development. Former colonial languages are maintained at the expense of the illiterate majority, while native tongues and functional literacies traditions are silenced (Macedo & DeGraff, 2019).

Hegemony as a practice "does not imply a conspiracy theory, but a competing and complementary set of values and practices, with those in power better able to legitimate themselves and convert their ideas into material power" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 74). Hegemony in practice, because of its salient nature, promotes its products through propaganda that it is for the benefit of all people, not serving the interest of a specific group of any kind; in other words, a fits-all universal system. In his book, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, Chomsky (2004) summarized the ideological hegemony of the USA in the form of setting standards for the rest of the world. Any opposition is neglected and marginalized.

## **Linguistics Hegemony and Education**

The link between education and language is inseparable; language is the container and conveyer of knowledge, skills, and values. Educational planners make maximum use of language to achieve their ideological, political, and economic goals (Pennycook, 2017). Lord Thomas Macaulay was

appointed by the British colonial authorities to lay the foundations of education in India to serve the interest of colonization as it is the colonial policy worldwide. Macaulay was very candid in declaring a language and educational policy that emphasizes the hegemony of the colonial ideology, language, and culture. Hegemony, as embodied in Macaulay's words, does not recognize justice, human rights, or the fate of other languages or cultures. It is a means and an end in itself. In his famous document 'Minute on Indian Education,' February 1835, Macaulay dictated: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. ...I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. ... I have conversed with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I have never met one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth more than the whole native literature of India and Arabia..." (Macaulay, 1979, p. 116).

A critique of Macaulay's piece of colonial discourse reflects the colonial policy of the time, hence manifested in different and more sophisticated forms in contemporary times. Here we have a fundamental colonial language and educational policy to breed tiny Euro-literate elite from among the colonized people aspiring to their masters and looking with contempt at their people, culture, and way of life. In Macaulay's words, "a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and intellect."

### **Attitudes and Linguistic Imperialism**

A superficial observation of the attitudes of colonialist authorities of the time would reveal the disastrous effect such policies would have on linguistic and educational planning then, now, and in the future. One of its devastating manifestations was the escalating rates of illiteracy, stratifactional favoritism, and corruption. The emergence of a new caste based on linguistic discrimination has become evident in many colonial and postcolonial contexts. No wonder "the superiority of the Europeans became absolutely

immeasurable" in Macaulay's words. These discriminatory colonial policies reached their extremist stage when attacking people's sources of enlightenment and education based on illogical and shaky misconceptions. Macaulay declared: "I would at once stop the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books, I would abolish the Madrassa and the Sanskrit College at Calcutta. ...Are we obliged to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion." A centuries-old predicament has been adopted by the guardians of today's neocolonialism and globalization. No wonder the inheritance of colonial policies was poverty, illiteracy, and dictatorship.

If such extremism was an unacceptable atrocity of the past, a history that can only be analyzed in retrospect, a lesson for humanity to learn from, then it might be tolerated. But, when it is developed into a more sophisticated political creed challenging people's basic rights to their languages, cultures, religions, and autonomy, then it becomes very alarming. These reckless policies of the past, which were sheltered within different misleading guises into the present, should be disclosed and challenged by committed and objective researchers from all over the world. The truth regarding centuries-old atrocities should be exposed. The worldwide intellectual community should rise to meet its responsibilities to combat injustice for the benefit of humanity at large.

The deliberate policy of endorsing the spread of English overseas has been maintained for more than half a century to continue centuries-old hegemony. A top-ranking British official, the minister of education and employment, David Blunkett, declared "It makes good economic sense to use English fluency as a platform to underpin our economic competitiveness and to promote our culture overseas" (Phillipson, 2001). Freitas (2019) wrote that in 2017 alone, more than 3 million people took IELTS and TOEFL tests that are accepted by more than 10,000 universities and licensing agencies in more than 130 countries. ELT has intertwined with the political and economic interests of the dominating English-speaking countries. Soto-Molina and MÃŠnchez (2020) found that ELT textbooks in Columbia are culturally biased and used as acculturation instruments that favor linguistic colonialism.

