"Make them take an 'IELTS test' in Arabic"! Resentment of and resistance towards English and English-medium instruction in the UAE

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Abstract
English in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has grown to become the primary language of trade and retail, the mass media and advertising, and the de facto medium of instruction in federally-sponsored institutions of higher education (HE). In recent years, however, the widespread proliferation of the English language in this otherwise conservative Arabic-speaking country has become increasingly controversial. Indeed, resentment of and resistance towards English on the part of Emiratis has been found to exist in relation to English-language mass advertising (Nickerson & Crawford Camiciottoli, 2013) and English-medium instruction (EMI) within HE (Issa, 2013, March 6). In addition, there is growing concern that 'native'-English-speaking teachers from largely secular, 'inner circle' countries will inadvertently transmit values, ontologies, and epistemologies contrary to those of their Muslim students (Ibrahim, 2013) and their traditional, tribal-based, gender-segregated society. In order to determine whether there existed any evidence of resistance towards the place of English in the present-day UAE on the part of Emirati HE students, a bilingual (Arabic/English) survey was conducted with a group of students completing a foundation programme at a major federal HE institution. The findings reveal some not inconsiderable ambivalence towards English and EMI, especially in the realms of cultural integrity and language policy.

Key words: Arabian Gulf, English, Islam, social distance, social psychology

1. Introduction
1.1 The global spread of English
The spread of the English language in the post-World War II period has been pervasive. Watson (2007), for example, notes that approximately 430 million people now have English as their mother tongue, and some 1.6 billion as a second or third language. In other words, as Kachru (1996a) puts it, there exist approximately four non-'native speakers' of English for every 'native speaker'. To put it mildly, then, Swales' (1993) prediction that the use of English will hit a plateau – or possibly even go into decline – has not been fulfilled. Rather, Crystal's (1985) forecast that by the year 2000 there will be more non-'native' speakers of English using the language than 'native speakers' appears to have been well and truly borne out. It is not, however, purely the vast number of English speakers which points to the relentless proliferation of the language, but also the sheer geographical range of the language's users. For, as noted by Strevens (1982), English is employed, in one capacity or another, in practically every single country on the planet.

1.2 The English saturation of the UAE
Despite their relatively conservative nature, the Islamic monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have not been immune to the global spread of English. In Saudi Arabia, by far the largest and most populous country of the GCC, for example, English now plays a central role in retail, banking, commerce, and travel (Al Haq & Smadi, 1996; Elyas, 2008) as well as in the education system of the kingdom (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014), as is also the case within higher education (HE) in Qatar (Pessoa & Rajakumar, 2011). In Oman, too, English is increasingly becoming the dominant language in tertiary education, as has been documented at the country's flagship HE institution (Abdel-Jawad & Abu Radwan, 2011). This Englishisation of the region is, however, possibly exemplified by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the most conspicuous indicator of which arguably being the dominance of English in the mass media (Walters et al., 2007) and advertising. Indeed, a visitor to the country could perhaps be forgiven for believing that the E in the acronym UAE stood for English. Indeed, the predominance of English in public spaces in the UAE has, somewhat oddly, even led to the Romanisation of some standard Arabic-Islamic expressions. This can be seen in linguistic hybridisations such as *Eid Mubarak* and *Ramadan Kareem*, which are reminiscent of 'Arabish', '3arabizi' (Bianchi, 2012), or 'Arabizi' (Allehaiby, 2013), and which thus constitute evidence that this "trendy" form of Romanised Arabic (Aboellezz, n.d.) is, as suggested by Allehaiby (2013, p.57), currently in the process of migrating "from CMC [computer mediated communication] online mediums to offline means, thus moving from unregulated to regulated spaces."

English is also the predominant – if not the exclusive – language of the retail sector of the UAE. In reference to the role of the language in cosmopolitan Dubai, for example, Randall and Samimi (2010, p.44) remark that "there can be few societies in the world where a second language is necessary to carry out basic shopping tasks, from buying food in supermarkets to clothes in shopping malls." Nickerson (2015, p.240) concurs, emphatically pointing out that "English is the language of retail. If you buy a pair of shoes in Dubai, then you do so in English!" Being the language, or the "acrolectal lingua franca" (Boyle, 2011, p.144), of retail for the more than 200 different nationalities employed in the UAE does indeed give English a certain functional prestige, especially when considering the size of the retail sector in the country. Shihab (2001, p.253) for instance points out that the service sector – of which the retail sector is a significant component –

"ranks first in size of employment (58 per cent of the labour force), which reflects its powerful dominance in the UAE." The growing penetration of business and commerce in the UAE by English is also reflected in corporate in-house training. In his survey of 22 of the top 100 companies in Dubai, for example, Wilkins (2001) found that whilst none of the firms delivered training exclusively in Arabic, 41% did indeed conduct staff training solely in English, and 50% delivered training in both English and Arabic (9% utilised various other languages).

