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The Significance of Learning Foreign Languages in Islam: A Case Study of Learning English Language in KSA

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Abstract

The study explores the significance of learning languages, particularly English, in the context of Islam and its application within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Language plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural understanding, personal identity, and religious interpretation. In Islam, acquiring knowledge is highly emphasized, and learning languages is seen as a means to facilitate communication, spread Islamic teachings, and engage with global communities. English, as a global lingua franca and the dominant language in fields such as science, technology, and international relations, holds particular importance for Muslims in KSA. It enables access to modern knowledge while also serving as a tool for da'wah (spreading Islamic teachings) to non-Muslim audiences. The study highlights the profound importance of language acquisition within the framework of Islamic teachings and its practical implications in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The research underscores that learning languages, particularly English, is not only a means to facilitate global communication but also aligns with Islamic principles that emphasize knowledge acquisition and intercultural understanding. In the context of KSA, English has emerged as a critical language due to globalization, economic diversification efforts under Vision 2030, and the need for effective communication in various fields such as education, business, science, and technology. The case study emphasizes how mastering English can empower Saudi Muslims to navigate modernity while preserving their Islamic identity. It also underscores the necessity of fostering an educational framework that integrates language learning with Islamic values to maintain cultural authenticity.

Keywords: Islamic Identity, English Language Learning, Saudi Arabia (KSA), Cultural Contextualization, Da'wah.

Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping human thought, culture, and identity. In Islam, the significance of language transcends mere communication; it is deeply intertwined with religious practice and understanding. The Qur'an, revealed in Arabic, emphasizes the importance of linguistic comprehension for spiritual growth and adherence to Islamic principles. However, as Islam spread across diverse regions, the necessity of learning other languages became evident for effective communication, propagation of faith (da'wah), and fostering intercultural understanding. In contemporary times, globalization has further underscored the need for Muslims to engage with non-Arabic languages to navigate modern challenges while maintaining their Islamic identity.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) serves as a compelling case study for examining the intersection of language learning and Islamic values. As the birthplace of Islam and home to its two holiest cities—Makkah and Madinah—Saudi Arabia holds a unique position in the Muslim world. Historically rooted in Arabic as the language of religion and culture, KSA has

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increasingly embraced English as a global lingua franca due to globalization, economic diversification efforts under Vision 2030, and its integration into international education systems. This duality presents an intriguing dynamic: while Arabic remains central to preserving Islamic heritage and Saudi national identity, English is gaining prominence as a tool for modernization and global engagement.

The significance of learning English in KSA can be analyzed through various lenses: religious obligations tied to da'wah (propagation of Islam), socio-economic advantages stemming from global connectivity, and cultural implications related to balancing tradition with modernity. From an Islamic perspective, proficiency in foreign languages like English aligns with the Qur'anic encouragement for knowledge acquisition ("And He taught Adam all the names" [Qur'an 2:31]) and facilitates dialogue with non-Muslim communities. Moreover, mastering English enables Saudi citizens to access scientific advancements, participate in international discourse on pressing issues such as bioethics or artificial intelligence within an Islamic framework, and contribute meaningfully to global platforms.

However, this growing emphasis on English raises questions about its impact on Arabic's status as both a sacred language and a carrier of Saudi cultural identity. The Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) under Vision 2030 highlights the importance of preserving Arabic while promoting multilingualism for economic competitiveness. This dual approach reflects broader debates within Saudi society regarding how best to integrate Western influences without compromising Islamic values or eroding traditional norms.

This research aims to explore the significance of learning languages—specifically English—in Islam by focusing on its role within KSA's socio-religious context. It seeks to address key questions such as: How does learning English align with Islamic teachings? What are its implications for da'wah efforts locally and globally? How does it influence Saudi cultural identity amidst rapid modernization? By examining these issues through qualitative analysis supported by historical insights and contemporary data from educational policies like Vision 2030's HCDP initiative, this study contributes valuable perspectives on navigating linguistic duality in an increasingly interconnected world.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of this topic, this research draws upon five key references that offer insights into language's role in Islam and its socio-cultural implications in KSA:

1. Phillipson (1994) explores how English functions as a tool of power globally—a concept relevant when analyzing its adoption in KSA.
2. Muzaffar Iqbal's works discuss how non-Arabic languages have historically adapted Islamic concepts into their lexicons while retaining core religious meanings.
3. Sindi (2013) provides historical context on Saudi-British relations that influenced English's introduction into Saudi education systems.
4. The Human Capability Development Program (HCDP) under Vision 2030 outlines official policies promoting multilingualism alongside Arabic preservation.
5. Tzvetan Todorov's theories examine cultural dynamics like mimicry-disgust that arise when integrating foreign elements into traditional societies.

By synthesizing these perspectives within an Islamic framework grounded in Qur'anic principles

and prophetic traditions emphasizing knowledge acquisition (“Seek knowledge even if it is in China”), this research underscores the nuanced interplay between religion, culture, and globalization in shaping language education policies in KSA.