## **Linguistic Hegemony and Colonization of the Consciousness**

What is devastating is not the existence of economic and political hegemony but rather the willing submissiveness to it and the unconscious acceptance of the language and the culture of the dominating power, post-colonialism in this context under the guise of linguistic globalism. The relationship, as we see it, between the hegemonizing power and those affected by hegemony is never reciprocal. It is mostly a one-way relationship. The dominating hegemony imposes its way of perception of reality, culture, language, and other aspects of life with total to that of the 'Other'. The 'Others' language, culture, and other ways of life are considered trivial and unworthy.

The intensification and institutionalization of hegemony, over time, lead to the unconscious and unquestioned assimilation of its predicaments by those affected by it. As a consequence of this prolonged dominance, those affected by hegemony start to look with contempt vis-à-vis their indigenous languages and cultures and aspire to that of the hegemonizing ones (Alkahtany, 2002). Such a phenomenon has resulted in the development of a class referred to as the euro-literate elite. Alhamami and Almelhi (2021) found the cumulative grade point average (GPA) of alumni from healthcare colleges can be predicted by the first semester grades of the intensive English proficiency program. Healthcare students with higher proficiency in English achieve a better GPA when they finish undergraduate programs. The researchers conclude that using EMI to teach healthcare subjects presents many obstacles that have a negative impact on students' academic achievement, especially if the students lack fluency in English.

### **Research Questions**

The experience of EMI in many higher education programs in Saudi Arabia is in great need of in-depth empirical research to assess the experience and reveal its consequences on both educational and linguistic grounds. This study aspires to contribute to the evaluation of this experience and disclose some of the nonlinguistic manifestations that might have led to the conviction of imposing EMI in the presence of Arabic as a well-established international



language and container of sciences for many centuries. This study will involve the major participants of any educational program, students, and supervisors who are unfortunately neglected by most policymakers. The study will investigate the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes of students and supervisors participating in EMI programs regarding the role English plays in comparison to students' mother tongue (Arabic)?
2. What are the expected results of the implementation of English as the sole medium of instruction on the quantity and the quality of graduates of these programs?
3. How is 'Arabic as the official and national language of Saudi Arabia and many Arabic-speaking countries and the lingua franca of Muslims' going to be affected because of marginalizing one of its important functions as the vehicle of science?
4. What are the implications that our findings may have on the theory of linguistic hegemony?

### **Method**

To achieve the aims of this study, a theoretical, as well as a historical, framework was established within the previous pages. To verify the validity of previous claims, two empirical data collection procedures will be followed to acquire more reliable views regarding the imposition of EMI policy in higher education. The first is quantitative in the form of developing a survey aiming at identifying the attitudes of students studying in university EMI programs.

The participants were requested to fill out a questionnaire in response to several statements indicating their agreement, disagreement, or lack of knowledge. This kind of closed-question questionnaire may limit the participants' choices. However, it is useful in eliminating the problem of respondents failing to focus on the expected dimension, since all they had to do was to choose from a set of provided categories (Brown, 2001). Studying attitudes provides an indicator of the community's thoughts and beliefs, preferences, and desires. Attitude surveys provide social indicators of

changing beliefs and the chances of success in policy implementation. Attitude towards language function is one of the most important indicators of identity and affiliation. This becomes more salient when that language is closely attached to one's religion and association with a certain community, as is the case with Arabic (Al-Kahtany, 2002). The use of quantitative and qualitative instruments increases the strength of the findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). For example, words, pictures, and narratives can be used to add meaning to numbers, and numbers can be used to add precision to words, pictures, and narratives. The use of two approaches can answer a broad and complete range of research questions because the researcher is not confined to a single method or approach. A researcher can use the strengths of an additional method to overcome the weaknesses of another method by using both in applied linguistics studies (Brown, 2014).

