

# The spread of English language in Jordan

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses a matter of great practical significance: the relatively recent spectacular spread of English language in Jordan, a bilingual country. This topic touches on some areas of considerable theoretical importance for the sociology of language such as language attitude. This paper is divided into three aspects: firstly, deals with the main fields affected by the spread of English language cross Jordan. Secondly, the underlines is the most significant forces affecting this sort of spreading the language cross Jordan. Thirdly, is about prospects for the future of English language in the country Jordan. The methodology adopted in this paper is based on experimental fieldwork and documentary analysis, personal observations and questionnaires submitted to sample University students as well as to a sample layman.

## II. DOMAINS AFFECTED BY THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN JORDAN

These include education, and mass media. The first domain is the most significant one; there is a very strong connection between education and the spread of English language cross-Jordan. Both public and private educations are considered here:

## III. PUBLIC EDUCATION

Generally, English was the first foreign language to be taught in Jordan before and after the independence in 1946. Jordan was under the occupation of Great Britain from 1916 – 1946. After the independence, English is getting to be taught in all Jordanian schools at the early age of eleven, for just one hour and lecture a week. But, after the 1990s, English is getting to be taught alongside with Arabic language in all Jordanian schools at the early age of six. This has given the English language a unique position in Jordan.

Under public education, I shall begin with secondary schools and Universities in Jordan.

Secondary schools: After the independence in 1946 – 1989, Jordan chooses English language as their first foreign language. English remained one of the most significant foreign languages that a student compulsory has to be chosen, to learn during the

last three grades of high schools education. The number of a week hours allocated to English varied from one discipline to another: one hour in sciences, and two hours in humanities. But, after in 1990s the number of hours allocated to English is also varied from one discipline to another: 7hours in sciences and 9<sup>th</sup> hours in humanities. This means English is getting to be used extensively in all Jordanian schools compared to the previous years.

## IV. UNIVERSITIES

The spread of English at the secondary school level led to an even wider spread at the University level. Table 1, confirms this fact and reveals an important increase in the number of students who register every year in the departments of English. A natural development of this state of affairs led to parallel increase in the number of departments of English throughout the country. In the early 1962 there was only one English department in Jordan (at the city of Amman). In 1976 – 1985 the number of English departments in Jordan reached 3. Then, in 1986 – 2013 the number of English departments reached 30. “Steaming” became a necessity in some places as band levels in the flow of students wishing to register in English departments were often wider than administrative expectations.

As the number of University graduates in English increases, the Jordanian secondary school teaching staff grew steadily. If we consider the population of English teachers in Jordan, we shall notice that in 1962 that were not more than 22 teachers of English in secondary schools.

But, the number of English teachers has increased dramatically from 1962-2013. In other words, thousands of English teachers are currently teaching in Jordanian schools. This has increased the number of people toward learning English language as the first priority, because most jobs in Jordan required English language from their employees or candidates. Believe it or not English is getting to compete Arabic language and many sectors English is first, for instance, tourism sector, ministry of foreign affairs, higher scientific study, business, air port, etc. This has given English language a unique position in Jordan, and this also increased the spread of English cross the country.

Table 1, the number of students registered in some English University departments (first year)

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Jordan University	534	585	631	672	785	967
Irbid National	167	189	243	261	297	379
Gadara	132	149	176	190	222	289
Yarmuke	519	576	612	669	765	955
Al Il beit	389	478	555	602	685	801

The number of students is varied from one University to another, because Jordan University was established 1962, Yarmuke in 1976 and Al IL Beit was also established 1990s. These Universities: Jordan University, Yarmuke and Al IL Beit belong to the state and the other Universities are private and established last decade.

Further, these 5 Universities are selected randomly among other 30 Universities state and private too. That is why; the number of students is varied from one University to another, but generally the number of the students in English departments has increased dramatically every year. This will increase the number of English teachers and increase the spread of English language cross Jordan.

#### V. PRIVATE EDUCATION

Privately sponsored education is another domain where English is spreading. Two foreign institutions can be cited here: the British council and American language center. Over the years, the British council has reinforced its position as a promulgator of English in this country. Courses are continuously supplied by this institution for learners for all ages. Similarly, the American language center and its branches throughout of Jordan register an increasing number of students every year. Here also English courses are offered to learners of various ages and levels. Private education is also available in American schools: Two such schools are worthy of note: in the capital of Amman, these schools have both primary and secondary level.