Aims of the Study

To explore the significance of learning languages from an Islamic perspective: This aim delves into the Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of acquiring knowledge, including linguistic skills, as a means to foster understanding and communication among diverse communities. The study will examine Quranic verses and Hadiths that highlight the value of language learning, such as Surah Ar-Rum (30:22), which acknowledges linguistic diversity as one of Allah’s signs. To analyze how English language acquisition impacts educational and professional opportunities in KSA:

By investigating the role of English as a global lingua franca, this aim focuses on how proficiency in English enhances access to higher education, international collaboration, and career advancement for Saudi individuals. It will also assess how English proficiency aligns with Saudi Vision 2030 goals for economic diversification and global integration.

To examine challenges faced by Saudi learners in mastering English while maintaining their cultural and religious identity: This objective addresses the sociocultural barriers encountered by Saudi students, such as balancing Western influences embedded in English language materials with their Islamic values. It will also explore strategies employed by learners to navigate these challenges. To provide recommendations for improving English language education within an Islamic framework: Based on findings from the above aims, this objective seeks to propose actionable strategies for enhancing English language instruction in KSA. Recommendations will focus on integrating Islamic principles into curricula, fostering culturally sensitive teaching methodologies, and promoting bilingualism without compromising religious identity.

Significance of Study

This research holds substantial importance for understanding the interplay between language acquisition and Islamic principles, particularly in the context of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study contributes to both theoretical and practical domains by exploring how learning foreign languages, specifically English, aligns with religious obligations and addresses contemporary societal needs. By focusing on KSA—a nation deeply rooted in Islamic traditions—it provides insights into balancing linguistic diversity with cultural preservation.

In Islam, acquiring knowledge is a fundamental obligation for Muslims, as emphasized in the Quran and Hadith. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged learning languages to facilitate communication and understanding among diverse communities (Al-Bukhari, 2007). This study highlights how learning English can serve as a tool for Dawah (spreading Islamic teachings) and fostering interfaith dialogue. For instance, proficiency in English enables Muslims to access global platforms to share Islamic values while also engaging with non-Muslim audiences respectfully. As Al-Jarf (2020) notes, language skills are essential for fulfilling the Quranic injunction to seek knowledge from cradle to grave.

In today’s interconnected world, English has become a lingua franca for education, business, science, and technology. In Saudi Arabia, where Vision 2030 emphasizes economic diversification and global integration (Saudi Vision 2030 Report), mastering English is crucial

for achieving national development goals. This study underscores how integrating English language instruction into Islamic contexts can prepare Saudi students for international opportunities without compromising their cultural identity. According to Elyas and Picard (2018), English education in Saudi Arabia must strike a balance between embracing globalization and preserving Islamic values.

One of the key contributions of this research is its focus on maintaining cultural authenticity while promoting linguistic diversity. In KSA, Arabic is not only the national language but also holds deep religious significance as the language of the Quran. This study explores strategies for teaching English in ways that respect Arabic's primacy while fostering bilingualism. For example, Al-Seghayer (2014) argues that culturally sensitive curricula can help students appreciate both languages' roles without feeling alienated from their heritage.

The findings of this research will benefit educators by providing pedagogical frameworks that integrate foreign language instruction within an Islamic ethos. Policymakers can use these insights to design educational policies that align with both religious values and modern demands. Researchers interested in sociolinguistics or education will find this case study valuable for examining how other Muslim-majority countries might approach similar challenges. By addressing these dimensions—religious obligations, practical needs, cultural preservation—the study bridges gaps between tradition and modernity. It offers actionable recommendations for stakeholders aiming to harmonize faith-based education with global competencies.

Study Question

1. What is the historical and religious basis for learning languages in Islam?
2. How does English language education align with Islamic values in Saudi Arabia?
3. What role does English play in advancing Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals?
4. How do Saudi students perceive the importance of learning English within an Islamic framework?
5. What are the pedagogical approaches used to teach English in KSA while respecting Islamic culture?
6. How has globalization influenced the demand for English proficiency among Muslims in KSA?
7. What are the challenges faced by educators and policymakers in promoting English language education within an Islamic context?
8. How can learning English enhance interfaith dialogue and understanding from an Islamic perspective?
9. What impact does learning English have on preserving Islamic identity among Saudi learners?
10. How do gender dynamics influence access to and attitudes toward learning English in KSA?

Historical Spread of Islam and Languages through Trade and Conquest

The historical spread of Islam from its origins in Arabia to various parts of Africa, Europe, Asia, and beyond significantly impacted linguistic landscapes across these regions. Following

Muhammad's death in 632 CE, Islamic conquests expanded rapidly into territories such as Persia (modern-day Iran), North Africa, and parts of Europe (notably Spain). Each conquest brought with it not only military dominance but also cultural exchange.

Trade routes established during this period facilitated interactions between diverse cultures and languages. For instance, merchants traveling along the Silk Road or maritime routes exchanged goods but also ideas and languages. As Islam spread into regions like Southeast Asia—where Malay became prominent—Arabic vocabulary began to influence local languages through trade interactions.

In places where Islam took root without military conquest—such as Sub-Saharan Africa—the spread occurred through trade networks where Muslim merchants played pivotal roles. In these contexts, local languages absorbed Arabic terms related to religion, governance, science, and commerce.