Six hundred questionnaires were distributed to students in different science, engineering, computer sciences, and medical colleges. After screening the collected questionnaires, only 304 were considered for this study. The rest were either incomplete or were not returned. A survey response rate of 50% should be considered acceptable in most language studies (Brown, 2001).

The second procedure is qualitative in the form of interviews attracting the opinions of supervisors and instructors in EMI programs. The interviewees are in close contact with the role of English in higher education programs. It takes the form of interviews related to their perception of the language policy at higher education programs in which they have been key participants. Three experts volunteer to participate in the study and share their experiences as administrators and instructors in EMI undergraduate programs.

## **Findings**

### **The Role of English in Higher Education: Students' Attitude**

Because of the central role students' attitudes have on their motivation and consequently achievement in their fields, they are included in this study. They

give first-hand experiences of their daily contact with EMI in their fields. Three statements were designed to attract their assessment of the role English plays in the achievement in their fields (items 1-3). Table 1 summarizes participants' views toward EMI in undergraduate programs.

**Table 1**

*Students' attitudes toward the role of English in Undergraduate Programs*

<b>Item One:</b> I believe that using English as a medium of instruction in higher education was a hurdle in the way of the majority of outstanding high school graduates.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	196 (64%)	40 (13%)	68 (22%)
<b>Item Two:</b> I think that the use of English as a medium of instruction in some higher education programs was behind the withdrawal of some of the outstanding students.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	152 (50%)	85( 28%)	22 (22%)
<b>Item Three:</b> I think that the difficulty in studying my major is because it is taught in English.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	162 (54%)	47 (15%)	31 (31%)

In their response to Item 1 below regarding their opinion concerning "the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education was a hurdle in the way of the majority of outstanding high school graduates", the vast majority of students participating in the study (196 making 64% of the sample) agreed that using EMI in higher education was a hurdle in the way of the majority of outstanding high school graduates, while only 22% showed their disagreement.

In their response to Item 2 stating that "the use of EMI in some higher education programs was behind the withdrawal of some of the outstanding students", 50% of the participants agreed with the statement. Only 22% of the whole population of 304 participants indicated their disagreement, while 28 remained undecided.

Item 3 was directed towards the participants to express their feelings about the difficulty they faced in studying their majors in EMI. More than half of the students (54%) participating in the study, 162 out of 304, expressed their agreement in comparison to 31% who articulated their disagreement.

After reporting the attitudes of students who study in EMI

undergraduate programs, the focus will shift to account for the attitudes of other key players in these programs who worked as teachers and administrators for an extended time.

### **The Role of English in Higher Education: Supervisors & Professors' Views**

A. Views of Professor A, Assistant Professor of Physics, Coordinator of the medical program for 22 years. When Prof. A was asked about the use of EMI within the courses of science for medical students and the medical program, he replied by stating that:

"The program attracted elitist students with high commitment and hard work; therefore, they are psychologically and academically prepared to meet the challenge of studying medicine and science. Courses taught in English pose a very serious challenge. Many students face difficulty understanding the material studied. Many cannot express themselves in speaking and writing. Teachers, realizing their difficulty, were pressured to use a lot of Arabic in classroom lecturing and group discussions with the students. English composes only 30% of classroom communication. Textbooks and exams are written in English." He went further to say that "The difficulty of understanding the material taught in English led to some form of linguistic handicap among some of the medical students."

B. Views of Prof. B, a consultant surgeon, Dean of the College of Medicine, and a graduate of the School of Medicine at Toronto University, was requested to comment on the effect of using EMI in higher education, in colleges of medicine in specific, his response was:

1. Low creativity among the students because they are taught in a language other than their native tongues.
2. Slow comprehension while reading medical material.

