

Instruction through the English Medium and its Impact on Arab Identity

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of English medium instruction on students' Arab identity and mastery of Arabic. The study, undertaken at two high schools in Abu Dhabi, UAE, examines students', teachers', and parents' perceptions about the effect of instruction in the English medium on students' identities and Arabic proficiency. A total of 140 students, 30 teachers, and 40 parents responded via survey questionnaires and structured interviews about the impact of English Medium Instruction (EMI). Results suggest that students are gradually becoming more competent in English and less fluent in Arabic. In addition, even though the students are aware of the fact that Arabic is part and parcel of the Arab identity, it no longer represents the core of their social identity. The study calls for the need to design a bilingual curriculum in which Arabic and English are used as media of instruction in an equitable manner, such that English neither displaces Arabic nor poses a threat to national identity and heritage.

Keywords: Arab identity, Arabian Gulf, English-in-Education; bilingualism, English as a medium of instruction, national identity, UAE

Cite as: Hassan, B. , & Al- hussien, A. (2016). Instruction through the English Medium and its Impact on Arab Identity. Arab World English Journal,7 (2). DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no2.23>