



## Relevance of English in Promoting Indo-Arab Ties

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**Abstract :** English is undoubtedly a global *lingua franca*. Even in India, it serves crucial purpose of a link language. For example, if someone from south India interacts with one from northern or western part of India, in most cases, English is used as a medium of communication. Similarly, if an Indian officially visits an Arab country, despite his access to Arabic, he sometimes mingles English with Arabic in order to be better in communication so he can be understood by my most of the target audience. This article is a modest attempt towards studying and analyzing the crucial importance of English in the promotion of the two culturally different communities. It has been found that English can further strengthen the ties between the Arab countries and India.

**IndexTerms** – English, communication, cultures, medium, ties

### Introduction

Social and communicative importance of English can't be underestimated for the simplest reason that it is approximately used by over 380 million native speakers and around 200 million second/foreign language speakers. Thus, it is a global *lingua franca*. Though, English is closely associated with the countries like the US, Canada, the UK or similar countries, Arab world and Asia in general and India in particular also exploit English for different reasons. In addition to the contribution of English to economic sector, English has greatly contributed to the building of linguistic, cultural and academic bonds between nations (Khan, 2021).

It has been felt by many that English has adversely affected the cultural identity of other people. On the other hand, only a very few people could realize that English also played a role of liaison between languages and cultures. Global impact of English language can be studied and analysed in different ways. It can be regarded as a tool for change, economic prosperity, and a means of cross-cultural communication. (Johnson, 2009), and effective tool of communication. (Poggensee, 2016). English in Gulf countries started becoming important long ago according to the following excerpt. (Aljaffery, 2010)

#### The spread of English Language in the Arab Speaking Countries

By : Yacoub Aljaffery

Sometimes during the fifth century, the Quran that's written in Arabic introduced the Arabic language to be the language of the Muslim empire that spread around the world: Nadvi (2003) "Arabic became the official language of a world empire whose boundaries stretched from the Oxus River in Central Asia to the Atlantic Ocean, and even northward into the Iberian Peninsula of Europe. As Islam continued to spread through the world, Arabic inherently followed."(P. 2). Arabic became prestige because of the variety of sciences that were invented by Arabs like Chemistry, Algebra and Astronomy. Things have changed today, and the language that is mostly used around the world is the English language due to the advanced technology and the political power that USA, and the English speaking countries has in the world. Hollywood movies and pop culture have a big impact in spreading English language throughout the world. Middle Eastern countries, especially gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait and Iraq have been heavily influenced by English Language in the last few years. Since Islam has urged people to learn other nations' language for security purposes, English language has been taking big part of the Arabic speaking countries. That desire to learn other languages has increased since the second Gulf war in 2003.

(source: <https://www.grin.com/document/288945>)

### English as a medium of education

Thousands of Arabs have travelled for the sake of education to the Western countries especially the US, Canada and the UK, and obviously they communicate in English because English is the only popular medium of communication and highly learning in countries mentioned above and in the Western countries. In fact, in Saudi Arabia or other Arab countries, the medium of instruction at higher education level is also English. In particular, in the field of medicine, engineering and computer sciences, English is a preferred language in the entire Arab world except a few countries like Syria. In the past, many students from Arab countries came to India from Saudi Arabia for courses like computer sciences and medicine after the late King Abdullah visited India in 2006, and cultural as well as academic ties got strengthened. Still many of the Arab students are enrolled in different

courses in India. Therefore, the language that acts as a 'link' in the coordinating process of cultural and academic exchange, is none other than English.

### Language and culture: two sides of the same coin

Having a deep rooted relation with culture, language is closely linked to culture. . Krober (1923) opined that culture and language enrich each other for further development. Landi (1973) stated that language constitutes a speech community, and one can understand that the whole society from the language. In other words, language describes culture and culture preserves language. The world is nothing but a combination of different cultures, societies and a medium of communication. (Sapir, 1929) Landi (1973) stated that language constitutes a speech community, and one can understand that the whole society from the language. In other words, language describes culture and culture preserves language. The world is nothing but a combination of different cultures, societies and a medium of communication. (Sapir, 1929). Thus, it can be inferred that using a language assuming a culture, and knowing a culture is like being familiar with a language. English in the present context is playing a different role. The issue is what happens when cross-cultural interactions take place. It is seem promoting two different cultures-Arab and the Indian one.

### English and Economic ties

English has rightly been regarded as a driving force behind all types of development related to multiple businesses and allied collaborations. There are enough researches that conclude that English language has tremendously contributed to the general development at the world level irrespective of fields: business, science-technology, medicine, commerce etc. English is well regarded as a medium of success in the field of economics or related fields in addition to its pivotal role in communication across the globe. (Alfarhan, 2016). As referred, English language has successfully enriched business and economic sector multiple ways. (Seppala, 2011). English being the lingua franca in India where there are more than 14 official languages and hundreds of dialects and varieties, it serves specific purpose, therefore it can be considered as a 'cultural capital'. (Alfarhan,2016).