3. Difficulty in communication.
4. Intensifying the feeling of inferiority because of poor linguistic proficiency.
5. Teaching in English does not necessarily result in better language acquisition.
6. Some students continue with linguistic handicaps even after they graduate and become physicians and consultants.

C. Views of Prof. C, ex-dean of the college of medicine for a number of years and one of the prominent founders of medical education in Saudi Arabia, were very similar to those mentioned above. Indeed, he had several serious reservations:

1. Beginning medical students face serious linguistic problems with English.
2. Huge time and effort are spent trying to overcome linguistic difficulties.
3. A significant portion of students will never be able to get through the English linguistic hurdle.
4. English is not only a hurdle for medical students only but it is also a major obstacle in the way many physicians pursue their higher studies and research.
5. It is rare to find a foreign language speaker of English who could reach the proficiency level of its native speakers. That is salient when presenting at international conferences. Though some ideas of non-native speaking scholars may be more elaborate and genuine, their native speaker counterparts' presentations are more attractive.
6. Dependence on using English as the only medium of instruction in medical college will only intensify the feeling of inferiority.

### **The Role of Arabic in Higher Education: Students' Views**

A minority but influential public figures questioned the role of Arabic in higher education and emphasized the role English should play for better

achievement and development. We tried to account for the opinions of those involved in higher education. Many statements were presented to the participants to assess their attitudes concerning the role Arabic may occupy in their fields of study as compared to English. In their response to a statement (4) about the ability of Arabic to take the place of EMI in higher education programs of science, medicine, and engineering, the majority agreed with such a statement (47%). On the other side, a somewhat large number of participants (117 or 38%) indicated their disagreement. This might be attributed to the unfeasible possibility in the near future for Arabic to resume its role as the language of science and technology. Table 2 summarizes students' opinions toward the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction in higher education.

**Table 2**

*Students' Attitudes toward Arabic in Higher Education*

<b>Item Four:</b> I think that Arabic can work instead of English as the medium of instruction in my field.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	143 (47%)	42 (14%)	117 (38%)
<b>Item Five:</b> I believe that I will get more benefit from my field if Arabic is used as the medium of instruction.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	169 (56%)	55 (18%)	77 (25%)
<b>Item Six:</b> I believe that learning in Arabic will attract more students to my field and achieve better results.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	192 (63%)	57 (19%)	52 (17%)
<b>Item Seven:</b> I think that the use of English as the medium of instruction in higher education is an indication of the inability of Arabic to do the same function.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	82 (27%)	57 (19%)	163 (54%)

Realizing the linguistic problems they were facing in studying their fields in a foreign language other than in their native tongue, the students' response to the statement (5) was that they would get more benefits if they studied it in Arabic. One hundred sixty-nine (56%) of the participants affirmed their belief that they would benefit more if Arabic was used as the medium of instruction. Only 25% of the participant disagreed with Statement 5.

Statement 6 elicited students' views regarding the outcome of using Arabic as a medium of instruction. To confirm the agreeable consensus that using one's native language as the medium of instruction, 63% of the participants (the highest percentage of all responses to the statements in a questionnaire of 30 statements) agreed that such programs would attract more students to the field of study. Only 17% showed their disagreement. (Item 6).

In their response to Item 7, the majority of the participants, 54%, voiced their disagreement with the idea that Arabic is unable to function as the medium of instruction in science, engineering, and medicine – a fallacy that has been raised against many indigenous languages over the last decades as a residual of colonial and post-colonial language policies. Phillipson (2004) states that any language has the potential to serve any purpose, provided it has enough resources devoted to it. Any spoken language can be learned in infancy, and many children learn several simultaneously. The uses to which a language is put have nothing to do with the intrinsic nature or structure of a language.

### English as Lingua Franca: Students' Views

Table 3 summarizes participants' beliefs toward the use of English as a lingua franca in higher education.