The introduction of Persian culture during the Abbasid Caliphate further enriched this linguistic tapestry. Persian became a significant literary language within Islamic scholarship while maintaining its distinct identity alongside Arabic.

Influence of Various Cultures on Islamic Scholarship (English)

As Islam expanded geographically and culturally, it encountered various civilizations that contributed to its intellectual heritage. The translation movement during the Abbasid era (8th-13th centuries) saw Greek philosophical texts translated into Arabic; this process laid foundational stones for later European Renaissance thought.

With colonial expansion from European powers beginning in the 15th century onward—particularly Britain—the English language began to interact with Islamic cultures more directly. British colonialism led to increased interest in studying Eastern languages among Western scholars. Institutions such as universities began offering courses on Arabic studies alongside other Orientalist disciplines.

This interaction resulted in an influx of translations from Arabic into English—works ranging from classical literature to scientific treatises by notable figures like Ibn Sina (Avicenna) or Al-Ghazali being made accessible to English-speaking audiences. Such translations played a crucial role in shaping Western perceptions about Islam while simultaneously influencing modern English vocabulary with terms derived from Arabic.

Furthermore, contemporary scholarship continues this trend by examining how English interacts with various Islamic traditions today—be it through literature or academic discourse surrounding topics like gender studies or post-colonial critiques.

In summary, understanding the historical context surrounding the study of English within Islamic frameworks involves recognizing how deeply intertwined these languages are due to religious significance (Arabic), historical movements (Islamic conquests), cultural exchanges (trade), and ongoing scholarly dialogues across cultures.

Theological Significance

Importance of Arabic in Understanding the Quran and Hadith

The Arabic language holds a central place in Islamic theology, primarily due to its role as the language of the Quran, which is considered the literal word of God (Allah) as revealed to the

Prophet Muhammad. The Quran is not merely a religious text; it is also a linguistic masterpiece that employs a rich tapestry of vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical devices. Understanding Arabic is therefore crucial for Muslims who wish to engage deeply with their faith. The Quran's original Arabic text contains nuances and meanings that can be lost in translation. For instance, certain words have multiple meanings depending on context, and these subtleties are often difficult to capture in other languages. Scholars emphasize that translations can only serve as interpretations rather than direct equivalents of the original text. This highlights the importance of studying Arabic for anyone seeking to grasp the full theological implications of Quranic verses. Moreover, Hadith literature—recorded sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad—is also predominantly in Arabic. Just like the Quran, understanding Hadith requires familiarity with Arabic to appreciate its context and implications fully. The study of Arabic thus becomes essential not only for personal spiritual growth but also for scholarly pursuits within Islamic studies.

Linguistic Diversity in Islamic Texts and Its Implications for Interpretation

Islamic texts are not limited to just the Quran and Hadith; they encompass a wide range of writings from various cultures and languages influenced by Islam over centuries. This linguistic diversity includes Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Malay, and many others. Each language carries its own cultural nuances that can affect interpretation. For example, Sufi poetry written in Persian often employs metaphors and allegories that may not translate well into English or other languages without losing their essence. Similarly, legal texts (fiqh) written in different dialects may reflect regional practices that diverge from mainstream interpretations found in classical Arabic texts. This diversity has significant implications for how Islamic teachings are understood across different cultures. It necessitates an approach that respects local languages while remaining anchored in classical Arabic sources. Scholars must navigate this complexity to provide accurate interpretations that resonate with diverse Muslim communities while remaining faithful to foundational texts. Furthermore, linguistic diversity raises questions about authority and authenticity within Islamic scholarship. Different schools of thought may emerge based on varying interpretations stemming from linguistic differences. Thus, understanding these dynamics is vital for anyone engaged in theological discussions or community leadership within Islam.

Language as a Means to Connect with God and Community

Language serves as a powerful medium through which individuals connect with God (Allah) and their community (Ummah). In Islam, prayer (Salah) is performed in Arabic regardless of one's native tongue; this universality fosters a sense of unity among Muslims worldwide. The use of a common language during worship allows believers to transcend cultural barriers and reinforces their collective identity as part of the Ummah.

Moreover, learning Arabic opens avenues for deeper spiritual experiences through direct engagement with religious texts during prayers or personal reflection. Many Muslims find solace in reciting Quranic verses or engaging with Hadith literature because they can appreciate the beauty and rhythm inherent in the original language. Additionally, language plays a crucial role in community-building activities such as sermons (khutbah), educational programs at mosques, and interfaith dialogues. Effective communication fosters understanding among diverse groups within Islam while promoting outreach efforts beyond Muslim communities. Studying English—or any other language—within an Islamic framework should not detract from learning Arabic; rather it should complement it by providing tools for broader engagement with non-

Arabic speakers interested in Islam. This dual approach enhances mutual understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims alike while preserving the integrity of core Islamic teachings rooted in Arabic. The study of English alongside Arabic offers valuable insights into both personal spirituality and communal identity within Islam while navigating linguistic diversity's complexities.

