3. Desperate times call for desperate measures

To address this issue, one of the measures taken was to tap into Western academics to run their public education system with "Westerners filling key positions" at these institutions and government agencies [18]. But nothing comes without a price. The imported education came with ideals and values seen as exclusively tied to the Anglo-American model to a large extent, reinforced by the medium of the English language and the ideologies that accompanied it.

Education has always been viewed as the main venue for knowledge. But that knowledge could either be objective or infused with subjective ideologies, with explicit or implicit agendas and may have intentional or unintentional consequences. This has been the case throughout history and differed according to times, contexts and agendas. Education today is believed to have "become the key venue to support globalization" and the "primary site for the creation and transmission of such ideologies which "can be seen worldwide in (1) the adoption of economistic values and the naturalization of new objectives and comitant practices in schools and universities, (2) the priority assigned to certain subject matters and fields of study over other, and (3) the disregard, and sometimes plain erasure, of certain knowledge, particularly that which might contest points 1 and 2" [23]. Higher education is also believed to have been reshaped according to a "standardized Anglo-American model" that is molded into "neoliberal economic reforms and managerial styles" [24].

Concerns began to be voiced by individuals both within these countries as well as individuals from outside these countries. Many are skeptical in regards to these institutions, the imported knowledge, the rampant use of English, and the 'open society' that have come with them [15] and their effects on the language, and therefore culture and identity of the natives of these lands. Such problems have seemingly not been overlooked by the government leaders who, according to Krieger, are "aware of those limitations but don't have the time to build an indigenous system from scratch" because of urgent needs.

But what needs to be taken into consideration is that, according to Chroist [7], any assessment of conflict involving ethnic identity will require delicate treatment of language. Such a context requires education researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners to differentiate and re-think education and learning, both within and outside the school system [5]. The relationship between education and development in today's global context, with the shift in control of domestic economies away from national and towards global, has also raised questions as to whose economic and cultural goals and interests are being served by education [16]; how far can states promote 'national culture' through education and what forms should these take in pluralistic societies [11] are questions that today's Arab world governments are struggling with.

4. The 'Arabic' Dilemma

Whereas "in some contexts there is a growing acceptance of the fluidity, plurality, and hybridity of identities, in other contexts, there are efforts to preserve the purity, unity, and coherence of identities that are perceived to be under threat" [28]. The latter is evident in the Middle East. Concerns about preserving Arabic and Arabic culture and identity in light of all the changes occurring, began to be voiced. The question "How far should the requirement for native Arabic speakers to pursue their…studies in the language be seen as an inevitable response to market needs, and how far a symptom of neo-colonist power politics in which Arabic is relegated as non-useful, and Arab culture is cast as 'other' [9] began to be asked.

For the past decades the Arabic language has been taking a back seat while other languages, especially English, has been given precedence on the political, financial as well as the pedagogic level. The issue of language and identity in the social and academic context of many of these Arab countries became heightened due to a number of factors. Statistics show that even though Arabic is among the most widely spoken languages in the world, coming in 6th place, with a population of 256,000,000 [30], it is not one of the top ten languages used on the web [31]. And, according to King [12], a cultural system, which is the outcome of the political and economic system, is most obviously, and importantly, represented by language. Samuel Huntington's prediction of the 'Clash of Civilizations' has also had its impact on Arabic. Because of its carrying linguist as well as religious implications, it has created a scenario in which the Arabic language became connotated with terrorism, leading to a repression of the language and to those who associate with it.

Another important factor is that the demographic makeup of many of these Arab countries is

overwhelmingly made up of non-Arabic speakers. Therefore, as it stands now, not only is Arabic and its culture being demonized by powerful political media, they are, as shown by Kreieger [15], being dominated by more powerful languages and cultures in their own native countries. He explains that in some places in the Arab Gulf, there is a "massive expatriate community, which accounts for 90 percent of the country's population" with "Education Mall[s]" that offers "a hodgepodge of services under the broad rubric of "knowledge". He further explains in his article titled "Desert bloom", that whereas "the native populations…tend to be relatively conservative, the governments have been happy to afford great social liberties to foreigners, with hardly any legal restrictions on dress, alcohol, or gender roles."

