



Proposing Bilingual Educational Policy for Kuwaiti Learners

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Abstract: This paper analyzes and proposes a solution to a theoretical problem concerning education policies in Kuwait based on Bacci's "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) method. The issue revolves around the use of Arabic as the primary language of instruction in public schools. A bilingual education solution is proposed as a solution to the current crisis in education. The article is divided into six sections, each focusing on a different aspect of the problem. An analytical framework based on Basil Bernstein's pedagogical discourse tool is used to analyze the problem step-by-step. Changes in educational policies, curriculum revisions, and professional training are necessary to accommodate the proposed changes. Through the proposed bilingual policy, bilingual education will be encouraged and promoted, facilitating smooth transitions into English-only higher education. This policy will result in a major shift in EMI (English as a medium of instruction) ideologies, leading to higher levels of academic achievement. Such an education transformation and implementation does not come without imminent challenges. However, despite the foreseeable challenges, this project promises to be a success, providing students with increased motivation and ultimately higher achievement levels.

Keywords: Bilingual Education, Educational Policy Analysis, English Medium Instruction (EMI) and Kuwait Educational Reform

PROPOSING BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY FOR KUWAITI LEARNERS

This paper addresses a very pertinent and important issue related to Kuwaiti education. Located in the middle east, Kuwait has a minority native Arab population and a majority expatriate population. As opposed to Modern Standard Arabic or classical Arabic, Kuwaiti Arabic is the language of communication. Kuwait's public schooling follows Arabic at the school level but English at the tertiary level like many of the gulf countries. Herein lies the problem. Changing languages at the tertiary level demotivates students, hinders comprehension, and reduces performance.

Kuwait's schooling system consists of three main models. Firstly, there are public schools that teach English as a foreign language in Arabic. Second, there are private bilingual schools that teach partially in Arabic and partly in English. Lastly, there are private British and American schools that teach Arabic as a language alongside English. The higher or tertiary level of education switches to English as the medium of instruction, both public and private. The policy exposes Kuwaiti students to a complex and contradictory situation where they study all subjects including math and sciences in Arabic for almost twelve years. This is like learning in their native language in their home country for twelve years; however, when it comes to tertiary education, they must study in a foreign land because all the majors and disciplines are taught in English. This disengages and demotivates them.

This paper uses Bacci's "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) method of policy analysis as a diagnostic tool to analyze and propose a solution to this theoretical

problem. The WPR approach and analytical tool is used for challenging existing practices and policies. It illustrates the interrelationships and diverse elements that occur in Kuwaiti society, and how government policies can create educational problems. As education policies in the region are not accessible, there is not enough research and literature on the concerned issue, hence the need to investigate and explore the situation. Nevertheless, the researcher has used evidence from authentic research and content on the issue.

The article is divided into six sections, each analyzing the problem using Bacci's WPR analytical tool's question and answer approach. The first section on literature review analyzes and discusses the problem using Bacci's WPR model. A step-by-step approach is used to address the different questions efficiently. The proposed bilingual educational set-up has been analyzed and discussed using Bernstein's pedagogic discourse approach to draw attention to the silences. The theoretical framework employs Basil Bernstein's pedagogical discourse tool to examine the problem and recontextualize the existing situation in the second part of the article. In the third part, the author discusses the theoretical dimensions and underpinnings of the Kuwaiti educational policy and current educational crisis. A detailed discussion of the pedagogical implications of bilingual education is presented in the fourth section. The infrastructural changes involved in this revolutionary leap would not be without challenges and issues. The fifth stage of this article discusses the challenges associated with administering this educational reform. The paper concludes with recommendations for successful implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study uses Bacci's WPR (What is the Problem Represented to Be?) model to analyze and assess the existing education policy. Creating a post structural analysis theory, it establishes it as an operational set of strategic relations and practices. The WPR approach is used to engage in this theorizing act and make politics visible. In doing so, the study offers seven interrelated forms of questioning and analyses that critically analyze problematizations (the ways in which "problems" are produced and portrayed) in governmental policies and practices (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016).

Bacci's WPR "What is the Problem Represented to be?" Model

The "What Is the Problem Represented to be?" perspective (WPR) allows students and scholars to think differently about widely accepted categories and governing practices. It is WPR's aim to challenge policies that create problems rather than address them, thereby shaping lives and worlds. The model also highlights how and why policies problematize themselves, demonstrating how and why they are created. Through problem representation, Baccii focuses on the underpinning problems of such policies. This model goes backwards to identify the problem and then proposes an answer.

As proposed by Bacci and Goodwin (2016, p.14), WPR is a prescriptive tool that focuses on questions and answers rather than problems and solutions for reconstructing the problematizations to get better answers through investigations, working backwards to identify what is problematized.

Q1: “What the Problem to be Represented is? Why is it Significant?”

It is important to understand that the first step in the WPR approach is to identify the problem presentation. When it comes to identifying a problem representation, one must “work backwards” from a proposal to see what is being represented as a problem (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016, p.21). Bacci’s model is relevant to this research because through the first question, it aims to investigate the Kuwaiti educational policy that forces students to face adverse situations in respect to their learning in classes. According to Troudi (2009) and Malallah (2010) cited in (AlRubaie, 2010) students often feel torn between their local linguistic environment and the academic environment when they enter college. Higher education offers religion and related subjects in Arabic, while technology courses are taught in English. As a result, Kuwaiti students often lack motivation and engagement leading to an underutilization of their diverse potential. Hence, this study proposes a bilingual strategy to strengthen Kuwaiti students’ Arabic and English skills to help them with their tertiary education.

Q2: What Deep-Seated Presuppositions or Assumptions Underlie this Representation of the “Problem?”