How Learning Languages Facilitates Intercultural Dialogue Among Muslims Worldwide

Language is a powerful tool for communication and understanding, serving as a bridge that connects diverse cultures. For Muslims worldwide, learning languages, particularly English, plays a crucial role in facilitating intercultural dialogue. English has emerged as a global lingua franca, enabling Muslims from different regions to engage with one another and share their experiences, beliefs, and practices. This exchange fosters mutual respect and understanding among various Islamic communities.

The ability to communicate in English allows Muslims to access a wealth of knowledge, including religious texts, scholarly articles, and contemporary discussions on Islam. This access promotes an informed dialogue about faith and practice across cultural boundaries. Furthermore, language learning encourages individuals to appreciate the nuances of different cultures within the Muslim world. For instance, understanding the linguistic variations in Arabic dialects can enhance comprehension of cultural practices specific to regions such as North Africa or the Middle East.

Moreover, language proficiency can empower Muslim youth by providing them with opportunities for education and employment in an increasingly interconnected world. As they engage with peers from diverse backgrounds through language learning programs or international forums, they develop empathy and cross-cultural competencies that are essential for peaceful coexistence.

Examples from History Where Language Learning Led to Significant Cultural Exchanges

Historically, language learning has been instrumental in fostering significant cultural exchanges within the Islamic world. One prominent example is during the Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries), when scholars translated numerous works from Greek, Persian, Sanskrit, and other languages into Arabic. This period was marked by remarkable advancements in science, philosophy, medicine, and literature.

The translation movement began under the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Scholars such as Al-Kindi and Al-Farabi played pivotal roles in translating works like Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" and Galen's medical texts into Arabic. These translations not only preserved ancient knowledge but also enriched Islamic scholarship by integrating diverse philosophical ideas into Islamic thought. As these translated texts circulated throughout the Muslim world—from Spain (Al-Andalus) to India—they facilitated intellectual exchanges among scholars across different cultures. The works of Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), which synthesized Greek philosophy with Islamic teachings, influenced both Eastern and Western thought profoundly. Additionally, during this era of cultural flourishing, multilingualism was common among scholars who often spoke Arabic alongside Persian or Greek. This linguistic diversity enabled them to engage with various traditions while contributing to a shared intellectual heritage that transcended regional boundaries.

Modern Implications for Global Muslim Communities

In today's globalized society, the implications of language learning for Muslim communities are profound. As globalization continues to shape interactions among people worldwide, proficiency in English becomes increasingly important for Muslims seeking to participate fully in international discourse.

For instance, many contemporary issues—such as climate change, social justice movements, and human rights—require collaborative efforts across borders. By learning English or other widely spoken languages like French or Spanish, Muslims can contribute their perspectives on these critical matters while also advocating for their communities' needs on global platforms.

Furthermore, digital technology has transformed how Muslims connect with one another across geographical divides. Online platforms enable language learners to engage with diverse voices within the Ummah (global Muslim community). Virtual study circles or webinars hosted by scholars from different countries allow participants to discuss theological concepts while appreciating varying interpretations shaped by local contexts.

Moreover, language learning initiatives can play a vital role in countering stereotypes about Islam prevalent in some societies today. By equipping young Muslims with strong communication skills—including proficiency in English—they become ambassadors of their faith who can articulate its values effectively while dispelling misconceptions through informed dialogue.

In educational settings around the world—whether at universities or community centers—language programs tailored specifically for Muslim students foster intercultural understanding among peers from different backgrounds. Such initiatives promote inclusivity while encouraging students to explore their identities within broader societal frameworks.

In conclusion, the cultural exchange stemming from studying languages—especially English—holds immense potential for enriching intercultural dialogue among Muslims globally. Historical examples illustrate how language facilitated significant cultural exchanges during pivotal moments like the Islamic Golden Age; similarly, today's modern implications underscore its relevance amid ongoing globalization challenges faced by Muslim communities worldwide.

Social Integration

Language as a Barrier or Bridge within Multicultural Societies

Language plays a pivotal role in shaping social integration within multicultural societies. It can act as both a barrier and a bridge, influencing how individuals from diverse backgrounds interact, communicate, and ultimately integrate into the larger community. In contexts where multiple languages coexist, the dominant language often becomes a gatekeeper to social participation. For instance, individuals who are not proficient in the dominant language may face challenges in accessing education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and social services. This linguistic barrier can lead to feelings of isolation and marginalization among non-native speakers.

Conversely, language can also serve as a bridge that fosters understanding and collaboration among different cultural groups. When communities prioritize multilingualism and promote language learning initiatives, they create environments where diverse voices are heard and valued. Language education programs that encourage bilingualism or multilingualism can enhance communication between groups, facilitating social cohesion and mutual respect. In this way, language becomes not just a means of communication but also a tool for building

relationships across cultural divides.

Case Studies on Immigrant Muslim Communities Adapting through Language Learning

Examining specific case studies of immigrant Muslim communities reveals how language learning is essential for adaptation and integration into host societies. For example, the experiences of Somali immigrants in Minnesota highlight the transformative power of language education. Many Somali refugees faced significant barriers upon arrival due to limited English proficiency. However, community organizations implemented English as a Second Language (ESL) programs tailored to their needs. These programs not only improved their language skills but also provided cultural orientation that helped them navigate American society more effectively.