1.3 Growing disquiet over the Englishisation of the UAE

This wholesale embracing of the English language – "an icon of the contemporary age" (Guilherme, 2007, p.74) – signals how, according to Clarke (2007, p.584), the UAE "has accommodated globalization." As with globalisation itself, however, English is something of a two-edged sword (Canagarajah, 1993; Hopkyns, 2014). As elucidated by Guilherme (2007, p.74), for example, "the connotations of English are complex"; on the one hand it is the language of "opportunity, science, social movements, peace processes, human rights and intercultural exchanges", while on the other is also often simultaneously regarded as "the language of imperialism, consumerism, marketing, Hollywood, multinationals, war and oppression." As such, English "has the capacity to empower, just as it has the capacity to divide" (Mohd-Asraf, 2005, p.103). The tension which is predictably created by such a double-edged weapon often manifests itself in resistance on the part of some who have the language thrust upon them. A candid example of this is offered by an examination of the views regarding the prevalence of English in public spaces in the UAE. In their study of the language of mass advertising in the country, for example, Nickerson and Crawford Camiciottoli (2013) found that although many of their Emirati participants had a neutral or positive attitude towards English, they also (p.344) unearthed "evidence that participants viewed texts in English as a potential threat to the local language and culture", with one participant stating (p.345) that "Advertisements should be in Arabic too [*sic*] keep the mother language and national identity." This remark smacks of Modiano (2001, p.340), who notes that "Because English is such a dominant force in world affairs (and the bulwark of Western ideology), there is a danger that its spread dilutes (and 'corrupts') the distinguishing characteristics of other languages and cultures." Such a comment also reminds us of "the need of the local minority [in the UAE] to show a strong identity resistance to the continuous westernized acculturation, especially in Dubai" (Rapanta, 2014, p.2).

It also behoves us to remember that English "was not invented along with cinema, television or the internet; it has its own heritage that is territorially and chronologically related to specific cultures and territories" (Guilherme, 2007, p.80). This is of particular significance in the context of the UAE, for, as a former protectorate of Great Britain, English is not merely a value-free complex of arbitrary Saussurean signs and an autonomous Chomskyan system of grammar, but is also the language of the country's former colonial masters (Fellman, 1973; Sperrazza, 2012). Arabic, in contrast, is a treasured marker of ethnic solidarity (Almaney, 1981; Dahan, 2013; Shouby, 1951; Zaharna, 1995) and religious identity (Ahmed, 2010; Al Allaq, 2014; Koch, 1983; Morrow & Castleton, 2007). This role takes on a special significance since the religion of the UAE may well be the only aspect of the country which has not undergone radical change as a result of the "cultural tsunami" (Hatherley-Greene, 2012, p.iii) and "cultural colonization" (Hatherley-Greene, 2012, p.10) that occurred in the UAE following the discovery and subsequent commercial exploitation of colossal deposits of hydrocarbon resources.

2. EMI in HE in the UAE

In addition to employing a language in the mass media and advertising, customer interface in the retail sector, and office communication, perhaps the most aggressive vehicle for the spread of a language, however, is its adoption as a – or, as *the* – medium of instruction within educational contexts. In this regard, many states of the GCC appear to have acquiesced to the "Tyrannosaurus rex"-like stampede (Swales, 1997) of English. Indeed, referring specifically to HE in the GCC, Davis (2010, p.38) remarks that the "use of English as a medium of instruction has been embraced without reservation, in contrast to the bitter confrontations in other parts of the Arab world over the use of former colonial languages over Arabic." This is perhaps epitomised by the EMI policy enacted by the UAE in government-funded HE. For, although Article 9 of the Cultural Treaty of the Arab League of 1946 stipulates that members "of the Arab League will […] work to make the Arabic language […] the language of instruction in all subjects and in all educational stages in the Arab countries,"[i] English is nevertheless the predominant medium of instruction at all three federally-sponsored HE institutions. Thus it is no wonder that, although Arabic may be the sole de jure official language of the UAE, as noted by Sperrazza (2012), over 60% of students in the country nevertheless receive their HE in the de facto language of tertiary education in the UAE, English (see also Findlow, 2008).

2.1 Controversy surrounding EMI

In recent years, however, the policy of EMI within HE in the UAE has grown increasingly controversial, as evinced by the number of critically-oriented doctoral theses the policy has motivated (e.g., Karmani, 2010; King, 2014; McLaren, 2011; Mouhanna, 2016), demands made by students for Arabic-medium programmes (Swan, 2015, April 9), and the considerable discussion and publicly-expressed concern this aspect of HE in the UAE has begun to engender (Hatherley-Greene, 2012). Commonly expressed misgivings include a possible weakening of competence in and knowledge of Arabic on the part of students (Hanif, 2015, March 28), as well as the relative status of the language vis-à-vis English in contemporary Emirati society (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Sperrazza, 2012), that the policy creates inequities in HE by favouring students who attended (largely private, i.e., fee-paying) EMI secondary schools (McLaren, 2011; Ronesi, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011), and that the policy potentially relegates Arabic in the eyes of students (Findlow, 2006; Hunt, 2012), at least some of whom, it has been reported (e.g., Diallo, 2014), appear to resent the imposition of English on their education, culture, and religion. This reference to religion is of vital importance in the region since, for many Gulf Arab Muslims, Islam is, through and via the Quran (Dahan, 2013; Shouby, 1951), intimately intertwined with Arabic (Al Allaq, 2014; Almaney, 1981; Koch, 1983; Morrow & Castleton, 2007). Perhaps the most telling indicator of the sheer extent of the controversy surrounding the present EMI policy, however, is the objection made by a member of the Federal National Council (FNC), an advisory body in the legislative system of the UAE, that the delivery of lessons in English stands in direct contravention of the constitution of the country (Issa, 2013, March 6), Article 7 of which states that the "official language of the Union shall be Arabic".