As pointed out by Bacci and Goodwin (2016), there are several objectives in Question 2. The first step in understanding the problem representation is to identify its meanings (presuppositions, assumptions, unexplored thinking methods, knowledge, discourses). It is more appropriate to identify these meanings within the policy, program, or technical instrument rather than in the heads of social actors. As a second step, we examine conceptualization and binaries underlying the problem. Such as male/female, citizen/migrant and public/private? The final analysis identifies and reflects upon patterns of problematization that may indicate a particular political rationale.

In the research context, the problem is due to an educational policy that sets Arabic as the language of instruction and expects students to switch to English. As students switch languages, they struggle to grasp content, consequently demotivating them. The problem lies in the education system where Arabic is the main language of instruction during the school years, so students cannot handle the switch to English at the higher levels. A diglossic country, Kuwait has both Modern Standard Arabic and Kuwaiti dialect of Arabic. Kuwaiti society has been experiencing a major language shift due to expat-based labor markets and changing educational environments. Parents prefer private schools to public schools to ensure their children receive quality education and higher-ranking diplomas (Alsafran, Al Ajmi and Al Azmi, 2020). Thus, this study proposes a bilingual solution to facilitate the switch students need at tertiary education and prepare them for the global market.

Q3: How has this Representation of the “Problem” Come About?

In a WPR analysis, Question 3 examines how a specific problem representation has evolved. Specifically, this question challenges attempts to trace back the policy’s origins to any easy-to-trace historical development. It aims to highlight the myriads of possible alternatives. The goal is to disrupt the assumption that what it reflects to what should be. Since the third

question focuses on Foucauldian genealogy, it is necessary to map the practices that produce detailed representations of problems (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016).

As emphasized by Bacci and Goodwin (2016), a key component of this analysis is the consideration of individual power relations, which considers, among other things, the operation of specific discursive practices that create authority for specific knowledges. An emphasis is placed on those minor knowledges that challenge the scientific consensus and that survive at the margins of scientific knowledge, which are called "subjugated knowledges".

In the research context, as pointed by Beblawi and Luciani (1987), cited in (Karmani, 2009), the rentier mode of managing oil revenues in Kuwait has contributed to "buying off political consensus" and securing and strengthening a state's legitimacy. As a result, oil revenues have been lavishly distributed to the local population, mainly in the form of free or heavily subsidized housing, health care, education, and welfare projects, rather than obtaining revenues from domestic sources (like most non-rentier economies do).

According to Noreng (1997), cited in (Karmani, 2009), rentier states are rarely compelled or motivated to represent public policy and expenditure commitments, a major consequence of the distributive mode of oil wealth management. Kuwait has weak state-society links, with few opportunities for public participation in policymaking and insufficient means for the government to gauge and meet societal needs. As a result, language education policies and planning are susceptible to hit-and-miss decisions. Due to the abundance of capital created by oil revenues, governments pursue capital-intensive economic strategies instead of labor-intensive ones. Hence a capital-intensive strategy usually results in extensive hiring of foreign experts (mainly Western or Western-oriented), which is costly and advocates policy changes that (a) conflict with local interests and (b) are seldom absorbed locally. By educating and preparing Kuwaiti students for a labor-intensive economy, a bilingual model is proposed to deal with this issue of over-dependence on foreign labor.

Q4: What is Left Unproblematic in this Problem Representation? Where are the Silences? Can the "Problem" Be Conceptualized Differently?

The question encourages critical thinking. It's about destabilizing existing problem representations by emphasizing silences or unproblematized concepts. A particular confluence of circumstances can also be reimagined as not problematic or problematic in a different way. Questions 2 and 3 lay the foundation for Question 4: "What are the silences in this representation?" Can this problem be reframed? Comparing problematizations of selected issues across time and cultures is an effective way to promote different thinking. These comparisons enable us to identify the "problem" that is created by a combination of practices and relations. Within a particular context, different practices may produce contrasting problematizations (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016, p.22).

Kuwait's national policy focuses on preserving Arabic as the medium of instruction, which isn't inappropriate, since any nation would be keen to preserve its language. There is a growing consensus that English has diminished the status of local languages, including Arabic. Language policies should be developed with input from those who will use them. According to studies in the Arabian Gulf, such as Qatar, UAE and Saudi Arabia, there are

fears and anxieties about English's impact on Arabic (Alazemi, 2020). Similarly, Kuwaiti parents appear to demonize English language because of the country's colonial past.

It is possible to alleviate these fears by fully developing both languages, the learner's first language Arabic and the target language English. Considering this, a bilingual educational policy is proposed that will provide students with exposure to both languages while preserving their native language Arabic. It will provide the right ground and learning environment for their future higher education.

Q5: What Effects (Discursive, Subjectification, Lived) are Produced by this Representation of the “Problem”?

As further explained and demonstrated by Bacci and Goodwin (2016), the fifth question asks analysts about the effects of problem representations. In addition to measurable outcomes, we should consider political implications. This study examines three types of effects: discursive effects, subjectification effects, and lived effects. However, they are interconnected. An analysis of discursive effects demonstrates how the terms of reference established by a particular problem representation determine what can be thought and said. The subjectification effect reveals how "subjects" are implicated in problem representations and constructed in specific ways. The lived effects category allows us to examine how discursive and subjectification effects manifest in people's lives. As a result of these interrelated effects, (Foucault, M., 1982, p.208), cited in (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016) describes "dividing practices" that separate people from one another and can also produce "governable subjects" that are divided internally.