Maalouf [17], like many, questions such decisions and says if governments, such as those in the Middle East, "relaxed [their] vigilance and just let market forces and the power of numbers have it all their own way", then " the national language would soon be used for domestic purposes only. Its territory would shrink, and…would end up as a mere local dialect". He maintains that "Any attempt to separate language from identity" is "neither possible nor desirable" because "Language is bound to remain the mainspring of cultural identity". Some government officials are beginning to voice concerns and maintain that "It is not acceptable to drop Arabic language from our lives," explaining that there is "no reason to permit" even "businesses like real estate developers and banks to sign contracts and serve notices in English only, ignoring Arabic completely" because "From a practical point of view Arabic must be used because it is the language of the land and the society…" [3]. Others explain that there is a need to develop "a unified educational policy that stresses the national religious and cultural values…to develop a young generation that is proud of its national identity" and one way to do so is to "…improve[e] Arabic language classes and how they are taught… [and] re-examin[e] the policies of federal universities regarding English-language admissions requirements and teaching subjects in English" [21]. Some, according to Shaheen [21], are saying that "teach[ing] courses in English [is] technically a violation of the law" because the "General education law [in the Arab world] says the language of instruction in schools is Arabic." Individuals like Al Kitbi [4], sees that the "increasing reliance on English is an example of the sort of proposed changes in educational systems that serve foreign interests more than they serve the societies of the Gulf" and

"The insistence of foreign powers on a change in the educational philosophy in the Arab Gulf region comes within the context of the control and suppression…of youth so that their world view in the future will be compatible with and serve the interests of those powers." She believes that it is now "appropriate to question whether the language of instruction ought to be English" and "to consider …the barriers to providing a quality…..education in Arabic".

In the many western institutions with their English speaking faculty and staff being imported, where Western-educated expatriate professors outnumber those of the nationals, "Arabic has been all but eliminated as the language of instruction in favor of the more universal English" [19]. According to Mills, entire university system, from classroom instruction to institutional accreditation, is being overhauled to conform to American standards. Mills explains that in some law schools , even the study of Shariah Islamic law and jurisprudence, which once had a significant role in the curriculum has now been 'significantly curtailed.'

Marginalization of Arabic and its culture is beginning to be evident. Many affiliated with the Arabic language and culture feel they are being "erased" and they feel "lost" Mills [19]. The emerging cultural context in these countries seems rather bleak. As Maalouf [17] explains, "The present format, rather than leading to a great enrichment, a multiplication of means of expression and the diversification of opinion" instead has lead to "impoverishment" and will ultimately lead to "mawkish "wallpaper", and the extraordinary effervescence of ideas will produce only a simplistic conformism, an intellectual lowest common denominator".

5. The Resurgence of Arabic

But the issue of language is not to be taken lightly. Language, that "ultimate measure of human society" (Fisher 1999, p. 203 as cited in Chroist, [7]), is according to John Stuart Mill 'the light of the mind.' It is the light that allows one to navigate and identify with all that a culture incorporates and entails and the main ingredient to truly being multicultural [2]. Language is a vital tool of communicating thoughts, ideas, feelings, relationships, friendships, cultural ties, and through which emotions are shaped and perceptions of reality are determined (Whorf as cited in Kramesch, [13]). The words in a language are 'microcosms of human

consciousness' [29] and language "is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated— overpopulated—with the intentions of other" [6]. It can also be a "powerful means of social control" [26], employed as a mechanisms of political and social control [27]. A common language, to Sapir as cited in Kramasch [13], serves as a powerful symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak it. And even though, within that one language or culture, many different worlds exist, from ethnicities to language variations to loyalties, each with their own version of reality, when the need comes, according to Maalouf [17], these differences tend to dissipate, are disregarded, and one tends to identify with the greater whole, that of language, religion or race. English may have become 'one of the few enduring facts of global modern life', but Arabic is not just a language of communication. For these countries, the issue of language goes hand in hand with religion, an issue for many in these areas that is not to be meddled with. Arabic is currently the language of about 256 million people spread out in 30 different countries and the liturgical language of Islam which now has more than 1.5 billion followers around the world. Arabic is the language of the Quran, the Holy book of Muslims, and Islam is not just a religion that can be easily separated from the state and the decisions of the state, it is a way of life that encompasses everything. And any sidelining of Arabic can have serious consequences and implications.

Today Arabic is gradually regaining status. The world is "rapidly shifting to a completely new social, economic and political order," a new world order is emerging in which Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin will be the most probable dominant languages, with Arabic demographically being the fastest growing language in the world [10]. Research shows that "there has recently been an unprecedented interest in and awareness regarding the importance of developing and adopting new methodologies in the teaching of Arabic language" not confined only in "realm of schools in the Arab World, but has transcended those borders to places such as the United Kingdom and the United States where increases in the number of students taking Arabic language courses at American universities have reached 126% according to the Modern Language Association MLA in 2007" [25]. Arabic is now designated as a "strategic" language by the U.S. government and is facing "unprecedented demand for instruction in schools across America, from kindergarten upwards" and the U.S. Department of

Education is allocating Federal Funds for various international education programs [20].

6. Conclusion

Globalization demands some degree of structural change in the various dimensions of a society which, according to Shorish [22], are expected to affect the normative and values systems of developing countries in a most dramatic way. For the Arab world, one such "change" is seemingly a loss of the Arabic language which threatens the loss of ethnic identity and culture that accompanies it. Such change may lead to, according to Maalouf [17] an "unleash[ing] of millions upon millions of our fellow human beings a reaction of furious, suicidal, systematic rejection" if all individuals in this globalized world do not find their own spaces, where they can recognize and identify with their worlds and not "be made to think it is irremediably alien and therefore hostile" to them. English becoming the medium of instruction in many private and public schools in the Arab world context needs to be taken into consideration especially in light of today's heightened sentiments of nationalisms and instability where, according to Findlow [9], "Arabic hasn't been mobilized as a political tool of resistance discourse" but any change in "the political or soci-economic circumstances could at any time threaten this balance and bring about a rather different set of feelings about the prevalence of English" .

