

Conversing in L2 English with Saudi Arabic (L1) Children at Home

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Abstract

This qualitatively based research study aims at critically examining the linguistic practises of a particular group of Saudi parents who chose to use the host country's language (English L2) instead of the mother tongue (Arabic L1) with their children. Specifically, the study aims at answering two research questions: Why Saudi do parents chose to speak English to their child/children? And What are the effects of mostly speaking English on the children and their home language: Arabic? A total of ten participating parents took part in this research study where semi structured interviews were utilised to gather the primary data. Thematic analysis of the data revealed three main emerging themes and six subthemes. The findings from the data analysis revealed that Saudi parents speak English with their children so as to allow them the opportunity to be bilingual and linguistically (English – L2) proficient as well as the fact that those parents were pleased to see their children speak English with a British accent. Also, the analysis revealed that that children of Saudi parents speaking English only has led to the weakening and loss of their Arabic L1 language. The study concludes that parents should provide a linguistic balance for their bilingual children in order to preserve the native language. Additionally, the study recommends that further parallel research studies with bilingual children of various L1(s), are conducted.

Keywords: Bilingualism, critical period hypothesis, language loss, language and identity

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