Apart from these foreign bodies, several institutions and institutions of higher education after courses in English to their students with goal of raising their level comprehension to that required to cope with the increasing use of English textbooks, reference books and documentation. Among these we can cite, school of science and technology and business in the city of Amman. There are also many private business schools which teach English to serve the needs of secretarial training, commerce and computer science. This has increased the spread of English language in Jordan.

#### VI. THE MASS MEDIA

Along with education, the domain of the mass media is another in which English is spreading steadily. This is beneficial

for the spread given the powerful role that the media are assuming in modern times at national and international levels. I shall deal first with written and then with the oral communication media.

Cultural factors such as education, gender, age main language spoken at home, etc., are in direct relationship with the reading habits. More specifically, reading requires language proficiency. This proficiency is more and more often required, given that English written material is gradually finding its place on the newsstands of larger and smaller Jordanian cities, towns, and villages. The imported press is now plentiful in Jordan. Dailies such as Jordan times, Financial times, wall street journal etc. These Journals can easily be purchased, and censorship is seldom. Periodicals are also available. English material is not only imported but also locally produced. There is a locally published English daily, Jordan Today, whose circulation is growing steadily.

Paralleling the increase of English news paper is that of English and American books. These are provided by the British and the American language center and others, for instance, the media book service, some private English and American bookshops, and many second hand bookshops. These books are either 'seasonal' secondary school and university textbooks or books dealing with a variety of subjects ranging from scientific, political and economic subjects to literature, detective stories and children's books readers and the like.

Local English publications are mainly pedagogical. For example, the Jordanian association of teachers publishes its proceedings on yearly basis. On the other side, an increasing number of Jordanian scientists in various domains publish a broad in English. Moreover, publications in English are often cited and discussed at length owing to the fact that there is no other language in which as much is published as in English. All these facts cause the proportion of English language materials in library collections to increase.

Along with written media, the Jordanian radio station allocates every day portion two hours (from 2 -4pm) to the English broadcasting of news, songs, and other miscellaneous programs. According to the questionnaires submitted to the Irbid National university students, 41% of the Irbid National University students listen to this daily broadcast ( while are driving or sitting in the coffee shops) which looks to be enjoying increasing popularity, especially among the youth. Two factors can be given. Firstly, the time of the broadcasting is relevant.

Late afternoon is usually a time for relaxation. Secondly, English modern songs seem to be appreciated even by people who do not understand it. These songs belong to what is termed the 'international youth culture'

English language programs are also provided by the CNN, BBC world service and the voice of America. 10% of the students listen to CNN, BBC world center service and 7% to the voice of America. A few students mentioned other radio station. Overall, age, and the level of education are determining factors when we consider the role of the media in spreading English. People who are expected to be interested in English are mainly students, teachers, and people of the more educated class.

As for Jordanian television, it allocates every week at least two hour programs to the teaching of English to beginning, intermediate and advanced learners. In addition, two hour program of international culture (English and American songs in the majority of cases sung by Jordanian young men and women) is regularly offered on Thursday after noon and Saturday nights. In the recent past, the Jordanian television provided a weekly two–three times news round up in English.

English television programs and films are some translated into Arabic and some not. English plays are from time to time translated and sometimes not. Jordanian audience is expected to 'dubbed' English and through it to English and American culture. For example, the people living in all Jordanian cities, towns, have the opportunity to watch two Jordanian foreign channels and hundreds of foreign channels are also available such as Euro news, NBC, CNN, BBC, ALJAZZERA English channels, etc., and especially the American channels, world net. These channels can be easily by purchased it through local shops. Researcher is needed to determine just how much English is offered by these channels which already mentioned. Apart from this, it is not uncommon to English words in news broadcasts and advertisements. There appears to be some type of snob appeal about using English in these contexts. For instance, when an English word or phrase is given for a product in the middle of a Jordanian commercial, people tend to believe that the product is more popular abroad and hence fashionable. This usually helps sell the product. All these forms of mass media are easily accepted by Jordanians, already familiar with French culture. The mass media sometimes serve education for example, pop songs, on international hit parades, usually delivered in English, are seldom used as a means to teach vocabulary, and students appear enjoy this so much.