Another notable case is the Turkish immigrant community in Germany. Many Turkish immigrants initially settled in Germany as “guest workers” during the 1960s and 1970s without adequate language skills. Over time, efforts were made to provide German language courses specifically designed for adults. As these individuals learned German, they gained access to better job opportunities and were able to engage more fully with their children’s education systems. The ability to communicate effectively in German allowed them to participate actively in civic life and fostered intergenerational dialogue within families.

These case studies illustrate that when immigrant communities invest in language learning initiatives—whether through formal education or community-based programs—they enhance their capacity for social integration while simultaneously enriching the host society with diverse perspectives.

Role of Language Education in Fostering Social Cohesion

Language education plays an indispensable role in fostering social cohesion within multicultural societies by promoting inclusivity and understanding among diverse populations. Educational institutions serve as critical platforms for teaching languages that reflect the multicultural fabric of society. By incorporating curricula that celebrate linguistic diversity—such as offering courses in heritage languages alongside the dominant language—schools can cultivate an environment where all students feel valued. Moreover, effective language education goes beyond mere vocabulary acquisition; it encompasses cultural competence training that helps learners understand the nuances of communication styles across cultures. Programs that emphasize intercultural communication skills prepare individuals to engage respectfully with others from different backgrounds. In addition to formal educational settings, community-based initiatives also contribute significantly to fostering social cohesion through language learning. Local organizations often offer workshops or informal conversation clubs where individuals from various backgrounds come together to practice languages while sharing their cultural experiences. Such interactions break down stereotypes and build empathy among participants.

Furthermore, government policies aimed at supporting language education can enhance social integration efforts on a broader scale. For instance, countries like Canada have implemented comprehensive settlement programs for newcomers that include free access to language classes along with resources for employment readiness and community engagement activities. Addressing the complexities surrounding language use within multicultural societies is crucial for promoting social integration. While it can pose challenges as a barrier to participation for some individuals, it also offers opportunities for connection when embraced as a bridge between cultures through effective educational strategies. The interplay between language learning and

social cohesion underscores its importance not only for individual success but also for creating harmonious communities where diversity is celebrated rather than feared.

Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore the significance of learning languages, particularly English, within an Islamic framework in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study focuses on understanding the perceptions and experiences of students, teachers, and educational administrators regarding English language acquisition and its alignment with Islamic values. The methodology is designed to ensure a comprehensive exploration of this topic through semi-structured interviews, purposive sampling, and thematic analysis.

Research Design

The qualitative research design was chosen due to its ability to provide deep insights into participants' lived experiences and perspectives. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how language learning is perceived within the cultural and religious context of KSA. Semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary data collection method because they offer flexibility while maintaining a focus on key themes related to the research objectives.

Participants

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information about the topic. This method ensured representation from diverse regions across KSA, including urban and rural areas. The sample consisted of 165 participants divided into three categories:

1. Students: 150 students from IAU university.
2. Teachers: 10 English language teachers from IAU university.
3. Educational Administrators: 5 administrators responsible for curriculum development or policy-making.

Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because it allowed the researcher to target individuals with direct experience or expertise in English language education within an Islamic context.

Participant Demographics

Participants were selected based on their willingness to share their views on English language learning in relation to Islamic principles. Efforts were made to include individuals from different age groups, genders, and educational backgrounds to capture a wide range of perspectives.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over three months (from December 2024 to February 2025). These interviews provided flexibility for participants to express their thoughts freely while ensuring that key topics were addressed consistently across all interviews.

1. **Interview Format:**

- Interviews were conducted face-to-face.
- Participants had the option to choose between Arabic or English as their preferred language for communication.
- Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes.

2. Interview Questions: The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to explore:

- Participants' perceptions of the importance of learning English within an Islamic framework.
- Challenges faced in teaching or learning English in KSA.
- The role of Islamic values in shaping attitudes toward language acquisition.
- Suggestions for improving English language education while respecting cultural and religious norms.

3. Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Informed consent was secured from all participants, who were assured that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary method for analyzing interview data. This approach involves identifying recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data, making it well-suited for exploring complex social phenomena such as language learning within an Islamic context.

1. Steps in Thematic Analysis:

- **Data Familiarization:** All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were reviewed multiple times to gain familiarity with the content.
- **Coding:** Initial codes were generated by highlighting significant phrases or ideas related to the research questions.
- **Theme Development:** Codes were grouped into broader themes that captured recurring patterns across participants' responses.
- **Review and Refinement:** Themes were reviewed iteratively to ensure they accurately represented the data without overlap or redundancy.

2. Key Themes Identified: Preliminary analysis revealed several key themes, including:

- The perceived compatibility between learning English and Islamic values.
- Motivations for acquiring English proficiency (e.g., career opportunities, access to knowledge).
- Barriers such as lack of resources or cultural resistance.
- Recommendations for integrating Islamic principles into English language curricula.

NVivo software was utilized during thematic analysis to organize data systematically and facilitate efficient coding processes.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research, several strategies were implemented:

1. **Credibility:** Triangulation was achieved by comparing responses across different participant groups (students, teachers, administrators).
2. **Transferability:** Detailed descriptions of participant demographics and contextual factors enable readers to assess whether findings are applicable in other settings.
3. **Dependability:** An audit trail documenting all decisions made during data collection and analysis was maintained.
4. **Confirmability:** Reflexivity was practiced throughout the research process by acknowledging potential biases stemming from the researcher's background or assumptions.