3. Resentment of foreigners in the UAE

It is not, however, merely the ubiquitous presence of English in advertising or the adoption of the language as the primary medium of instruction in HE which are controversial and thus give rise to resistance; the 'bringers' of the language also often spark concern, too, as can the mere presence

of foreigners themselves, of which there are no small number in the UAE. Indeed, as noted by Shihab (2001, p.251), along with "immense wealth generated by oil", the "dominant socio-economic features of the UAE" are "a small indigenous population" and "a large expatriate population." Indeed, Al-Khouri (2012) notes that in the 2010 census, the population of the UAE stood at approximately 8.2 million, only approximately 950,000 of which were UAE nationals. While such "demographic imbalances" (Al-Khouri, 2012, p.1; Martin, 2003, p.54) are common in the Gulf (non-nationals outnumber nationals in four of the six countries that make up the GCC), the situation is somewhat more pronounced in the UAE, where non-nationals make up some 88% of the populace (Qatar 87%, Kuwait 70%, Bahrain 52%, Oman 30%, KSA 27%). The largest two groups of foreign workers in the UAE originate from Pakistan and India (Weber, 2011), at approximately 1.25 million and 1.75 million, respectively (Wilkins, 2010). In fact, as noted by Randeree and Gaad (2008, p.71), the Indian male accounts for no less than 49.9% of the workforce of Dubai, a point which leads Khalaf (2006, p.251) to quip that "Visitors to Dubai may comment that they actually feel they are in an Indian rather than Arab city." As with the dominance of English in advertising, however, here too there are some signs of resistance to the presence of such an inordinate number of foreigners, which can sometimes be expressed in somewhat bellicose and apocalyptic terms. Some of the Emiratis interviewed by Ashencaen Crabtree (2007), for example, condemned (p.584) "the alien and therefore corrupt values brought in by the armies of multi-ethnic migrant workers that today flood the labour markets of the UAE." Most of the informants in research conducted by Ouis (2002) also agreed that the Gulf hosts too many migrant workers, and that the local culture was thus at risk of being overwhelmed by alien values and beliefs.

3.1 Trepidation towards foreign teachers and 'experts'
The presence of foreigners in the education sector of the UAE can also be resented, especially in the context of educational reform. Such resentment may not, however, always be totally unfounded. For, although within the fields of EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language), 'native'-English-speaking teachers are often lionised (Phillipson, 1992), frequently being portrayed as 'one-size-fits-all', 'magic bullet-like solutions' to all the ills and woes of a country's EFL/ESL programme(s), such a stellar portrayal is often arguably unwarranted (Scovel, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, 2000). As noted by Al-Issa and Dahan (2011), when ADEC (Abu Dhabi Educational Council) recruited a batch of nearly 1,000 foreign teachers to help implement their 'New School Model' curriculum and pedagogical reform, there was a conspicuous absence in the media reports lauding their arrival of any mention of the teachers' qualifications or germane professional experience. In fact, state Al-Issa and Dahan (p.7), the teachers were never praised "for anything other than their native language" of English. One of the ATEs (Arabic teachers of English) in an ADEC school interviewed by Stockwell (2015, p.139) also questioned the employment of some of their EMT (English medium teacher) colleagues, remarking, with some obvious resentment, "We are replaced by someone who is supposed to but doesn't know more. How can he be from a country where he uses English every day but can't spell?"

In addition to such institutionalised marginalisation, the presence of and 'reliance' on foreign teachers can also be disempowering for their local counterparts (Sanassian, 2011), and of course disempowerment can further fuel feelings of resentment. The possible reasons for such bitterness are far from difficult to fathom. As asserted for instance by Sinadi and Thornberry (2009,

p.45), it is "important to note that Arab culture has been transforming. Arabs have been changing, but they resent imposed change that they perceive to be imposed by foreign forces", and of course Arabs are hardly likely to be unique in this particular regard. This is of particular significance in the context of the UAE for, as noted by Ibrahim (2013, p.27), the number of 'expert' foreign consultants engaged in educational reform initiatives within the country "is significant" (see also Sanassian, 2011). Indeed, Ibrahim (2013, p.33) states that some of the Emirati teachers whose views he researched argued that educational reform should not rely on foreign consultants, since outsiders who are unfamiliar with the local context might "jeopardize the religion and culture of the UAE." This concern brings us to another cause of resentment of foreign teachers in the local education system, that of the fear that such imported teachers may inadvertently – or perhaps even consciously – convey alien and potentially corrupting values and beliefs to their students.