Public schools in Kuwait teach English as a foreign language, which limits their opportunities for learning it. English, however, is seen as a global language with greater prestige and career options. Nonetheless, teaching in a foreign language can harm native and second language as well as the learners' academic performance (Alsafran, Al Ajmi and Al Azmi, 2020). For them to develop academically and professionally, a bilingual system is important to provide equal opportunities for learning both languages.

In Kuwaiti context, some trainee teachers believe that English is a sign of prestige, and graduates of English-medium schools have a better command of the language. As global markets expand and foreign-capital companies occupy Kuwaiti jobs, they speculate that the best positions require English language skills. To maximize their children's chances of success, Kuwaiti parents choose to place them in schools that teach English extensively. In response to high demand, such institutions raise tuition payments and restrict entry. Consequently, all Kuwaiti families cannot send their children to Anglophone schools. In other words, an individual's ability to learn English is determined by their parents' earnings, which in turn influence local socioeconomic conditions (AlRubaie, 2010).

Q6: How and Where has this Representation of the “Problem” been Produced, Disseminated and Defended? How Has it Been and/or How Can It Be Disrupted and Replaced?

As put by (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016), this question aims to highlight the possibility of contestation and destabilization of 'truths' we take for granted. It emphasizes on the

practices of installing, authorizing, and evaluating particular representations. Furthermore Question 6, as mentioned by Foucault (1978), cited in (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016), allows participants to reflect on ways they challenge (or could challenge) dominant representations of a problem. For this part of the analysis, questions 2 and 3 are helpful.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK - BERNSTEIN'S PEDAGOGICAL DISCOURSE APPROACH

In this study, Bernstein's Pedagogical Discourse approach is used to recontextualize learning environments of Kuwaiti students to motivate them better for their future education. Bernstein (1990) as cited in (Singh, 2002), has identified three main fields of the pedagogic device: production, recontextualization, and reproduction. These fields have a hierarchical relationship, in that recontextualization can't happen without original knowledge, and replication can't happen without recontextualization. Higher education institutions and private research organizations continue to produce most of the new knowledge (Bernstein, 2000; Castells, 2000), cited in (Singh, 2002, p.3). However, state departments of education and training, curriculum authorities, and specialist journals primarily recontextualize knowledge (Singh, 2002).

Bernstein's Pedagogic Discourse - Production and Growth of Knowledge

The growth of knowledge has enormous implications for educators, including what knowledge can be converted into pedagogic communication, who carries out the work of pedagogising knowledge, and how it is transformed. As specialized knowledge grows, a paradoxical decrease has occurred in our comprehension of knowledge, since our intellect is limited in its ability to comprehend new knowledge. (Singh, 2002).

Bernstein's Pedagogic Discourse - Recontextualization of Knowledge

The field of recontextualization lies between the fields of primary and secondary production and reproduction of knowledge. As specified by Bernstein (1990), cited in (Singh, 2002, p.5), the official recontextualizing field (ORF) includes the 'specialized departments and sub-agencies of state and local educational agencies, as well as the research and inspection system of these organizations.'

Furthermore, Bernstein (1990), cited in (Singh, 2002, p.5), focuses on two types of PRF (pedagogic recontextualizing fields) which include: (1) university departments of education, along with their research; and (2) specialized educational media, including weeklies, journals, and publishing houses along with their readers and advisers. As agents within the PRF select and organize texts, they struggle to control the pedagogic discourses regulating the production of pedagogic contexts, their relationships within those contexts, and the texts produced by these agents.

According to (Bernstein, 1990), struggles over the pedagogic device are attempts to control pedagogic models and pedagogic discourse, and that these changes in instruction theory can affect pedagogic discourse and pedagogic practice. (Singh, 2002, p.6).

Bernstein's Pedagogic Discourse - Evaluation & Reevaluation of Knowledge - Kuwaiti Context

As defined by Bernstein (1990) and cited in (Clark, 2005), in pedagogic discourse, it is possible to understand what is relayed or, as Bernstein calls it, the "text" but not the relay itself, i.e., the structures that allow discourse to be conveyed. Thus, pedagogic discourse emphasizes verbal behavior rather than the structures that enable it - the structures that allow it to happen. Hence pedagogic discourse is "a principle for appropriating other discourses and bringing them into special relation with each other for the purposes of their selective transmission and acquisition" (Bernstein, 1990, p.181) cited in (Clark, 2005). In this regard, he discusses the conditions and structures that facilitate and influence pedagogical discourse. Thus, Kuwaiti curriculum, representing those structures, needs to be recontextualized to suit learners' needs, which may include changes in policies, curriculum rewriting, and teacher training.

In the research context, Kuwaiti learners struggle with English language at the tertiary level due to the lack of English language exposure during schooling time. Therefore, the author proposes to recontextualize those original policy documents for replication and evaluation of Kuwaiti educational approach in the public sector. To deal with Kuwaiti learners' challenges at tertiary level, a bilingual policy has been proposed. Introducing a bilingual educational policy will preserve the native language Arabic while exposing students to English as a medium of instruction. As a result, their future higher education will be set on a solid foundation.

By means of a bilingual education system, this paper proposes recontextualizing the existing educational policy for Kuwaiti learners to foster a more efficient pedagogy. While making recommendations for a more effective bilingual education policy for Kuwaiti students, potential challenges have also been considered.

Q7: Applying this List of Questions to Your Own Problem Representations

In the WPR approach, the final step involves applying the six questions to one's own proposals. To critique one's own thinking, one must consider one's location within historically and culturally entrenched systems of knowledge. Foucault (2001) has emphasized, cited in (Bacci and Goodwin, 2016), that even what we are ourselves can be problematic, commonly referred to as "reflexivity", and has a special significance in Foucauldian analysis. A WPR approach involves more than declaring the necessity to be "reflective" by embracing a precise and demanding activity: submitting recommendations.

