

## English As a Medium of Instruction and the Endangerment of Arabic literacy: The Case of the United Arab Emirates

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### Abstract

Due to the rapid spread of globalization and the attendant ‘global English,’ the need for English is often accepted without much thought being given to native languages. Indeed, this is the current situation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with English encroaching into all areas of society, and especially forcefully into the education sector, where English as a medium of instruction (EMI) is on the rise. At the same time, Arabic literacy, the ability to read and write in the language, is declining among UAE youth. Using a mixed-methods design, a study was conducted to gain insights into the use of Arabic by Emirati university students. The study examines how Emirati youth use their native language (i.e., Arabic) in their daily lives, their perception of their own reading and writing skills in Arabic vis-à-vis in English language, and the extent to which they can demonstrate their literacy skills in Arabic. Clear evidence emerged showing that while Arabic as a dialect continues to be spoken and used on a daily basis, Arabic literacy is unquestionably losing ground. This paper concludes with a call for a language policy in the UAE that will give Arabic its due in schools and wider society.

**Keywords:** Arabic literacy, bilingualism, global English, medium of instruction, language policy, United Arab Emirates

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