**Table 3**

*Students' unobserved beliefs toward English as a lingua franca in higher education*

<b>Item Eight:</b> I think that using English in studying science is the only option.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	87 (29%)	70 (23%)	144 (47%)
<b>Item Nine:</b> I think it is unfair to impose English as the medium of instruction in my field.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	127 (42%)	46 (15%)	126 (41%)
<b>Item Ten:</b> I feel that English is a reason behind the development of learning science.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree

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Frequency	198 (65%)	29 (10%)	76 (25%)
<b>Item Eleven:</b> I think that learning English will help me get more knowledge in my field.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	204 (67%)	52 (17%)	47 (15%)
<b>Item Twelve:</b> I believe it is better to restrict the learning of English to specialists in language departments.			
Answer	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree
Frequency	98 (32%)	32 (11%)	171 (56%)

**The Role of Arabic in Higher Education: Professors' Views**

After presenting students' perceptions about the role English assumes in their higher education programs concerning their native language that has been the language of science and international lingua franca around the globe for centuries, the turn has come to account for opinions of those who have been involved in supervising these programs for many years. Prof. A reported that "using English as the only medium of instruction in science and medicine could result in several disadvantages, among them:

- A. Language poses a challenge for many students interested in studying their selected majors, and therefore losing many qualified students to other fields which may not be of a great need for the country as we need scientists and physicians.
- B. The vast majority of students will not benefit by doing their studies in a foreign language as they would in their native tongue. Definitely, we are not going to graduate many highly qualified students in science and medicine.
- C. Many dropouts of medicine and science programs can be related to the difficulties our students face in understanding teaching materials and lectures, hence making low achievements in exams.
- D. The number of students transferring to other programs is increasing.
- E. Because students will not learn better in a foreign language that is going to affect the quality of graduates of these programs. Society at large may suffer in terms of quality education.



F. Most of those who graduate from science departments will eventually be school teachers. They will face another dilemma, teaching in Arabic, a different language from that in which they have studied.

Prof. A said with emphasis: "It is time consuming ... effort consuming".

When Prof. B was asked about the possibility of using Arabic as the medium of instruction in the colleges of Medicine, he indicated his aspiration for such a step. He also referred to two important issues that have to be taken into consideration: translation of terms, textbooks, and journals. Writing medical textbooks in Arabic is emphasized as a priority in the Arabization process of medicine. Prof. B stressed the great importance of supporting the role of intensive and continuous translation of medical literature. To achieve such an aspiration, there is a great need to establish a ministry of translation and research. Some translation efforts like that of Syria are very successful and require more support. He alluded to the high professional achievements of the many physicians who graduated from these colleges where Arabic is the medium of instruction. However, they face discrimination when recruited to work when compared with other graduates from colleges with EMI, as a form of linguistic discrimination.

A final word Prof. B wanted to highlight was that sciences can never be best understood but in one's native language. Low self-esteem among language planners in higher education is one of the major factors in the hegemony of English on our thought.

Prof. C had several serious reservations regarding imposing the only English policy in higher education programs and medicine in specific:

A. Beginning medical students face serious linguistic problems with English. Huge time and effort are spent trying to overcome linguistic difficulties.

B. A significant portion of students will never be able to get through the English linguistic hurdle.

C. English is not only a hurdle for medical students only but also a major obstacle in the face of many physicians in pursuing their

higher studies and research.

D. It is rare to find a foreign language speaker of English who could reach the proficiency level of its native speakers. That is salient when presenting at international conferences. Though some ideas of non-native speaking scholars may be more elaborate and genuine, their native speaker counterparts' presentations are more attractive.