4. Fear of alien values and second language learning

Even if teachers are culturally sensitive (see, e.g., Al-Issa, 2005; Diallo, 2014; McBride, 2004; Rapanta, 2014) and adhere to the mantra of "PARSNIP" (Akbari, 2008, p.281), that is, if they engage in the conscious avoidance of any discussion (or even any mention) of any topic in any way, even tangentially, related to politics, alcohol, religion, sex, narcotics, -isms, or pornography – and many do indeed engage in such stringent self-censorship, as documented for example by Hudson (2011, 2013) – their mere presence can nevertheless present a potential problem. This is since, as noted by Diallo (2014, p.3), the "imported Western-educated language teachers in the UAE, like any other teachers elsewhere, are far from 'neutral'. They are highly positioned even before they enter local classrooms, given that they embody Western Judeo-Christian epistemologies, liberal views and secular traditions." Emirati students, in stark contrast, are conservative, traditional, and devout Muslims (see, e.g., Simadi, 2006; Simadi & Kamali, 2004). As stated for example by Schvaneveldt, Kerpelman, and Schvaneveldt (2005, p.79) in relation to female students, Emiratis "are deeply devoted to the theology of Islam", a point on which Lambert (2008, p.105) concurs, noting that for female Emirati students, Islam "forms the basis of their opinions, decisions, and behaviour."

In addition to this secular-religious divide, cultural differences also loom large. In terms of Hofstede's (1986) four dimensional model of cultural differences, for example – viz., individualism versus collectivism; power distance (small versus large); uncertainty avoidance (weak versus strong); and masculinity versus femininity – the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, that is, the societies from which most English teachers in HE in the UAE stem (Syed, 2003),[ii] would best be described as *small power distance–high individualism–weak uncertainty avoidance–masculine*, whereas the UAE would perhaps best be captured by the string, *large power distance–low individualism–strong uncertainty avoidance–masculine*. In short, the 'cultural distance' (Svanes, 1988), or the 'social distance' (Schumann, 1976), between Emirati EFL/ESL learners and the target language group is not inconsiderable. This is significant since within the field of the social psychology of language learning (e.g., Lambert, 1981) there is the assumption that any negative attitudes on the part of learners towards the speakers of the target language may adversely affect, and perhaps even wholly preclude, successful acquisition of the language. As noted by Lambert (1981):

negative, prejudiced attitudes and stereotypes about another ethnolinguistic group, quite independent of language learning abilities or verbal intelligence, can upset and disturb the motivation needed to learn the other group's language; just as open, inquisitive and friendly attitudes can enhance and enliven the language learning process (p.3).

More contemporarily, as stated by Hagler (2014) in relation to students of English in Saudi Arabia:

one can infer that a negative attitude toward Western culture could significantly impede language acquisition and perhaps other aspects of learning. In order to resist assimilation and to assert one's native culture, it is conceivable that some learners may adopt a more instrumental approach to their language learning in order to maintain some distance from the second language and its culture (p.3).

Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that, as noted by Ridder (1995, p.44), whereas German was a major influence in Holland prior to World War II, its sway waned in the immediate post-war period, and instead the "adoption of English words and phrases by speakers of Dutch" increased in popularity, as English was now "the language of the liberators, the money providers and progress." Similarly, no one should be too overly surprised if some present-day Palestinians were to display resistance to English, the language of globalisation, which some in the Middle East regard as the "ideological framework of the new American imperialism", if not an overt "conspiracy against Islam and Arab-Islamic culture" (Najjar, 2005, p.104) (see also Ouis, 2002). After all, as noted by Dwairy et al. (2006):

because the Israeli occupation is supported by the United States, rejecting the Western individualistic and liberal style of life may be considered by some of the Palestinians to be part of their struggle to protect and preserve their cultural and national identity (p.241).

Indeed, negative perceptions of the USA and resistance towards American values have been found to exist throughout much of the Muslim world. In their post-9/11 analysis of nine predominately Muslim countries, Nisbet, Nisbet, Scheufele, and Shanahan (2004), for example, note that the general public in many such countries hold "unfavorable views of the United States" (p.14). Furthermore, it was found that in all the countries examined the majority (from 67% to 84%) believed that "the spread of American ideas and customs was bad for their country" (p.14). Such ideas and customs are of course spread via the vehicular language of English, which enjoys a symbiotic relationship with globalisation (Coleman, 2006; Dahan, 2013).

4.1 Muslim students' perceptions of 'the West' and 'Westerners'
With the total of the above in mind, one question that naturally arises is what, precisely, is the "attitudinal orientation" (Schumann, 1976, p.138) of learners of English in the Muslim world towards 'the West' and 'Westerners'? That is, what perceptions of Western teachers are held by Muslim students of English? It has to be stated at the outset that research previously conducted into this question in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region reveals that many Muslim students have a somewhat unflattering picture of Westerners. Sellami (2006), for instance, investigated the views of Moroccan undergraduate EFL/ESL students towards the citizens of two

'inner circle' (Kachru, 1996b) countries, viz., the USA and the UK, and uncovered highly "stigmatized and stereotypical views" of both Americans and the British (p.177), with one informant writing that these two peoples "have become slaves of sex, money and alcohol" (Sellami, 2006, p.179).