Research Question: How can we support and enhance Kuwaiti students' learning environments through the implementation of bilingual education policy?

THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE EXISTING EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Demographic Constitution of Kuwait

A small country with 4.4 million people located on the Persian (Arabian) Gulf coast, Kuwait is situated at the northern edge of the Arabian Peninsula. With a nominal GDP of USD 302.62 billion (2024) and a GDP per capita of USD 27068.49, Kuwait's economy is robust and stable.

According to Article 3 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, Arabic is the official language. Kuwait's compulsory education law of 1965 guarantees free education up to secondary school (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017).

Kuwaitis enjoy low taxes, a high per capita income, and many social services, including free healthcare and education. It has resulted in Kuwaitis' exposure to international markets and an increase of expatriates in the country. Kuwait is linguistically diverse, with Arabic as the official language and English as the second language. Most Kuwaitis are bilingual, preferring Arabic with family, friends, and businesses. Kuwait has also used English as its language of administration and international relations during the British protectorate and after joining the United Nations.

Colonial History and Discovery of Oil

Kuwait's oil discovery in the 1930s led to the formalization of its education system and further strengthening of the status of English (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017). Similarly, (AlRubaie, 2010), describes the state of Kuwait as a former protectorate of the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain, enjoying rapid growth and prosperity since the late 1930s, when one of the world's richest oil deposits was discovered there. As Hourani (1991) mentions, cited in (Karmani, 2009, p.89), Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State then, lamented that oil was "much too important a commodity to be left in the hands of the Arabs".

In his book Mansfield (1985) describes how Gulf states transitioned from being a poor region controlled by Bedouin tribes to becoming an oasis of development. After the OPEC oil embargo, writes George Soros (1998) cited in (Karmani, 2009), English became big as business and commercial pressures exerted extraordinary influence. As the Arabian Gulf states embarked on a socio-economic experiment, English emerged as a powerful tool to facilitate their modernization (Karmani, 2009, p.92).

Early Stages of Educational Transition

In Kuwait, a primary source of literacy in the early 19th century was Qur'anic schools led by religious preachers called 'Mutawas' or 'Mullas'. Except for wealthy merchants' daughters, most women were illiterate due to tribal traditions and religious fallacies. With the phenomenal growth of English, it quickly became apparent that "English" had usurped a powerful stake in the region's future development (Karmani, 2009, p.93). As put by (Power, 2022), in the early 1950s, Kuwait was at the forefront of a profound change that was stimulating forces from within and outside the Gulf States.

Kuwait's Council for Education was established in 1936 to consolidate intellectual and monetary assets within the public educational environment (AlRubaie, 2010). The new system in modern schools entailed a one-year preparatory course, elementary reading and writing, and six years of primary education. The general education system was reorganized in 1956-57 into a Preparatory Stage, a Beginners' Stage, an Intermediate Stage, and a Secondary Stage (Al-Awadi, 1957). Kuwait has since been connected to the Western world through the English language and has developed 'American style' educational institutions thanks to the lingua franca status of English (Wright, 2024). However, the colonial history

and the fear of the western influence stays at the backdrop guiding educational policies in Kuwait.

Existing Educational Setup

Currently, Kuwait's public schools teach Arabic with English as a foreign language, while bilingual Arabic-English private schools are partly subsidized by Kuwait government, and American or British-oriented English-language schools are also available. Public schools in Kuwait are free and available to Kuwaitis only. The language of instruction is Modern Standard Arabic, and English is taught five times a week for 45 minutes. In 2002, the Ministry of Education introduced a modernized English language curriculum for public schools, along with new textbooks and assessment tools (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017).

At the Ministry of Education, English language instruction and assessment are handled by the Language Teaching (ELT) General Supervision department. In addition, it identifies learning objectives and evaluates outcomes for education in public sector. Besides, overseeing practical pedagogical training, the department also approves new candidates to national pedagogical cadres as part of its responsibility to manage the national English language curriculum. (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017).

Kuwait's public education system is highly centralized, with the Ministry of Education defining general goals for education. Kuwait's English education is guided by three primary educational objectives. According to the ELT General Supervision, the new English language curriculum includes linguistic, cognitive, and affective goals. In the progression, less complex linguistic, cognitive, and affective tasks are followed by more complex tasks. The lack of sufficient exposure and engagement in classes makes updated and modernized curricula unlikely to improve Kuwaiti students' English language proficiency (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017, p.82).

Lack of Professional Training for EL Teachers

EL (English language) teachers lack training and pedagogical skills, and often students end up with little or no knowledge of the language. As emphasized by (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017), insufficient teacher training and professional development is often cited as the cause of Kuwaiti students' low proficiency in English. Most coursework at Kuwait University for English teachers is in Arabic, including pedagogical topics such as teaching methodologies, with only four English courses required. As a result, future English teachers do not receive adequate training in linguistics, which can pose a host of difficulties for graduates of public schools, especially if they intend to study in higher education.

According to (AlRubaie, 2010), cited in (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017), the Kuwaiti public-school system lacks preparation for ESL teachers. They use outdated teaching methods that emphasize drills and memorizing out-of-context vocabulary instead of teaching pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Moreover, the teaching materials are dull, lack cultural content, and are disconnected from other subjects. According to one study respondent, high school assessment methods often reward obedience and diligence over academic progress. Most importantly, respondents expressed disappointment with teacher professionalism (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017). Therefore, today's public high school

graduates have poor reading comprehension and writing skills, leaving them ill-prepared for college. Kuwaiti students, therefore, suffer from high levels of demotivation because of their English difficulty.