E. Dependence on using English as the only medium of instruction in medical college will only intensify the feeling of inferiority.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

### **Consequences of Imposing English in Higher Education**

Promoting the role of English as a foreign or a second language in higher education or other spheres of life including economy, technology, and politics will eventually lead to the marginalization of national languages. It may lead to unfair competition and steer into unjust linguistic monopoly and total or partial marginalization of national languages. This periphery role may take the shape of complete absence from public life and become confined to social life. Or certain prominent linguistic functions of national languages (e.g., the medium of instruction) are transferred to English. A tentative list of expected consequences because of imposing English in higher education programs is provided for consideration below:

1. National languages' deprivation of use for science will result in a linguistic lacking in developing new terminologies and styles in science, technology, and medicine.
2. Development of terminologies and genres for emerging sciences and technologies goes into a gradual and continuous rhythm. When a language, in this case, Arabic, is excluded from this process, lacking in vocabulary and style will prevail in these languages.
3. Many capable students will be marginalized from pursuing their interest in studying certain fields of need in their countries in a foreign language.

4. It has become an acceptable fact that learning in one's native language is best for acquiring knowledge in all fields.
5. Foreign language acquisition is a long and costly process in terms of period and financial spending.
6. The vast majority of foreign language learners do not reach a high level of proficiency despite the high cost.
7. Alienating students against their native languages and hence developing a sense of inferiority before the English language and culture.
8. A new form of elitist diglossia develops which excludes the majority of society; technological dichotomy. English is the medium for science and technology and; the national language for social aspects of life.
9. Excluding Arabic from higher education programs may lead to the marginalization of its linguistic functions in many domains and be confined to very limited aspects of life.
10. Job markets shrink before graduates with Arabic-only education regardless of their skills and talents. Persistence of this may lead to discrimination on linguistic grounds.
11. The exaggerated emphasis on the linguistic role of English at the expense of Arabic (participants' mother tongue), in the absence of well defined and implemented balanced language policy, may lead to over-generalizing the role of English. Instances of that form of linguistic hegemony have become prevalent in many public domains including airports, giant department stores, hospitals, shopping centers, etc.

### **Linguistic Hegemony as a Hindrance to Development**

The problem of linguistic fluency among those who have spent many years of their life learning and instrumentally using English is very salient. Many of them are holding very important posts in science, medicine, and other fields. Alhamami (2021) found that engineering students' attitudes correlate with their preferred medium of instruction (Arabic). However, the engineering

instructors at the same institute believe that the EMI policy does not affect students' abilities to participate in classroom activities and examinations. Thus, there is a contradiction between students' and instructors' perspectives. It is recommended that policymakers consider the contrast in students' and instructors' perspectives on EMI when designing programs.

No matter what is done regarding the enhancement of language preparation programs, universities will continue to face the problem of insufficient linguistic fluency on the part of both lecturers and students. It can be related to a number of factors:

- A. Language is viewed as merely a medium of instruction that plays an insignificant role in other aspects of our lives.
- B. Native languages are marginalized in vital areas of education while prominent in all other aspects of life.
- C. The extremely high cost of quality education in a foreign language.
- D. Language preparation programs, because of the high demand for English language teachers, forsake quality.

### **Fallacies Regarding English As A Lingua Franca**

Demand for English has resulted in an emphasis on quantity at the expense of quality. Students and administrators complained that there were many lecturers in public universities with poor proficiency in English. Lack of language proficiency on part of the lecturers will affect students' comprehension of the content area (Alhamami, 2019). The introduction of EMI in higher education caused many problems because students are deprived of their linguistic right to being taught in their native languages and therefore faced another hurdle that they had to struggle with, English. Horbacauskiene and Jaleniauskiene (2020) stressed that the change in the language of instructions may deeply affect not only students but teachers as well.