As regards the perceptions of Westerners held by Emirati students, Walters, Quinn, and Walters (2005, p.70) report that during the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, one student at Zayed University (ZU) would read the Quran and ask "Allah to protect Muslims from those American criminals." This is particularly noteworthy since ZU "is an American institution in concept and implementation" (Ryan Abu Wardeh, 2010, p.1), boasting of many faculty members from the USA.[iii] Similarly, in their research into perceptions of Europe and Europeans on the part of some 478 Emirati females, all of whom, significantly, were prospective teachers, Kostoulas-Makrakis (2005) also found "a high degree of animosity" towards both the continent and its people (p.506). "To their minds", writes Kostoulas-Makrakis (p.506), "Europe stands as the imperialistic militaristic enemy, which poses a threat to the Arab or Islamic culture and existence." These trainee Emirati teachers also referred to the perceived "hatred of Christians towards Muslims" as well as "Europeans' lack of moral principles" (p.506), with one respondent stating that she hates "Europeans like any other Muslim does because they enjoy torturing Muslims" (p.506). Another remarked that "Europe claims to be developed but they only try to control others either by conquering countries and destroying their cultures or by demolishing ethics" (p.506).

5. Ambivalence and ambiguity in EFL/ESL

Of course, no matter what the learner's perception of English speakers or 'English-speaking' countries such as the USA and the UK, there nevertheless exists widespread recognition that the English language itself does indeed appear to confer some considerable potential advantages upon its users, especially in the realm of earning potential. In his study of the economic value of English in capital-rich, conservative Switzerland (which has the four national languages of German, French, Italian, and Romansch), for example, Grin (2001) concludes (p.73) that "English language skills are associated with significant earnings gains on the Swiss labour market. Controlling for education and experience, these differences clearly rise along with the level of competence in English." Even in ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia, the potential economic benefits of English are acknowledged. After all, as noted by Mahboob and Elyas (2014, p.129), "One of the reasons why English is considered so important in the KSA [Kingdom of Saudi Arabia] education system is its perceived economic value." However, it is not simply in relation to potential earnings that English can be advantageous to its users. For, as explained by Marginson (2006), English can also be seen as an instance of a positional good, i.e., a product or service which affords the consumer greater prestige and status, or as Prodromou (1998, p.79) puts it, knowledge of English can confer "snob value" upon its users. However, any ambivalence on the part of students in regards to English – i.e., negative perceptions of the speakers of the language and their culture on the one hand, in tandem with a desire to learn the language for socio-economic mobility or 'snob value' on the other – can lead to students harbouring a somewhat ambiguous, if not downright dubious, attitude towards English, referred to as "double-think" by Abbott (1992, p.174) and dubbed a "want-hate relationship" by Lin (1999, p.394) (see also Kachru, 1996b), manifestations of resistance which have previously been found by educators of an ethnographic bent in Sri Lanka (Canagarajah, 1993) and Mexico (Francis & Ryan, 1998).

It should be noted that resistance, as the term is employed here, does not necessarily entail overt activist action such as students going on strike or taking to the streets in protest. Rather, resistance towards a certain educational policy can be manifested in behaviour such as "leaving assigned materials 'at home'" (Talmy, 2010, p.133; see also Talmy, 2008), trivialisation of work through dishonest academic practices, distancing oneself from academic work by adopting a "cool demeanor" (Masemann, 1982, p.14), absenteeism, doodling in textbooks (Canagarajah, 1993), and, as has been previously noted in relation to HE in the UAE, opting for 'tight' timetables, i.e., back-to-back classes (Hatherley-Greene, 2012) so as to minimise time spent on campus. Many of these examples of academically counterproductive behaviour can often be observed on the part of Emirati HE students. Indeed, Rogier (2012) has commented upon female Emirati HE students' unwillingness to study outside of the classroom, as has Martin (2003). Academic dishonesty within HE in the UAE has also attracted considerable attention (Hatherley-Greene, 2012; Hudson, 2013; Martin, 2003), even within the national media (e.g., Swan, 2012, February 12). Absenteeism, too, is such a potential problem (Hudson, 2013; Yassaei, 2012) that, despite its status as a university, attendance is taken at the location of the current study every lesson, a practice more commonly associated with compulsory education. It is even possible that the somewhat festive spirit of the food court on the female campus of the case institution – what in the framework proposed by Quantz and O'Connor (1988) would be termed a carnivalesque moment – may also be a manifestation of resistance to English and EMI.

Another possible indicator of underlying psychological resistance towards English on the part of students in the UAE is their demonstrable competence in the language, or rather the relative lack thereof. For as is well documented, levels of proficiency in English in the UAE are low, as indeed they are in the whole Gulf (Fareh, 2010; Said, 2011). Gallagher (2011), for example, points out that takers of IELTS (International English Language Testing System) in the UAE obtained the lowest scores out of twenty states in 2006, trailing developing countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka (IELTS Annual Review 2006). Highly similar results were obtained in 2007 (IELTS Annual Review 2007), 2010 (IELTS Annual Review 2010), and 2011 (IELTS Annual Review 2011). It is – at the very least – feasible that such suboptimal levels of English in the UAE may come about as a result of learners harbouring a 'want-hate' relationship with English, and that the very real social/cultural distance which appears to exist between the students and their teachers may account, at least in part, for Emirati students' relatively low performance in EFL/ESL.

That such behavioural traits and relatively modest results in international English language proficiency examinations such as IELTS constitute expressions of resistance towards the language is not the only interpretation, of course. In his critique of Canagarajah (1993), for example, Braine (1994) argues that what Canagarajah describes as an oppositional response to ESL could just as simply be plain boredom or frustration. However, as we shall see below after briefly examining the intertwined nature of English and Islam, the results of the survey employed in the current study would tend to suggest that the students do indeed display a great deal of resistance to English, to the alien values which ride "piggyback" on the language (Qiang & Wollf, 2007, p.61), as well as to EMI.