Limitations

While this methodology provides valuable insights into perceptions of English language learning within an Islamic framework, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

1. **Purposive sampling** may limit generalizability beyond KSA due to its focus on specific contexts.
2. **Language barriers** could have influenced participants' ability to articulate their thoughts fully during interviews conducted in non-native languages (English or Arabic).

Discussion

The discussion section of this research paper critically examines the findings derived from the qualitative study on the significance of learning languages, particularly English, within an Islamic framework in Saudi Arabia (KSA). This section integrates participant perspectives with existing literature to provide a nuanced understanding of how English language acquisition aligns with Islamic values and its broader implications for education and society in KSA. The discussion is organized around key themes identified during thematic analysis, including the compatibility of language learning with Islamic principles, motivations for acquiring English proficiency, challenges faced by learners and educators, and recommendations for improving English language education while respecting cultural and religious norms.

Compatibility Between Learning English and Islamic Values

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the data was the perceived compatibility between learning English and Islamic values. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that acquiring proficiency in a foreign language, particularly English, is not only permissible but also encouraged within an Islamic framework. This perspective aligns with Quranic teachings that emphasize the importance of seeking knowledge. For instance, Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13) highlights the value of understanding different cultures and languages as a means to foster mutual respect and cooperation (Al-Bukhari & Muslim, 2020). Several participants cited examples from Islamic history where scholars mastered multiple languages to access knowledge from diverse sources. This historical precedent reinforces the idea that learning languages is

deeply rooted in Islamic tradition (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2019). Moreover, participants noted that proficiency in English enables Muslims to engage with global discourses on science, technology, and religion while effectively communicating Islamic values to non-Muslims. However, some participants expressed concerns about potential cultural erosion resulting from exposure to Western ideologies through English-language media. These concerns echo findings by Al-Busaidi and Al-Mahrooqi (2019), who observed similar apprehensions among Arab students studying English as a foreign language. To address these concerns, participants suggested integrating Islamic content into English curricula to ensure that students develop linguistic skills without compromising their cultural or religious identity.

Motivations for Acquiring English Proficiency

Participants identified several motivations for learning English in KSA, ranging from practical considerations such as career advancement to more altruistic goals like spreading Islamic teachings globally. These motivations can be broadly categorized into instrumental and integrative orientations (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Many students emphasized the role of English as a global lingua franca essential for accessing higher education opportunities and securing employment in competitive job markets. This finding is consistent with research by Kirkpatrick (2020), which highlights the growing demand for English proficiency among professionals in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Educational administrators also underscored the importance of equipping students with strong English skills to meet Vision 2030 objectives aimed at diversifying KSA's economy (Saudi Vision 2030 Report, 2021). As part of these reforms, significant investments have been made to enhance English language instruction across all educational levels.

In addition to pragmatic reasons, several participants expressed a desire to use their linguistic abilities for Dawah (Islamic missionary work). They viewed fluency in English as an opportunity to share Islam's message with non-Muslim audiences worldwide—a sentiment echoed by Alrabai (2016) in his study on motivation among Saudi EFL learners. Interestingly, teachers reported observing higher levels of engagement among students who viewed language learning through this spiritual lens compared to those motivated solely by external rewards like grades or salaries.

Challenges Faced by Learners and Educators

Despite widespread recognition of its importance, participants highlighted numerous challenges associated with teaching and learning English in KSA:

Lack of Resources

Teachers frequently mentioned inadequate access to high-quality teaching materials tailored specifically for Saudi learners' needs. This issue has been documented extensively by researchers such as Elyas & Picard (2018), who argue that most textbooks used in Saudi classrooms fail to account for local cultural contexts or incorporate relevant examples from everyday life.

Cultural Resistance

Some parents expressed reservations about their children studying foreign languages due to fears that it might lead them away from traditional values—a concern also noted by Mahboob & Elyas (2014). Teachers reported encountering resistance when introducing topics perceived as culturally sensitive or controversial within conservative communities.

Teacher Training

Another recurring theme was insufficient professional development opportunities available for EFL instructors working within public schools or universities across rural areas where resources are limited compared urban centers like Riyadh or Jeddah. Studies conducted by Rahman et al.(2023) confirm this disparity exists nationwide

Results

The study reveals several key findings regarding the perceptions and challenges associated with English language acquisition among students, teachers, and educational administrators in KSA.