Due to the reason that world community use English as effective and convenient means of communication, they feel bound to use it because no other language could replace it, consequently it remains a culturally powerful language for communication between them (Poggensee, 2016). English enables people to communicate effectively across nations irrespective of race, region, culture etc. People in general intend to be proficient in English for its relevance, the entire Arab world has also started learning English for different reasons despite religious or cultural issues. Many Arab-muslim scholars are of the opinion that more English means more foreign culture because language preserves culture. On the other hand, many Islamic scholars are currently using English as the language of 'preaching' or '*dawah*', but they are not affected by English/British cultures. Moreover, it is clear that English is internationally important for cultural exchange, economic relationship, trade and education.

A Saudi researcher came out with following conclusions. (Alkhalil, 2018).

**Promoting English in Saudi Arabia**

By Samar Alkhalil, March 25, 2019 *Language and globalization*

"Do you speak English?" is a frequently asked question, which Saudi people must be prepared to answer with a confident "Yes!" when applying for a job or to a university. In Saudi Arabia, as in many other places, knowledge of English has become a major prerequisite for many positions and in numerous disciplines. This demand for English has opened the way for an explosion of private institutes teaching the English language, where English is regarded as a commercial product that can earn good money for the purveyor. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the promotional discourses disseminated by these institutions conceal language ideologies that shape learners' beliefs regarding English learning and its teaching.

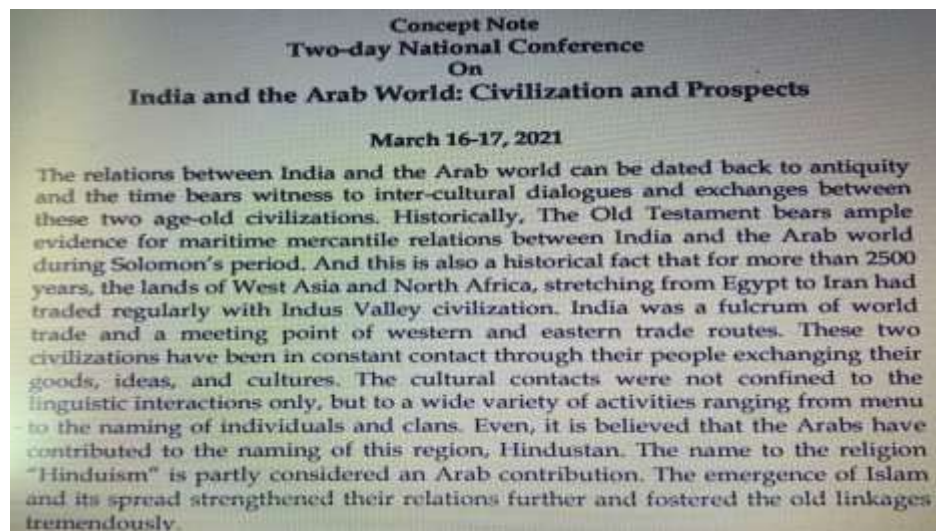
My master's thesis explored the approaches that English language teaching institutes use to persuade their audience that they should learn English in their institution. It examines language ideologies by looking at how English language learning is presented in the online advertisements produced by these institutes, and at the ways in which they represent themselves to their audience. To do this, I analyse visuals and texts to see how institutions make use of a range of language resources in promoting their services.

The analysis of the institutes' ads shows that, in their attempt to persuade a potential audience to enroll, they conceptualize English as a global language. For example, English learning is described as totally advantageous as it supposedly opens the gates to job opportunities, education and travel. English learning is also represented as fun, confidence-building, and personally empowering.

(source: <https://www.languageonthemove.com/promoting-english-in-saudi-arabia/>)

### English as a cross cultural and academic communication

Culture and civilizations are quite close to each other. Similarly education is also deeply connected to both the concepts. In a recently held two day conference at Jamia millia Islamia's India Arab cultural centre, the focus was on these themes and sub themes and the major tool of communication was English.