Contrary to the belief that many people have about the spread of English as a global lingua franca, only a minority of the people in countries where English holds the status of a second or official language acquire a high

level of fluency in the language. India, for example, is a country colonized by the British for decades and still suffers from the effects of post-colonization adopted English along with Hindi as the official languages of government and higher education. Nonetheless, the vast majority of Indians do not communicate fluently in their "official language". Only a small percentage is considered to be fluent users of English. Such a very strange paradox was warned against by the first Prime Minister of India, Nehru, who was educated at Cambridge and imprisoned by the British before independence. He expressed his views regarding the role the English language was about to assume in a letter he wrote on September 10th, 1956, in which he wrote that he was "convinced that real progress in India can only be made through our languages. I am anxious to prevent a new caste system being perpetuated in India – an English-knowing caste separated from the mass of our public" (Gopal, 1980, p. 552). Indeed, what Nehru has warned against has taken place. A new caste was added to the already existing caste system disturbing the social fabric of India. A new high caste has emerged. Unlike other centuries-old socio-religious castes, it is a linguistic one.

The exaggerated myth regarding English as a world lingua franca is not peculiar to India but probably holds to all countries where English is used as an official language outside the countries where English is spoken as a native language. These countries some times referred to as English-speaking countries. In Nigeria and Kenya, few percents of the population speak English fluently while being imposed as the official language of the country. This tiny minority has developed into a 'privileged class', a new socioeconomic class based on linguistic grounds (Phillipson, 2004).

### **Hegemony through Elite Upbringing**

Raring loyal native elite was among the far most important colonial as well as the neocolonial policies to better impose their hegemony and dominance. Postcolonial policies maintain such proven to be a successful procedure to achieve newly proposed aims. Without local sympathizers and collaborators, colonial and postcolonial policies would have turned into total failure. Acculturation and education in English were the magic formulae to acclaim

colonial elitedom. Ansre (1979) provides his description of the situation as the phenomenon in which the minds and lives of locals are dominated by a foreign language to the point where they believe that they and should use only that foreign language when it comes to business transactions, health services, educational programs, and government documents. Phillipson (1992) stresses that linguistic imperialism has a subtle way of warping the minds, attitudes, and aspirations of even the nobles in society and of preventing them from appreciating and realizing the full potentialities of the indigenous languages. Transformation to elitedom meant "the ability to transpose one's mind from the immediate environment to the European one"; as suggested by Chishimba (1981, p. 168). Lord Cromer's words regarding the policy of establishing the Euroliterate native elite indicate the significant role they could play in maintaining cultural hegemony through English education. England was prepared to grant political freedom to all "her colonial possessions as soon as a generation of intellectuals and politicians imbued through English education with the ideals of English culture were ready to take over, but under no circumstances would the British Government for a single moment tolerate an independent Islamic state" (Thompson 1994, p 320).

Through the centuries of colonialism and post-colonialism, a shift among elites has been witnessed. During the early stages of colonial imperialism, the elites were from the colonizers themselves, in the form of settlers or administrators. In the current neo-colonialism, elites have emerged from among the indigenous people and from among the indigenous people of formerly colonized countries. Many of whom were educated by their colonial mentors and in the colonial language (Al-Kahtany, 2002).

The indigenous Euroliterate elites have been so much influenced by linguistic as well as cultural hegemony to the extent that they have absorbed their premises and accepted their dominance. One of the main assigned roles of the native elites was to serve the interest of colonialism and post-colonialism via different means. In Ghana, Anyidoho (2018) realized that the most effective medium was the school, which was the institution responsible for indoctrinating the young and marginalizing the old. In other words, It assumed the function of directing the acquisition of guided attitudes

about one's self, community, and identity. This may explain the hasty response of the Euro-literate elites towards the American deliberate and unsubstantiated impositions against curricula taught in Arab countries; hence, functioning as agents of neocolonial hegemony (Al-Kahtany, 2002).

During the era of colonialism, only very few elites who would serve the colonial policies were encouraged to acquire higher proficiency in the colonial languages. Making the whole population literate and proficient was not the desired aim. Elrayah (1999) reported that it was the British director of education's instructions that "... only those who are adjunct to administration and a necessity to technical progress would be required to learn English to be intermediators for the British officials" (p. 610).

