

Second Language Learning and the Clash of Civilizations

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Abstract

This research investigates the relationship among second language learning, identity, culture, and motivation in Saudi Arabia (SA). SA's education system concentrates on teaching, while identity and social aspects have only been given little attention. The researcher seeks to redress this balance by exploring the impact of pupils' negative views toward the linguistic communities and of themselves as Muslim pupils. It aims to investigate how negative views toward the English language speaking communities could affect or demotivate Arab Muslim female learners to learn the language. The researcher supports the arguments using a qualitative approach and data drawn from pupils' focus group interviews and one-to-one teachers' interviews. The current study involves 132 second-year pupils from a secondary public school in Taif city, in SA and three Saudi English language teachers. The findings indicate the impact of various social factors relevant to the Saudi identity and culture on pupils' English as a second language (ESL) learning in the Saudi context. Participants' beliefs and practices of ESL appear to be influenced by certain negative views toward the English-speaking communities. Finally, the study recommends extending the setting of the sample for future study to include more than one city in order to compare cultural and social attributes that impact ESL, as cultures and identities vary from one area to another in SA.

Keywords: Beliefs; culture; identity; motivation; second language learning

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