Tertiary Education in Kuwait

Higher educational institutions in Kuwait include both public and private institutions. Established in 1966, Kuwait University has 16 colleges including arts, sciences, law, engineering, medicine, dentistry, education, Islamic studies, and social sciences. There is a huge shift in how students receive information considering English is the language of instruction at tertiary levels unlike public schools. Additionally, to state-sponsored higher education, Kuwait has several private universities modeled after American institutions. American University of Kuwait (AUK), affiliated with Dartmouth College, and Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) are among them. In addition, there are American College of the Middle East (ACM), American University of the Middle East (AUM) and Australian University (AU) (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017, p.86).

In Kuwait, all higher education courses are taught in English, so students with lower levels of English are offered non-credit intensive English programs to give them proficiency in the language. Students who lack proficiency in English are offered this opportunity to improve their skills before enrolling in a full-time program. In addition to providing free university education at Kuwait University and merit scholarships to western-style universities, Kuwait's Ministry of Higher Education offers Kuwaiti students international scholarships. As such, this encouragement reflects the Ministry's belief that mastering English will ensure a better future for specialists in all fields (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017, p.86).

Students in Kuwait must switch languages to benefit from English as a medium of instruction. Twelve years of English language study is insufficient, since students are only exposed to an hour per day (Alazemi, 2020). Higher education institutions in Kuwait have implemented EMI since the 1990s, but issues regarding students' academic achievement and comprehension have since arisen. Schools teach English as a foreign language and then English-only policies are followed to teach scientific majors and subjects at graduate level. For Kuwaiti learners, it is like studying Arabic in their native country for the entire school years; then, they migrate to another country to study English. Consequently, Kuwaiti students feel disengaged and demotivated. Furthermore, this policy negatively affects Arabic language learning as well (Alazemi, 2020, p.43).

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF A BILINGUAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Bilingual Education Defined

A classic definition of bilingual education is instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part or, or all the school curricula. For a program to be deemed bilingual, both languages must be used as medium of instruction to deliver curriculum content. Immersion models that teach majority language students predominantly through a minority or "target" language are not considered bilingual (Baker and Jones, 1998; Hamers and Blanc, 2000; Cummins, 2010) cited in (May 2017).

It is useful to begin with a classic definition of bilingual education, first posited by Andersson and Boyer: "Bilingual education is instruction in two languages [emphasis in original] and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part or, or all, of the school curriculum. Put simply, bilingual education involves instruction in two languages" (May 2017, Pg 3).

"Differentiation between Elective, Circumstantial and Dynamic Bilingualism

Bilingualism can take many forms. As explained by May (2017), Elective bilinguals are those who choose to learn an additional language as a means of social and educational advancement whereas Circumstantial bilinguals are those who are required to learn another language, most often because their first language L1 is not the language of the wider society in which they currently live. These individuals often experience "subtractive bilingualism." Dynamic Bilinguals are bilinguals in the globalized world of the twenty-first century who engage in multiple and complex discourse practices to facilitate communication with others and to comprehend their bilingual worlds.

Models of Bilingualism

There are three broad models of bilingual education: transitional models, maintenance models, and enrichment models. A transitional model of bilingual education uses the minority language of students in the early stages of schooling but aims to shift students away from the use of their minority language towards the greater use of the majority language as quickly as possible. A maintenance approach to bilingual education aims to maintain the minority language of the student, strengthen their sense of cultural and linguistic identity, and affirm their individual and collective ethno-linguistic rights. It is an additive and strong bilingual model. Closely related to maintenance bilingual programs, enrichment programs are generally associated with teaching majority language students through a minority target language. They are also likely to reduce educational and wider social and linguistic inequalities experienced by minority language speakers and are additive in nature.

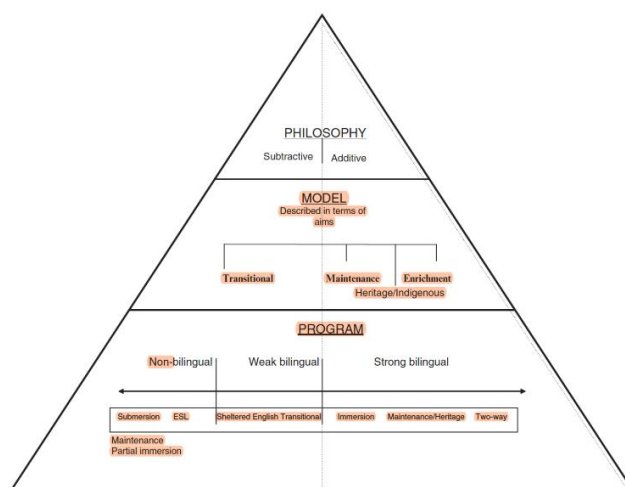


Diagram 1 Principal axes of bilingual/immersion education

© (May 2017, Pg 9)

ADVANTAGES OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Enrichment Bilingual programs have manifold benefits for learners that need two languages for communication and successful professional lives. Enrichment bilingual education programs provide instruction in the student's native language and in English to help them develop their English language skills and their cognitive development, as well as improve their problem-solving skills and creativity.

Using a dual-language approach allows students to build solid foundations in their first language, which serve as scaffolds for learning the second. Higher-order thinking skills, such as problem-solving, analytical reasoning, and metacognition, are fostered through cognitive engagement. Bilingual education can give students a solid foundation in their native language while also developing their English. Language programs can help students better understand other cultures. The teaching of multiple languages exposes students to different cultural perspectives and helps them understand the world around them (Charoenphon, 2023).

Additionally, bilingualism makes the cognitive demands of bilingualism more challenging, requiring us to switch between languages, understand and produce language in different contexts, and navigate different language structures. Bilingual students develop metacognitive skills, as they reflect on their language choices, evaluate their language skills, and adjust their language use based on the feedback they receive (Charoenphon, 2023). Developing critical thinking skills helps students become independent and critical learners across academic subjects and real-life situations.