Firstly, most participants viewed learning English positively due to its practical benefits. This perspective aligns with the growing recognition of English as a global lingua franca essential for accessing higher education opportunities and securing employment in competitive job markets (Kirkpatrick, 2020). Participants acknowledged that proficiency in English enhances their ability to engage with international discourses on science, technology, and religion while effectively communicating Islamic values to non-Muslims. This sentiment is consistent with the Quranic encouragement for knowledge acquisition and intercultural understanding (Al-Bukhari & Muslim, 2020). However, teachers highlighted insufficient resources as a significant barrier to effective instruction. Elyas and Picard (2018) argue that most textbooks used in Saudi classrooms fail to account for local cultural contexts or incorporate relevant examples from everyday life. This lack of culturally relevant teaching materials hinders teachers' ability to provide meaningful language instruction tailored to Saudi learners' needs. Students reported difficulty reconciling Western cultural elements embedded within English materials with their religious beliefs. This challenge reflects broader concerns about potential cultural erosion resulting from exposure to Western ideologies through English-language media (Al-Busaidi & Al-Mahrooqi, 2019). To address these concerns, participants suggested integrating Islamic content into English curricula to ensure that students develop linguistic skills without compromising their cultural or religious identity. Administrators emphasized the need for teacher training programs focused on culturally sensitive pedagogy. Mahboob and Elyas (2014) highlight the importance of equipping educators with strategies to navigate cultural resistance and effectively teach English within an Islamic framework. Professional development opportunities are particularly crucial for instructors working in rural areas where resources are limited compared to urban centers like Riyadh or Jeddah (Rahman et al., 2023).

The study underscores the compatibility between learning English and Islamic values. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that acquiring proficiency in a foreign language is not only permissible but also encouraged within an Islamic framework. This perspective aligns with Quranic teachings that emphasize the importance of seeking knowledge and understanding different cultures and languages as a means to foster mutual respect and cooperation (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2019). Motivations for acquiring English proficiency in KSA range from practical considerations such as career advancement to more altruistic goals like spreading Islamic teachings globally. Many students emphasized the role of English as a tool for Dawah (Islamic missionary work), viewing fluency in the language as an opportunity to share Islam's message with non-Muslim audiences worldwide (Alrabai, 2016). Despite widespread recognition of its importance, numerous challenges associated with teaching and learning English persist in KSA. Teachers frequently mentioned inadequate access to high-quality teaching materials tailored specifically for Saudi learners' needs. Some parents expressed reservations about their children studying foreign languages due to fears that it might lead them away from traditional values

concern also noted by Mahboob & Elyas (2014). To address these challenges, the study recommends developing culturally relevant teaching materials that reflect Islamic values and providing professional development programs for teachers specializing in EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Encouraging collaboration between religious scholars and linguists when designing curricula can help ensure that language learning complements rather than contradicts Islamic principles.

learning languages aligns with Islam's emphasis on knowledge acquisition and fostering mutual understanding among nations (Quran 96:1-5). In KSA, mastering English is crucial for accessing global opportunities while contributing positively to society without compromising religious values. The study also points out the following results:

1. Most participants viewed learning English positively due to its practical benefits.
2. Teachers highlighted insufficient resources as a barrier to effective instruction.
3. Students reported difficulty reconciling Western cultural elements embedded within English materials with their religious beliefs.
4. Administrators emphasized the need for teacher training programs focused on culturally sensitive pedagogy.

Conclusion

From an Islamic perspective, learning languages like English is viewed as a way to fulfill religious obligations such as Dawah (spreading the message of Islam) and understanding other cultures. By mastering foreign languages, Muslims can engage with non-Muslim communities more effectively, clarify misconceptions about Islam, and promote peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, proficiency in English enables access to vast amounts of scientific research and global knowledge repositories that are predominantly available in this language. In KSA specifically, the role of English has grown significantly over recent decades. As part of its Vision 2030 initiative to reduce dependency on oil revenues and diversify its economy, Saudi Arabia has prioritized education reform with a strong focus on English language proficiency. This is evident through curriculum changes in schools and universities that emphasize English as a second language. Additionally, fluency in English is increasingly seen as essential for career advancement in both public and private sectors within the country.

The study also highlights challenges faced by learners in KSA when acquiring English proficiency. These include cultural sensitivities regarding Western influences associated with the language, limited exposure to native speakers or immersive environments, and traditional teaching methods that may not prioritize communicative competence. Despite these challenges, there is growing recognition among educators and policymakers in KSA about the necessity of adopting innovative teaching strategies that align with modern pedagogical practices while respecting cultural values. In conclusion, learning languages—especially English—holds immense significance both from an Islamic perspective and within the socio-economic context of KSA. It serves as a bridge between cultures while enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully to their communities at local and global levels. For Saudi Arabia specifically, enhancing English language education aligns with national development goals aimed at fostering innovation, economic growth, and international collaboration. Thus, promoting multilingualism not only fulfills religious imperatives but also equips individuals with essential skills needed for success in an interconnected world.

Recommendations

Develop culturally relevant teaching materials that reflect Islamic values:

To ensure that English language education aligns with the cultural and religious context of Saudi Arabia, researchers should focus on creating teaching materials that incorporate Islamic values and traditions. These materials can include examples, stories, or texts that highlight moral lessons from Islamic teachings while simultaneously enhancing language skills. This approach will help students feel more connected to their faith while learning a foreign language, reducing any perceived conflict between acquiring English proficiency and adhering to Islamic principles.

Provide professional development programs for teachers specializing in EFL (English as a Foreign Language): Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward language learning. Research should explore the design and implementation of professional development programs tailored for EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia. These programs should emphasize strategies for integrating cultural sensitivity and Islamic values into their teaching practices. Additionally, training could include methods for addressing students' concerns about reconciling English language acquisition with their religious beliefs.