7. References

[1] Abu Bakar, T., "The Arabs, globalization, and economic and technological development". *Al-Watan Newspaper* 6204 (30), 2000.

[2] Ahmed, K. "What it means to be multicultural". Urbana, USA, National Council of teachers of English, http://galleryofwriting.org/writing/603482, 2009

[3] Al Baik, D., "It is not acceptable to drop Arabic language from our lives". *The Nation*, Retrieved on December 5, 2008 from http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles.html.

[4] Al Kitbi, E., "Gulf states: Education reform's real goals: Arab Reform Bulletin". *The Emirates Economist. Economic Analysis of events in the United Arab Emirates and the Gulf*, Monday, May 29, 2006.

[5] Arani, M. R. S., "Policy of education for the 21st century in developed and developing countries: focus on

Japan and Persian Gulf region" *Journal of International Cooperation Studies* v11 n3 p101-130 2004.

[6] Bakhtin, M., *The dialogic of imagination.* Austin: University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist.

[7] Chriost, D.M.G. *Language, Identity and Conflict: A comparative study of language in ethnic conflict in Europe and Eurasia*, Routledge, London, 2003.

[8] Craith, M.N., "Languages and power: Accommodation and resistance", In Craith, Mairead Nic, pp.1-19. *Language, power and identity politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, N.Y., 2007.

[9] Findlow, S., "Higher education and linguistic dualism in the Arab Gulf", *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 27* (1), Feb.,2006, pp.19-36.

[10] Graddol, D., *English Nest: Why global English may mean the end of 'English as a foreign language'*, British Council, UK, 2006.

[11] Green, A., *Education, globalization and the Nation State*, Macmillan Press Ltd, UK, 1997.

[12] King A. D., (Ed.). Culture, globalization and the world-system: Contemporary Conditions for the representation of identity, University of Minnesota Press, MN, 1997.

[13] Kramsch, C., "Language,, thought, and culture. In Davies, A. Elder, C.(Eds). *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics,* pp.235-261, John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

[14] Krieger, Z., "Desert Bloom", *Chronicle of Higher Education,* v54 n29 p.A, 26 Mar 2008

[15] Krieger, Z. "An academic building bloom transforms the Persian Gulf", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, v54 n29, pB7, Mar 2008

[16] Leach F. E. and Little, A. W., (Eds), *Education, cultures, and economics: Dilemmas for development*, Falmer Press, NY, 1999.

[17] Maalouf, A., *On Identity*, The Harvel Press, London, 2000.

[18] Mills, A. "Emirates look to the West for prestige", *Chronicle of Higher Education*, v55 n5 pA1 Sep 2008.

[19] Mills, A., "Academics in the Persian Gulf" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, v55 n24 pB7 Feb 2009.

[20] Saad, N., Demand for Arabic language education rises in United States, Retrieved on January 6, 2011 from http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/1493.

[21] Shaheen, K. FNC: use Arabic in Federal universities, *The National*, Retrieved on November 11, 2009, from www.thenational.ae.

[22] Shorish, M. M. Globalization and culture. *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*, 2 (2), 15-24, 1999.

[23] Stromquist, N. P., *Education in a globalized world*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, USA, 2002.

[24] Stromquist, N. P., and Monkman, K. (Eds), Globalization and education: Integration and contestation across cultures, (2nd Ed), Rowan & Littlefield Publishing, Lanham, Maryland, 2000.

[25]Taha-Thomure, H., The status of Arabic language teaching today. *Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues, 1(3)*, 186-192, Emerald Group Publishing, Limited, 2008. Retrieved on January 6, 2011, from http://www.deepdyve.com/lp/emerald-publishing/the-status-of-arabic-language-teaching-today-gcBdjAqu3a.

[26] Thornborrow J. "Language and identity." In, Thomas, L. Wareing, S., Peccei, J.S. Thrornborrow, J.(Eds) (2004), 158-172. *Language, society and power: An introduction,* Routledge, London, 2004.

[27] Tollefson, J. W. (Ed.), *Language Policies in Education: Critical Issues,* Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 2002.

[28] Tsui, A. B. M., and Tollefson,J. W.(Ed.), *Language Policy, Culture and Identity in Asian Contexts*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, New Jersey, 2007.

[29] Vygotsky, L., *Thought and language* (Rev.ed.), MIT Press, MA., 1997.

[30] Global Language Monitor http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0775272.html.

[31] Global Language Monitor http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm).