The Status of English in Bahrain: A Quantitative Analysis of Domains, Uses, and Attitudes

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ABSTRACT

The use of the English language in the Kingdom of Bahrain nowadays is widespread in various domains and for multiple purposes. However, there is no consensus among language experts in the country on what status English holds in reality. Additionally, there is no previous research study which has attempted to vigorously determine the actual status of English in the country. Thus, this thesis has investigated this issue by posing a basic question: What status does English hold in Bahrain today? By using a survey questionnaire, the study explored the domains where English is used, how frequent that use is, and how it is being perceived by Bahraini students and working people in the public and private sectors. The analysis of the collected data helped this research study to assertively conclude that the status of English in Bahrain is shifting and that today it stands as a well-established second language with a variety of functions. This study has even revealed that Arabic, the official language of the country, is being relatively displaced by English in more than one context, including those where Arabic was traditionally the dominant language. It is hoped that such significant findings would help policy makers in Bahrain, especially those responsible for educational policies, to develop relevant language plans that are based on exact research findings. They would also help educational institutions at all levels, curriculum developers, textbook designers in Bahrain, the Arabian Gulf, and all over the world to design relevant language programs that reflect the needs of all Bahrainis and that are aligned with official language policies. Moreover, they would provide language researchers worldwide with valuable data so as to deeply understand the dynamics of English as a global language, gain further insight into the diverse factors that facilitate its expansion, and eventually manage to design more comprehensive reference frameworks and analytical models that could incorporate all this diversity.