Mastering the colonizers' language and serving their interests have become the ingredients for success and the key to high government positions at the expense of the neglected masses. The syndrome of manipulating the elites by the colonial policymakers is a universal phenomenon among imperialist powers to achieve full control of their subjects. In India, where millions were suffering from severe poverty and alarming illiteracy, a very small class of people has been nurtured to impose the will of the colonizers.

To receive one's education in the colonial language meant direct promotion to elitedom. In his book *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, the Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) summarizes the role played by English in colonized communities by stating, "English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom" (p. 338). The existence of a well-defined language policy will specify the real needs based on thorough research and understanding of several factors including Linguistic heritage, cultural background, and educational objectives.

Many of the language planning decisions regarding the use of English are either based on fallacies regarding the nature of language, on fuzzy assessment of educational priorities, or both. A carefully designed language policy takes into consideration many factors including national heritage, cultural uniqueness, linguistic development of national languages, and long-term educational goals. Strategic decisions regarding language policy with superficial scrutiny under the pressure of linguistic imperialism may breed

undesired results in the long term.

We will conclude this research paper by presenting critical questions for policymakers and university administrators. These serious questions should be asked to direct future policies in similar contexts where the majority of the population do not speak English as a native language: Q1: Are we ready to sacrifice the quality of education in vital fields such as science and medicine at the expense of using EMI where Arabic is the mother tongue of all of its citizens? Q2: Is it worth all the time, effort, and money spent with little rewards? Q3: Is the use of EMI in medicine, science, and engineering going to help the country have better graduates and more of them to meet the great demand? Researchers should ask critical questions that challenge the current views of many language policies in non-English speaking countries.

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**LINGVISTINĖ HEGEMONIJA IR ANGLŲ KALBA AUKŠTAJAME  
MOKSLE**

**Santrauka.** Lingvistinė hegemonija, lingvistinis imperializmas ir kalbinis kolonializmas yra rimtos problemos, kurioms nebuvo skiriama pakankamai dėmesio taikomosios kalbotyros tyrimuose. Anglų kalba kaip dalyko mokymo ar dėstymo kalba (angl. *English Medium Instruction*, EMI) ne anglofoninėse šalyse yra lingvistinio imperializmo pavyzdys (Phillipson, 2018). EMI švietimo politika sąlygojo nepageidaujamų padarinių keliais aspektais, pvz., prastus mokymosi rezultatus, iššūkius studentų tapatybei, ribotas galimybes naudotis švietimo ištekliais, lygybės stoką ir nesąžiningus vertinimus anglų kalba vykdomose pirmosios pakopos programose. Naudojant klausimynus ir interviu kaip tyrimo instrumentus nagrinėta studentų ir akademinų ekspertų nuomonė. Duomenims analizuoti buvo taikyti kokybiniai ir kiekybiniai metodai. Tyrimo išvados rodo teisingumo stoką švietimo srityje ir tvirtą ryšį tarp lingvistinės hegemonijos bei sąmonės kolonizacijos. Išvados atskleidžia, kad besimokantieji EMI programose nėra aktyvūs autentiško, tikslaus ir įdomaus mokymosi dalyviai. Sprendimai, taikyti EMI, remiasi arba klaidingai suvokiama kalbos prigimtimi, arba neaiškiu švietimo prioritetų vertinimu, arba abiem veiksniais. Primygtinai raginame taikomosios kalbotyros specialistus, kalbų politikos formuotojus ir universitetų administraciją imtis iniciatyvos ir mesti iššūkį anglų kaip mokymo kalbos hegemonijai bei anglų kalbos viršenybei, skatinti teisingumą, lygias galimybes mokytis ir sąžiningą lygybę anglų kalba vykdomose pirmosios pakopos programose visame pasaulyje, ypač ne anglofoninėse šalyse.

**Pagrindinės sąvokos:** mokymo kalba; kalbos teisės; lingvistinė hegemonija; lingvistinis imperializmas; gimtosios kalbos ugdymas.