Moreover, students in bilingual education programs gain a deep understanding and appreciation for diversity through exposure to different languages and cultures. They also develop skills such as active listening, empathy, and intercultural communication, and are encouraged to use their native language in the classroom. Through learning about other cultures' customs, traditions, and beliefs, students develop empathy, respect, and appreciation (Charoenphon, 2023). Bilingual education programs also promote pride and identity among students by sharing their cultural heritages. It helps students maintain a connection to their cultural roots and enhances their sense of self by using their native language.

Furthermore, bilingual education programs prepare students for a wide range of job opportunities that require proficiency in more than one language. A bilingual career offers opportunities for advancement. Across many industries, bilingual individuals are in demand for positions that require cross-cultural communication, negotiation, and collaboration. A bilingual education can provide students with the language skills, cultural awareness, and intercultural competence needed to excel in such roles (Charoenphon, 2023).

Finally and most importantly, bilingual education programs allow students to maintain their native language skills while also gaining proficiency in a second language. This can help them connect with their cultural roots, family, and community. Bilingual education encourages students to appreciate and respect diversity, which can promote a healthy sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. This can lead to higher levels of academic performance and success besides a greater sense of personal fulfillment, which can further boost students' self-esteem.

Pedagogical Implications of the Proposed Bilingual Education for Public Sector Education in Kuwait

In bilingual education, the child's home language is part of or used exclusively when he or she enters school, and then the child's target language is used exclusively in later life. Bilingual education aims to facilitate the smooth transition of students into English-only classrooms as quickly as possible. The proposed educational policy will encourage a significant shift in the ideology of teaching English for acquiring content as EMI (English as a medium of instruction). A delicate balance must be created to implement this approach through a bilingual setup that nurtures students' language skills in English while preserving their indigenous culture and language which is so crucial for their self-esteem, academic confidence and preparedness for future professional lives. Following factors contribute to the perspective of proposing a bilingual education policy for Kuwaiti learners:

Effectiveness of Bilingual Education in Kuwait

Research studies have shown Kuwaiti students who have received instruction in both languages show higher interest in learning and better language skills. With the expansion of private schools in the 1990s, that were overseen by the Ministry of Education's Department of Private Education, English language learning became more prevalent. To meet the country's needs, bilingual citizens with high English proficiency were needed. Employers in sectors such as petroleum development, banking, transportation, and engineering need to understand the language.

Consequently, the national education system was revised. English became a necessity rather than a luxury, a necessity rather than an option or a commodity when traveling or shopping on the highly competitive international market (AlRubaie, 2010). Hence there is a strong need to revise the public educational system as well to meet the growing needs of the developing economy of Kuwait.

Growing Interest for Bilingual Education over Public Schools - Post Invasion

The American occupation has impacted the Kuwaiti population differently from the pre-war Kuwaiti population. As put by (Wright, 2024), the Iraqi invasion of 1990 marked another shift in Kuwaiti mindset toward the Anglophone world, with English seen as essential for expressing shock and disbelief. The present-day linguistic landscape in Kuwait reflects the dominance of English and growing numbers of Kuwaitis are learning English. In recent years, people have become increasingly fascinated by foreign culture and parents are encouraging their children to learn foreign languages.

English has become increasingly popular in everyday communication. As a result of the political environment, Kuwaitis enrolled in more English-speaking/bilingual schools. Prior to the 1990 Gulf War, only 15 non-Arabic foreign schools existed in the country, but now there are 104, 42 of which offer non-Arabic curricula (AlMubailesh, 2010) as cited in (AlRubaie, 2010). Additionally, the number of English-speaking/bilingual private schools reached 98 in 2009-10 (AlRubaie, 2010). There is a steady rise in English or bilingual schools in Kuwait, suggesting that bilingual education is necessary to meet the needs of globalized Kuwaiti learners.

Preference of Kuwaiti Parents for Bilingual Schools over Public Schools

Children are mainly placed in bilingual or private schools by Kuwaiti parents for the following reasons: academic excellence, teacher professionalism, and language proficiency (considered a guarantee of future employment). Private schools continue to have a large proportion of students, despite substantially higher tuition fees. It is important to note that there is a difference between bilingual and international schools within the private sector. Currently, Kuwaiti bilingual schools follow the Kuwaiti National Curriculum in Arabic/English, as well as adopting materials from other Arabic-speaking countries (e.g., Lebanon), along with an English curriculum primarily borrowed from the United Kingdom, the United States, and/or Canada, for instruction.

Comparatively, international schools follow their respective countries' guidelines. Numerous other schools are available besides Armenian, Filipino, French, and Iranian schools. It is worth mentioning here that Kuwaiti parents often send their children to Pakistani and Indian schools since these schools provide affordable higher quality education than prestigious public schools. (AlRubaie, 2010, p.29). There are approximately 15 Pakistani schools and 28 Indian schools that offer instruction in English. This further highlights the necessity for introducing an educational setup that is affordable and meets the increasing need for English proficiency for Kuwaiti learners.

Teaching Methodology and Curriculum Pattern of Bilingual Schools

Kuwaiti bilingual schools have great success because they develop bilingualism in learners from day one. Most subjects are taught in English, including physical sciences, social sciences, math, and other subjects. Arabic is used only for teaching religion and Arabic. Another strength of bilingual schools is that they teach social sciences partly in English and partly in Arabic. Local culture, geography, and history are taught in Arabic, while international culture, history, and geography are taught in English. Unlike other bilingual schools, Kuwaiti bilingual schools use a unique enrichment model to let Kuwaiti learners strengthen both languages. As English is the medium of instruction, students are more likely to learn and focus on it and through social sciences and theology, Arabic is further strengthened. A unique model such as this can be embraced by public education for the greater benefit of Kuwaiti learners, as it will also eliminate any existing fears among Kuwaiti parents regarding loss of cultural identity.