6. Islam and English

One possible catalyst for any ambiguity and resistance on the part of students in the UAE would be the staunch Islamic nature of the country. This is since English can be seen as encroaching on the Arabic language, which, as noted above, is both a marker of Arab heritage and Islamic identity, a point which is often unfortunately overlooked. Kabel (2007), for instance, criticises Karmani (2005b, p.262) for presenting himself as a "Muslim applied linguist" (see also Karmani, 2005c), arguing that "formulas such as Jewish, Catholic or atheist applied linguist" would appear ludicrous (Kabel, 2007, p.141). Kabel (2007), however, has clearly overlooked the fact that the alternative formulations he offers are in fact arguably far from analogous. This is since Karmani (2005b) speaks from the point of view of an EFL/ESL practitioner in the Islamic context of the UAE (see also Karmani, 2005a), where, as previously noted, Arab identity, the Arabic language, and the religion of Islam dovetail seamlessly. As noted by Al-Khatib (2000), the Arab world consists of 21 independent states, and estimates as to the percentage of Arabs in these countries who are practicing Muslims range from 80% (Sidani & Thornberry, 2009) to as high as 95% (Al-Khatib, 2000). Perhaps, then, it should be no surprise that Arabic has a distinct Islamic flavour. Indeed, as noted by Morrow and Castleton (2007, p.205), "Arabic religious expressions are so common that the language counts *Allah* as its most common content word" (original emphasis).

Of course, not all Muslims are Arabs or Arabic speakers. Indeed, the most populous Muslim country is Indonesia, but even here Arabic and Islam are entwined, for, as noted by Zaharna (1995, p.246), "The Koran was not only revealed in Arabic, but Arabic is the language used in prayer by Moslems throughout the world." That is, Arabic is the "liturgical language of 1.5 billion Muslims" worldwide (Morrow & Castleton, 2011, p.309). Indeed, a somewhat striking example of the extent to which Arabic and Islam are inextricably linked in the minds of some Indonesian Muslims is offered by Lukens-Bull (2001), who explains (p.362) how his informants believed that since the ingredients in an American snack were, along with other languages, listed in Arabic, the snack must therefore be *halal* (i.e., conforming to Islamic dietary practices). Thus, to these Indonesian Muslims, Arabic and Islam both entail and presuppose each other. Arabic is not only of such significance in Indonesia, of course; the language also "carries a powerful spiritual and religious symbolic value to the UAE's national identity as an Arab and Muslim country" (Diallo, 2014, p.2).

7. The current study

With the total of the above in mind, it was decided to research attitudes towards the presence and prevalence of non-Arabic-speaking foreigners and non-Muslim teachers in the UAE, the link between Arabic and Islam, the policy of EMI in HE in the UAE, and the possible encroachment of English on Islamic values, as held by female students ($n = 43$) on a foundation programme at a federal university in the UAE, an institution which is arguably highly representative of tertiary establishments in the UAE, and indeed the greater Gulf.

7.1 Participants

The students in this particular study ranged between 17 and 20 years old (mean = 18.44) and represented all 7 of the emirates that make up the UAE, stemming from, in numerical order, the emirate of Abu Dhabi ($n = 28$), Ras Al Khaimah ($n = 6$), Sharjah ($n = 2$), Ajman ($n = 2$), Dubai (n = 2), Fujairah ($n = 2$), and Umm Al Quwain (n = 1). The vast majority of the 43 participants ($n =$

41) were Emirati, though 1 was from the Yemen and 1 from Palestine. Students on the foundation programme need to obtain an overall 5.0 in the academic variant of the IELTS examination, or 'equivalent', so as to be able to proceed to their relevant faculty and commence their degree programme.

7.2 Research instrument

The research instrument employed in the following study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. Since it was necessary to ensure as far as possible that students fully comprehended the statements contained in the questionnaire, it was decided to present the informants with a bilingual (English/Arabic) document, which students could complete in the language of their choice, or a combination of both if so desired. This, presumably, is the rationale behind the bilingual English/Arabic instructions of the Common Educational Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) exam (Coombe & Davidson, 2013), and it is of interest to note that in their research into the eating attitudes of students at ZU, Thomas, Khan, and Abdulrahman (2010) acknowledge the lack of a dual language version of their research instrument to be a shortcoming of their study. The initial translation of the survey was completed by a female final-year Emirati student of translation at the case institution, and this was subsequently reviewed by an English instructor of Tunisian heritage fluent in both English and Arabic, as a result of which some minor edits were made to the questionnaire.

Participants were invited to read and sign a consent form before completing the questionnaire, were guaranteed anonymity, and were given an unlimited amount of time in which to complete the questionnaire. The questions, being fairly broad in scope, arguably afforded informants the latitude to interpret them according to their own priorities, beliefs, and values (Ashencaen Crabtee, 2007). A 5-point, Likert-type scale measured the attitudes of the students towards the issues targeted in the survey. In this way, it was possible to score and thus operationally define participants' attitudes. Since the areas on which participants' views were desired were quite distinct, and in order to avoid "respondent fatigue" (Ben-Nun, 2008), it was decided to target the topics of interest with a short, 8-item questionnaire. Interestingly, perhaps, 18 students completed the questionnaire in English, and 23 in Arabic (2 students completed it in full in both languages).