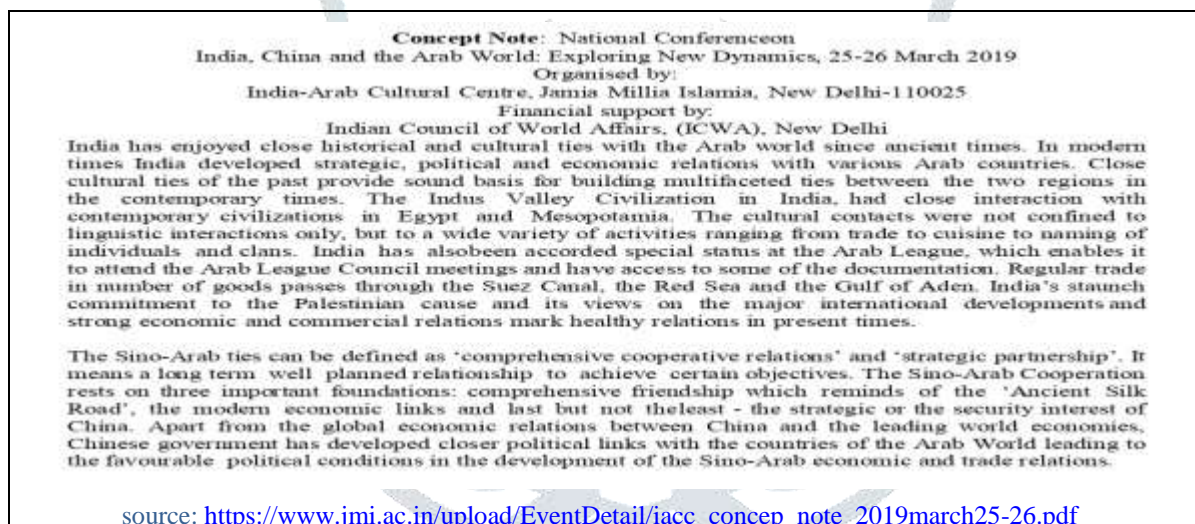


(source:

[https://www.jmi.ac.in/upload/EventDetail/conference\\_iacc\\_concept\\_note\\_2021march16\\_17.pdf](https://www.jmi.ac.in/upload/EventDetail/conference_iacc_concept_note_2021march16_17.pdf))

Thus, it looks clear that understanding between India and the Arab world is multidimensional. This is why, despite differences on many issues, the Indo-Arab bond does not get easily affected. And, in order to comprehend and promote each others' visions, missions and cultural heritages, there should be a medium. English has been playing a crucial role in maintaining and promoting the ties. Jonhson (2009) stated that English being a strong force for cross-cultural communication, English is rightly considered as a tool for linguistic and cultural bond and exchange.

Following event organized at JMI is a testimony of the same idea.



source: [https://www.jmi.ac.in/upload/EventDetail/iacc\\_concep\\_note\\_2019march25-26.pdf](https://www.jmi.ac.in/upload/EventDetail/iacc_concep_note_2019march25-26.pdf)

The globalization of English is basically acknowledged and promoted by educational institutions and universities. (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). In addition, media and journalism also support English because it has wider and global readership. As a result, the message reaches across the world within no time and translation is also not required. Although, it has become a common language for the people having diverse cultures, it still remains a threat to specific cultures which are close to religion, as mentioned above. Despite many people's belief that a foreign language can adversely affect the local culture, a so called restricted society like Saudi has already embraced English as the language of mass due to its own educational development and foreign employees. It has become quite evident in a way that most Saudi students go to the West and even Australia for their academic pursuits. Most of them stay around 6-7 years, get culture shocks, adjust themselves, exchange many things. Most of them return to their countries while a few stay back and look for suitable employment.

### Saudi experts praise English language move

(<https://arab.news/5tkc7>)

The pandemic and the use of distance education make learning English at an early age a necessity for all children, because English is the language of smart devices and advanced technology. Saudi experts have welcomed the Ministry of Education's decision to introduce English to the elementary grade one curriculum. The move was announced on Sunday and will come into effect in the next academic year. Dr. Ayman Johargy, general supervisor of the strategy management office at Umm Al-Qura University, told Arab News that Vision 2030 focuses on quality and comprehensive education for all and enhances life-time learning opportunities. He added that there is a special emphasis on the development of the curriculum, learning methods, and assessment and enhancement of student skills and values.

One of the Vision 2030 indicators is to rank among the top 10 in the Global Competitiveness Indicator. Based on an analysis of the weaknesses, strengths, threats and opportunities of the education system in the Kingdom, one of the challenges facing the system is the poor skills of college graduates, which are not aligned to the demands and needs of the labor market, he said. "English language proficiency is one of the requirements for most of the jobs. It is important for job applicants to be proficient in the language. That is why the Ministry of Education decided to introduce English in the first elementary grade starting next year. This decision will help develop the linguistic skills of students at an early age and help them acquire and learn the language faster," said Johargy. The English language gives speakers an opportunity to open up to different cultures around the world and broaden their minds, he added, which will help them learn new things and find lucrative job opportunities, and compete on the global level.