Anxiety to Preserve Arab Language and Culture

Preserving tradition, culture and language is of prime importance to most Arabs in the gulf states, including Kuwait. This is one of the reasons for their inclination towards public education sector that preserves these values. Focus on many studies have shown Kuwaiti parents' inclination towards public education to preserve culture and language. Language Programs should be created with input from those that will deal with them. Several studies in the Arabian Gulf region have shown that there is anxiety and fear for the effect English has on Arabic (Alazemi, 2020).

Scholars argue that the spread of English has diminished the status of local languages, and Arabic has been no exception. In a research study, as pointed by (Alazemi,

2020), during interviews, students demonstrated some sentimentality when discussing Arabic's prospects and abilities. It emerged from discussions that students regard Arabic as a source of their identity and as a means of preserving their history and heritage. During their discussion, they discussed Arabic's past as a language of science and academia; they see Arabic as a language that has contributed significantly to humanity, especially in scientific fields (Alazemi, 2020, p.57).

In another study (Wright, 2024) observed, that 'Americanizing' education in the Persian Gulf countries is leading scholars to worry about Arabic becoming a second language. Despite its heavy focus on western teaching methods and materials, the English Preparatory Program curriculum creates a stressful environment, resulting in students feeling anxious and 'westernized' (Wright, 2024). When one language dominates (English in this case) the other, local language becomes obsolete. Therefore, a bilingual educational setup in public sector will eliminate such fears and pave the way for better proficiency in English and a general increase in motivational levels towards education.

Bilingual English Islamic Schools

There are private English-Islamic schools in the private bilingual educational sector, which preserve local culture in response to the growing trend of preserving local customs, traditions, cultural values, and heritage. Students are taught Islamic studies as a compulsory subject at all levels, while English, science, and mathematics are taught in American or British curricula. Unlike international private schools, most English-Islamic schools teach males and females separately (AlRubaie, 2010, p.30). Kuwaiti parents prefer these schools because they focus more on preserving culture, language, and religion. This shows that Arabic is important as a medium of instruction for any proposed educational scenario. With bilingual education, Kuwaiti culture and tradition will be preserved through Arabic while English proficiency will be fostered through content education in English.

Importance of Arabic for Public Sector Employment

According to Kelly (2011), cited in (Wright, 2024), considering that majority of Kuwaiti students will be seeking employment in government sector dominated by Arabic-only discourse in the future, it is important to take into account, how and to what extent English language proficiency alone can improve their prospects. Additionally, as mentioned by Findlow (2006), cited in (Wright, 2024), it is therefore critical to challenge an assumption that English is the language of economic and scientific progress, which automatically places Arabic in an asymmetrical relationship with its Anglophone cousin, assigning it roles like for learning Quranic tradition. Consequently, education policies must be balanced to create future learners that understand not only English as a global language of success, but also strengthen local cultures and languages.

In contrast, the existing curriculum with competence-based values dominates the policy documents from the MoE (Ministry of Education), but the stakeholders on all levels seem to lack a clear understanding of these values. Islam, Arab culture and nationalism are visible and important values in the Kuwaiti educational system, and Kuwait's national development plan is organized around seven areas, including 'human capital', which aims to reform the educational system to better prepare youth for the workforce (Al-Senafi, 2020).

However, students lack English language skills so important to succeed in a globalized world. This is even though Kuwaitis value English language and the western culture, and English language is highly valued in the Kuwaiti educational system (Al-Senafi, 2020). Therefore, policymakers in Kuwait should consider promoting bilingual education in public schools to enhance language development and foster a multilingual society.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY

Re-evaluating Monolingual Orthodoxy in Favor of Pluralism of Languages

It is therefore vitally important to re-evaluate monolingual orthodoxy pedagogy whether for English or Arabic alone and replace it with one that appreciates pluralism of knowledge. As established by Kumaravadivelu (1994), cited in (Wright, 2024), such pedagogy responds to local knowledge, culture, and context based on particularity, practicality, and possibility. Learners' local knowledge refers to their cultural practices and wisdom. It is important that students' experiences and insights from their own life and worlds are recognized and utilized in standardized curricula. An individual's culture is his or her shared beliefs, values, norms, language and practices which determine who he or she is. Respecting and reflecting students' cultural backgrounds is an important part of acknowledging culture in the classroom. For learning to occur, it is necessary to create a specific environment which contributes to aligning teaching with the specific needs and realities of the students and the community in which they live. A bilingual public educational policy will thus ensure all of this and promote intrinsic motivation among learners. This will lead to higher levels of academic performance and achievement.

Promoting English as an International Language

These considerations however prompt another direction in redefining English as a global language. It is certainly not untrue that speaking English contributes to social and economic development, however, as the preceding discussion illustrates, such knowledge does not necessarily boost one's job prospects, especially within Kuwait.

According to Charles (2012), cited in (Wright, 2024) it is therefore not necessary to learn Academic Standard English, as a specific type of register in academic settings to succeed. It could be more promising to improve students' linguistic abilities through English as an International Language (EIL). It is a plural language form employed for international communication, not a distinct language variety propagated by the western world (Marlina, 2017) cited in (Wright, 2024).