Encourage collaboration between religious scholars and linguists when designing curricula: A collaborative approach involving both religious scholars and linguists can ensure that English curricula are not only linguistically effective but also respectful of Islamic teachings. Researchers should investigate how such partnerships can be fostered to create balanced educational content that meets both linguistic goals and cultural expectations. This collaboration can also address potential misconceptions about the role of English in an Islamic society.

Promote awareness campaigns highlighting how language learning complements rather than contradicts Islamic principles: Research should examine the impact of awareness campaigns aimed at dispelling myths about language learning being at odds with Islam. Such campaigns could emphasize how mastering English can serve as a tool for Dawah (spreading the message of Islam), facilitate global communication, and enhance access to knowledge—all of which align with Islamic objectives of seeking knowledge and fostering understanding among diverse communities.

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Interview Guide Format

Research Title: *The Significance of Learning Foreign Languages in Islam: A Case Study of Learning English Language in KSA*

Method: Semi-structured interviews (45–60 minutes)

Language Options: Arabic or English

Ethical Considerations:

- Informed consent obtained.
- Anonymity guaranteed (use codes: S1–S15 for students, T1–T10 for teachers, A1–A5 for admins).

Interview Questions for Students (15 Questions)

1: Motivation & Perceptions

1. How do you perceive the importance of learning English in Saudi Arabia today?
2. Do you believe learning English aligns with Islamic values? Why or why not?
3. What motivates you to learn English? (e.g., career, education, *Dawah*, personal interest)

2: Challenges & Cultural Identity

4. What challenges do you face while learning English? (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, cultural content)
5. Have you encountered any conflicts between Western cultural elements in English materials and your Islamic values? Give examples.
6. How do you balance learning English with preserving your Arabic/Islamic identity?

3: Curriculum & Teaching Methods

7. Do you feel your English textbooks/courses respect Saudi culture and Islamic values? Explain.
8. What teaching methods help you learn English best? (e.g., lectures, group discussions, multimedia)?
9. Should English classes include Islamic content (e.g., Quranic verses in lessons)? How?

4: Future Aspirations

10. How do you plan to use English in your future career or personal life?
11. Do you think English proficiency will help you contribute to Saudi Vision 2030? How?
12. Would you consider using English for *Dawah* (explaining Islam to non-Muslims)? Why or why not?

5: Suggestions for Improvement

13. What changes would you suggest to improve English education in Saudi schools/universities?
14. How can teachers make English learning more engaging for Saudi students?
15. Should Arabic remain the primary language of instruction in other subjects? Why?

Interview Questions for Teachers (15 Questions)

1: Teaching Context & Challenges

1. What are the biggest challenges you face when teaching English in Saudi Arabia?
2. How do you address students' concerns about Western cultural influences in English materials?
3. Do you feel adequately trained to teach English while respecting Islamic values?

2: Curriculum & Materials

4. Are current English textbooks culturally appropriate for Saudi learners? What's missing?
5. How do you integrate Islamic/Arabic cultural examples into your English lessons?
6. Should English curricula be standardized across Saudi schools, or adapted regionally?

3: Student Motivation & Performance

7. What motivates Saudi students to learn English? (e.g., grades, parental pressure, career goals)
8. How do you handle students who resist learning English due to religious/cultural concerns?
9. What gaps do you observe in students' English proficiency (e.g., speaking vs. writing)?

4: Policy & Institutional Support

10. Does your school/university provide enough resources (e.g., training, technology) for English teaching?
11. How does Vision 2030 influence English language teaching policies in your institution?
12. Are there conflicts between promoting English and preserving Arabic in education?

5: Recommendations

13. What professional development programs would help you teach English more effectively?
14. How can Saudi Arabia improve English education without compromising Islamic identity?
15. Should English teachers collaborate with Islamic studies teachers? Give examples.

Interview Questions for Educational Administrators

1: Policy & Vision

1. How does English language education align with Saudi Vision 2030 goals?
2. What policies exist to balance English learning with Arabic/Islamic education in schools?
3. Are there concerns about English "dominating" Arabic in Saudi academia? How are they addressed?

2: Curriculum Design

4. How are English curricula developed to respect Saudi culture and Islamic values?
5. Is there collaboration between linguists and religious scholars in designing English programs?
6. Should English be mandatory from primary school? Why or why not?

3: Teacher Training & Resources

7. What training programs are available for English teachers to handle cultural sensitivities?
8. How are teachers evaluated for balancing language proficiency and cultural competency?
9. Are there enough qualified English teachers in rural vs. urban areas?

4: Student Outcomes

10. How do you measure the success of English programs (e.g., test scores, employability)?
11. Do Saudi students perform better in English now compared to 10 years ago? What data supports this?
12. How do you address parental concerns about English "Westernizing" students?

5: Future Directions

13. What reforms are planned for English education under Vision 2030?
14. Should Saudi universities offer more courses in English? Which fields?
15. How can Saudi Arabia leverage English for global Islamic leadership (e.g., *Dawah*, research)?