*Encouraging children to learn English at the same time they learn Arabic will help them develop their skills and social intelligence. (Dr. Gareba Altawehir) (<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1738011/saudi-arabia>)*

Other Arab countries are also focusing on English especially for Education, trade, commerce, business and local/international jobs. UAE is the hub of jobs, business and tourism. Most expatriates belong to the Indian community. And, usually the tool of communication is English. Most of the Arab youngster are quite well versed. This is why, they interact with the outer world and cross culturally share issues related to cultures and development. It has been learnt that the Arab facebook users chats and shares information with the English speaking friends, only through English-the global lingua franca.

### Multilingualism and the role of English in the United Arab Emirates

Peter Siemund, Ahmad Al-Issa, Jakob R. E. Leimgruber, 03 June 2020 (<https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12507>)

#### Abstract

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has witnessed an unprecedented economic and cultural development since its foundation in 1971. Foreign labor and investment play a central role in this development, yielding a sharp imbalance between the Emirati and the foreign population. A population of no less than 85 per cent of highly transient foreigners strongly impacts the local linguistic landscape, with many languages competing in the public sphere. English occupies a special role in this multilingual texture, as it is used as a foreign language, a second language, and a lingua franca. It occurs in its standardized varieties, but also in several non-standard forms, as foreign labor is recruited from places formerly under British or American influence. Based on a new questionnaire study of 692 university students, we explore the tension between English and Arabic, the prominence of English, the increasing use of English as a home language, and the emergence of a new variety of English: 'Gulf English'.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/weng.12507>

If we focus on the Kuwaiti scenario, similar facts would come up because English is a preferred language in Kuwait as well. Although in Kuwait, English does not hold the status of either a national language or an official language, it functions as a *lingua franca* between educated Bahrainis and expatriates. English has occupied a significant place as it has been taught along with Arabic, the mother tongue, and enjoys a special place in the *Kuwaiti* curriculum.

**The role and status of the English language in Kuwait**, Abdulmohsen Dashti, Published online by Cambridge University Press: 12 August 2015

In the Arab world, English is having substantial effects on the region's educational systems, language policies and patterns of language use (Nunan, 2003; Bolton, 2008; Kirkpatrick, 2008). Having realized the importance of English in all domains of life, Arab countries have encouraged the acquisition of English by their people. Most Arab countries have introduced English as a main subject in the school curriculum. In most government and private sectors, most business organizations ask for proof of English proficiency before hiring people for employment.

(<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/english-today/article/abs/role-and-status-of-the-english-language-in-kuwait/496CC36CE8F5BEF6239107EB5CE6F5FB>)

Gomaa (2017) explored the relevance and use of English in the Bahrain and maintained that "English has emerged as a lingua franca between multilingual speakers in Bahrain" (Gomaa 2017, p. 271). There is no previous studies other than the ones undertaken by Gomaa (2017, 2020).

### English in Kuwait

English is one of the most important Kuwaiti languages. It is taught together with Arabic in Kuwaiti schools and is considered to have a prominent place in the educational curriculum of Kuwaitis. According to educationalists, demand for a Western education has increased among Kuwaitis for several reasons: the perceived inadequacy of state education, the importance of an English language education as a preparation for further education overseas and life in general, and the advanced curricula of the non-Arabic foreign schools in Kuwait. Despite the comparatively high fees, schools that teach American and British curricula are booming in Kuwait.

As a result, most people in Kuwait speak some English so it is not absolutely essential for an English speaking expat to learn Arabic. There are a number of radio and television broadcasts in English and newspapers and magazines are also available in the language. Most road signs are in Arabic and English, as are most business and restaurant signs. Interestingly, every Friday a mosque in Kuwait City delivers the sermon or khutbat al-Jumaa in English as well, making it easier for new converts to understand.

(source: <https://www.justlanded.com/english/Kuwait/Kuwait-Guide/Language/Language-in-Kuwait>)

### Conclusions

Indo Arab ties on different fronts may not be possible unless there is a cultural affinity and linguistic comfort. In Arab countries, official language of communication is always performed in Arabic as it the native language of the Arabs. But, in India, despite the fact that Hindi is the national language, quite many Indians communicate in languages other than Hindi. Therefore, the role of English becomes more crucial as it works as a link language or *lingua franca*. In most of the developing Arab countries, English is widely used as a second language. Therefore, it is not far away when most of the educated Arabs may choose English as a *lingua franca*. This way, Arabs can interact with most foreigners in English thus making it as a tool of cultural ties, business, employment, education and what not. India will face issues if things are not deal in English because very few people know Arabic. On the other hand, no Arab knows any Hindi/Urdu, however exceptions are there mostly in the UAE.

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