It is important to expose children to these varieties of English rather than just the British and the American English. According to Matsuda (2017) cited in (Wright, 2024), students will gain a better understanding of English spoken around the world by doing this. Hence, textbooks must include "aspirational and educational topics from their own culture that distinguish them from the global coursebooks." As put forward by (Selvi and Yazan, 2017), EIL pedagogy offers a plausible and sustainable alternative to the status of English as the language of globalization by providing more sensitive instructional principles and practices for speakers from diverse ethnolinguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Translanguaging and Code-Switching as an Essential Approach for Bilingualism

Keeping Arabic and English balanced in language classrooms would require code-switching. The establishment of a new bilingual policy is essential to the achievement of this goal. It is undeniable that understanding English is essential for effective intercultural communication. Nonetheless, individuals usually find it easier to interact with those who speak their language and share the same cultural background as themselves. A bilingual policy will ensure more effective learning environment through dual language environment making it easy for students to learn both languages.

Contextualization of Curriculum

It is also necessary to make changes to the Anglocentric EPP curriculum that has the role of promoting western culture and values among students. As a means of maintaining and facilitating a sense of Arab identity, its content should incorporate sufficient materials about the cultures, heritages, and histories of the students of the region. The integration of western and traditional modes of knowledge will result in a more inclusive educational environment that celebrates cultural diversity, ultimately assisting students in understanding their place in a globalized world in a richer and more nuanced manner. Kuwait's policy makers should trust local experts rather than following imported teaching/learning models and should modify those external guidelines according to the specifics of the country and its educational stakeholders (AlRubaie, 2010).

Student Feedback for Inclusivity

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the role of students in this context as agents of change. Most students are not capable of providing opinions regarding the educational content or the methodologies used in their classrooms. Considering these limitations, it is imperative that university authorities actively seek out and incorporate student feedback to ensure that they can develop a curriculum that is both relevant and culturally inclusive. The students' voice should be included in Kuwaiti literature, along with policymakers' and experts' views to provide a holistic picture of all the possible outcomes and provide a policy that caters for the needs of those working with it (Alazemi, 2020).

CHALLENGES AND POTENTIAL ISSUES

The shift to the ideology of bilingual curriculum promises to be a successful venture but not without inherent challenges and potential issues -

- To meet the needs of this new curriculum would require teachers who can teach in English, with majority of them having a predominantly Arabic linguistic background. As a result, it makes sense to hire regional language teachers who possess a blend of local and international knowledge and who can bridge cultural divides (Wright, 2024).
- Students might respond in an unfavorable manner thus foiling the success of the program considering their inclination towards their own language. Arabic-speaking youth feels torn between the linguistic environment of the local community and the

academic context, where culturally or locally oriented content is delivered in Arabic, while technologically or commercially relevant subjects are delivered in English (AlRubaie, 2010). There is a hostility for English being presented as the language of modernization while Arabic being presented as a language not fit for science.

- Instructors would also need some kind of additional training to execute this ambitious project. The current ELT curriculum framework fails to equip teachers and trainees with adequate learning opportunities to survive in the age of globalization. Judging from experience, critical thinking skills and linguistic and cultural diversity training are important for teacher training which are lacking in majority of public-school teachers (AlRubaie, 2010). Teachers attend training courses during the period of their service, but the programs are insufficient, and teachers need continuous training to improve themselves professionally and link them to the updates on the educational level (Alazemi, 2020).
- There is no connection between policymakers and the educational communities. Ideal language policymaking and planning should be guided by the principles of holism and should establish productive links between all educational stakeholders.
- Kuwait's sociocultural and educational environment houses multiple problems concerning the quality of learning and teaching. Learning foreign languages via authoritarian, drill-based methods often lead learners to study the language just to pass the test. Participants in a study as reported by (AlRubaie, 2010) suggested, that English should be treated as an object and source of positive emotions and pleasure. They recommended that existing curricula be reformed to allow greater flexibility in the learning frameworks to achieve this goal.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Despite the foreseeable challenges, this project assures to be a successful exercise aimed at securing higher motivational levels and eventually higher academic achievements at the tertiary level. A bilingual approach will provide for solid Arabic foundation combined with high English proficiency to help students become more competitive in the future by strengthening the local Arab identity. There is a need to explore language education policy and planning solutions that are locally based and help maintain and promote Arab-Islamic values, and address broader related issues, such as the corrosive effects of the region's self-serving mercenary culture (Karmani, 2009). Most Kuwaiti parents believe that mastering Arabic is equally important than just training high proficiency in English. A well-balanced bilingual educational system could improve linguistic outcomes and overall academic achievement for Kuwaiti learners (Alsafran, Al Ajmi and Al Azmi, 2020).

Local teachers are agents of curricular reforms and decision-makers in EIL and should acknowledge the multilingual context of English use and put aside a native speaker model of research and pedagogy to engage Kuwaiti learners (Selvi and Yazan, 2017). Bilingual policymaking for Kuwait should involve diverse stakeholders, including future and practicing teachers, program administrators, schoolchildren and their parents, members of local communities, and employers from various realms of the state job market. Teachers are active and critically minded researchers who have the power to hugely impact the world view and thinking skills of their students. Trainee teachers could enrich the existing body

of literature about English language teaching in Kuwait (AlRubaie, 2010). It has been suggested by (Tryzna and Al Sharoufi, 2017), that a regional curriculum, like the PGCE UK model, could be developed to solve the English language teaching problems not only for Kuwait but also for the entire gulf region. A GCC language policy would standardize English language programs and uniformly train English teachers, enhancing the status of English as a second language and stimulating academic research. Revision of the existing language policy would necessitate the modification of pedagogical practices, which entail adopting culturally appropriate curricula. Through a bilingual education policy, public schools can update their curricula to offer effective education of both Arabic and English to provide Kuwaiti students with more opportunities for higher education and wider career choices.

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