8. Results & discussion
Table 1:
Questionnaire & Students' Responses (in percentages)

Questions	Responses				
	SA	**A**	**NO**	**D**	**SD**
1. *Foreigners in the UAE should learn Arabic.*	58.1%	30.2%	7%	4.7%	…
2. *I am happy when foreigners learn Arabic.*	65.1%	25.6%	7%	2.3%	…
3. *Muslim students should only have Muslim teachers.*	11.6%	11.6%	16.3%	37.2%	23.3%
4. *Muslims have a duty to learn foreign languages.*	11.6%	41.9%	16.3%	18.6%	11.6%
	46.5%	20.9%	18.6%	7%	7%

	SA	A	NO	D	SD
5. *All Muslims in the world (from Indonesia, etc.) should learn Arabic.*					
6. *I should be able to choose whether I study in English or Arabic.*	62.8%	18.6%	4.7%	7%	7%
7. *The English language is a threat to Islamic values and customs.*	25.6%	30%	4.7%	39.5%	…
8. *Learning English makes students more Westernised.*	23.3%	27.9%	20.9%	25.6%	2.3%

SA = strongly agree, A = agree, NO = no opinion, D = disagree, SD = strongly disagree

Q1 of the survey looks at whether students are of the opinion that foreigners from non-Arabic-speaking countries, of which teachers are a particularly visible subpopulation, should learn Arabic. 25 students (58.1%) strongly agreed, 13 (30.2%) agreed, 3 (7%) had no opinion, and 2 (4.7%) disagreed. Interestingly, this question generated 5 optional comments,[iv] with four students, all of whom strongly agreed, adding, "To facilitate interaction, understanding and dealing with others,"[v] "To benefit from knowing about our values and traditions,"[vi] "To facilitate communication between two cultures,"[vii] and "Their language is a must therefore they need to learn our language."[viii] Of most interest, however, is the fact that Q1 appears to have hit something of a raw nerve with another student who also strongly agreed. For, with some not unobvious frustration, if not (arguably understandable) bitterness, this student wrote "Make them take an "IELTS" test in Arabic,"[ix] a rare outburst indeed for someone from a group known for, among other cultural traits, their hospitality and graciousness (Ashencaen Crabtree, 2007; Saudelli, 2012).

Q2, which is thematically linked with the previous question, examines whether the students surveyed are pleased when encountering a foreigner who has learned, or who is in the throes of learning, Arabic. Some 28 students (65.1%) strongly agreed, a further 11 (25.6%) agreed, 3 (7%) had no opinion, and 1 (2.3%) disagreed. One of the 28 students who strongly agreed stated, "It shows that we are civilized and advanced."[x] Another, who also strongly agreed, wrote that "This facilitates communication between me and them."[xi] A student who agreed appears to have summed up the students' attitudes on this topic, writing "I feel it is an appreciation of Arabic."[xii]

Q3 seeks to ascertain students' views towards the religious orientation, if any, of their teachers, more specifically, whether they believe that Muslim students should only have fellow Muslims as teachers. As such, this is a direct replication of Hudson's (2011) question of "*I think it is important that Muslim students should have Muslim English teachers.*" In the current study, 16 students (37.2%) disagreed, a further 10 (23.3%) strongly disagreed, 5 (11.6%) agreed, 5 strongly agreed, and 7 students (16.3%) expressed no opinion. Of these 7 students who did not express an opinion, one nevertheless added that "There is no difference between a Muslim and a foreigner; the most important thing is the delivery of information."[xiii] Interestingly, this echoes a comment made by one of the informants in Hudson's (2011) study who remarked (p.130) that "It's not about who teaches it, it's about how capable the teacher is."

There is a hadith (من تعلم لغة قوم أمن مكرهم) which is invariably translated as *He whoever learns other people's language will be secured from their cunning*, and which, interestingly, as noted by Elyas and Picard (2010), is often employed by private language training centres in Saudi

Arabia as a motto to promote – and perhaps even justify on religious grounds – the study of foreign languages. Q4 ("*Muslims have a duty to learn foreign languages*") sought to ascertain students' attitudes towards the sentiments underlying this particular hadith. No fewer than 18 students (41.9%) agreed, a further 5 (11.6%) strongly agreed, 8 (18.6%) disagreed, 5 strongly disagreed, and 7 (16.3%) had no opinion. One of the 7 students who expressed no opinion added, "Our prophet mahammed said its good to learn others languages but its not compulsary."

Q5 of this short, targeted survey seeks to gain an insight into the extent to which students believe Arabic and Islam are interwoven. Traditionally, it is often argued that the Quran should not be translated from Arabic as some meaning will inevitably be lost, and one should not corrupt the literal word of God, as revealed through the prophet Mohammed. From this point of view, then, in order to read the Quran all Muslims need to first fully master (classical) written Arabic. 20 students (46.5%) strongly agreed with the statement that "*All Muslims in the world (from Indonesia, etc.) should learn Arabic*", 9 (20.9%) agreed, 8 (18.6%) had no opinion, 3 (7%) disagreed, and 3 (7%) strongly disagreed. Although there is a strong consensus on this point, the opinions of those surveyed are by no means unanimous, and it is interesting to note that no fewer than 8 students expressed no opinion. The two diametrically opposed views on this topic are captured succinctly by the additional comments made by two students. One, who agreed, wrote, "Because the Quran is in Arabic and cannot be translated. It is also the language of paradise."[xiv] However, another student, who strongly disagreed, stated, "We get nothing from forcing people."[xv]

On the question as to whether students should be able to *elect* their language of instruction at university (Q6), as opposed to having to study in English for most degree programmes, 27 students (62.8%) strongly agreed, a further 8 (18.6%) agreed, 3 (7%) strongly disagreed, 3 disagreed, and 2 (4.7%) had no opinion. In sum, then, no fewer than 35 students (81.39%) were in favour of being able to select either Arabic or English as the primary language of tuition, a significant finding given the compulsory nature of EMI for the vast majority of degree programmes within federally-sponsored HE in the UAE.

As regards the potential threat which English itself may pose to the Islamic values held by the students (Q7), nearly one-third of the students (13, or 30%) agreed and a further 11 students (25.6%) strongly agreed that their Islamic values and beliefs are indeed threatened by the English language. In contrast, 17 students (39.5%) disagreed, and 2 students (4.7%) gave no opinion. The related question as to whether learning English may be seen as making students more Westernised is the point of contention tackled in Q8. 12 students (27.9%) agreed, 10 (23.3%) strongly agreed, 11 (25.6%) disagreed, 1 (2.3%) strongly disagreed, and 9 (20.9%) stated they had no opinion. Ultimately, then, 22 students (51.17%) stated that they believe that learning English does indeed have a Westernising socialisation effect on its learners.

9. Conclusion
Against a backdrop of the growing societal influence and cultural penetration of English in the UAE, this study examines the attitudes of a small sample of female students at a federally-sponsored institution of HE towards the place and role of English vis-à-vis Arabic in the country, the presence of non-Arabic-speaking foreigners in the UAE, the link between Arabic and Islam, the language policy of EMI within HE, the potential threat posed by English towards Muslim

students' ethno-linguistic identity and religious values, and the possible socialising effects of English on its users.

As revealed by the questionnaire, the vast majority (38) of students surveyed are of the opinion that foreigners in the UAE – presumably also including their teachers, lecturers, and other educators they encounter – should indeed learn Arabic, the mother tongue of the students, an interesting insight given the clear preference for 'native-speaking' teachers of English and mono-lingual, target-language-only lessons and lectures in the UAE, and indeed in many other parts of the world. The majority (26) of students do not, however, believe that it should be compulsory for their teachers to be fellow Muslims, though it is important to remember that, in contrast, approximately one-quarter of those surveyed (10) assert they should only have Muslim teachers. It is also interesting to note that no fewer than 7 students opted to not offer an opinion on this point, which is the same number as those who gave no opinion on the question as to whether Muslims have an inherent duty to learn foreign languages.

No such ambiguity exists on the issue of the interwoven nature of Islam and Arabic, however, with a significant majority (29) of students agreeing that all Muslims should learn Arabic, though again somewhat interestingly this question resulted in some 8 students declining to offer an opinion. It is perhaps for this reason that more than half (24) of the respondents expressed a belief both that English constitutes a possible threat to their Islamic values and (22) that English has potentially socialising and 'Westernising' effects. Preferences as regards being able to elect the language of their instruction for their university studies are even clearer, with the vast majority (35) of students stating that they believe they should indeed be able to choose between Arabic and English. On this point, one wonders how often – in this supposed age of 'student-centred' education – students themselves are actually asked which language they would prefer to study in, or how often they are simply instructed what they are going to learn, how they are going to learn it, and the language they will learn it in.

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[i] As published in *Arab News Bulletin*, vol. 2, no.2, February 1, 1947 (see *Middle East Journal*, vol. 1, no.2, 1947, pp.207-209).

[ii] For an appraisal of this aspect of HE in the UAE from the perspective of critical theory, see Karmani (2005a).

[iii] It would of interest to learn the extent to which American teachers at this institution experienced what Dell-Jones (2008) refers to as teaching EFL in "anti-American environments."

[iv] In addition to avoiding respondent fatigue, this may be a further advantage of a relatively short questionnaire.

[v] لست لي انتفاع على ولا تعامل وقف هم.

[vi] لي سي في دوا، في حفظوا في في أنا و عاداتنا.

[vii] لتسهيل التواصل بين الثقفة اللذين.

[viii] النشر ادخل على ما لا زملتي في مو الغنا.

[ix] امتحنوا و مم اتحان طلبي في اللغة العربية.

[x] يدل في تي تحضرنا و تقدمنا.

[xi] ألن لا يكي جع اللغة التواصل بيني و بين مم لغة.

[xii] أش هر بل مق في ر اللغة العربية.

[xiii] ال فرق بين مسلم و أجني، لما المهم هو وصول الملهو مة.

[xiv] ألن القرآن بل اللغة العربية و اليل كن أنه يترجم، لغة أ لل لجنة هي اللغة العربية.

[xv] الشي عي نأ يبا الإجار.