#### VII. FOCUSES AFFECTING THE SPREAD OF ENGLISH IN JORDAN

There is no study of language can ignore the forces that interfere with existing social patterns and create, increase or reduce the spread of a language. It is however, more difficult than one might believe to delineate clearly the relationship between society and language spread because past, more recent, and possible future events and changes play roles which are sometimes difficult to assess empirically. However, one can say that in Jordan, various linguistic and nonlinguistic changes are the root of better qualified as intervening variables. The international status of English is a significant cause.

#### VIII. THE INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF ENGLISH

Fishman et al. (1977) said that the summary of the unique position of English, thus (English) is the language of diplomacy, the predominant language in which mail is written, the principal language of aviation and radio broadcasting, the first language of nearly 300 million people and an additional language of perhaps that many more.

The fields in which English is used involve crucial intensives interaction between nations if we compare English and Chinese and Russian, for example, we will notice that on the one side, Mandarin is used by more people than English but in key domains which involve international interaction, a fact which makes it less important internationally. On the other side, given that languages are not inherently more powerful than others but their users can be, and that Russians are as powerful as Americans, it is paradoxical fact that Russians is not used in key international domains, a fact which diminishes its international strength.

#### IX. POLICY OF EDUCATION

The general policy adopted by both decision makers and educationalists in Jordan constitutes a considerable force in the spread of English in the Kingdom of Jordan. Jordan has always an open country and foreign language instruction has always been a necessary part of the schools and university syllabuses. Jordanian is exposed to English at the early age of six, sine 1990s. Likewise, language departments have always existed in Jordanian universities and course designers, trainers, supervisors, assessors, that are language policy makers, have always allocated a sizeable role to English in school and university syllabuses. Policy makers in Jordan have certainly realized that international communication between Jordan and rest of the world could not be achieved by Arabic alone; they know that English is the key to communication in a very tangible sense. As there has never been any law specifying second or foreign language use, this has left the door open to the spread of English.

Overall, the policy adopted by Jordanian government is extremely influential in furthering the spread of English in this country. The fact that English has connotations greater than being simply the language of one specific state helps the process. More specifically, the policy in language planning encourages English as a language of wider communication but not at the expense of the Arabic, the national language. This trend is publically supported and results in an increase of exposure to English. On another level, a considerable number of English and American backed companies have set up in Jordan and the world economic forum which held several times at the Dead Sea in Jordan. The position of English is also enhanced by the fact that more English and American products are imported.

#### X. ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH IN JORDAN

The status of English as a language of wider communication and the policy adopted by these decision makers are explicit causal factors in the spread of English in Jordan. Attitudes toward English in this country, being a reflection of a number of intergroup relationships, are a strong intervening variable. There

is no one can deny that attitudes bear directly on motivation and achievement. It is true that sociolinguistic attitudes, beliefs and overt patterns of behavior are basically subjective, but it is at least possible that they can be objectively investigated. The right context for the study of language attitudes, especially of those associated with English is the Jordanian educational sense; the attitudes of ordinary layman will also be investigated. It is hoped that these various sources will give a more valid and complete pictures than would any one source by itself. I shall begin by considering the attitudes of secondary school students.

#### XI. ATTITUDES OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

Guebel's (1976) confirmed that in his survey which was meant to elicit reactions to English among secondary school students, 73% of fourth form students believe that English is the foreign language they would like to study, after being asked to select from a set containing English, Spanish, Italian, German, French, etc. These students have already taken English but they plan to increase their knowledge to get better job in future. As to 56 and 70 from the students a result of 95% of them favoring English was obtained. With a similar goal of finding out the general attitude of secondary school students toward English, among other languages, Elbiad (1985) claimed that the used set of 13 adjectives which can be categorized as (1) esthetic for instance, romantic, (2) practical (for instance precise), (3) positive for instance useful and (4) negative for instance difficult. The results of investigation reveal that when respondents are given an alternative between English and other foreign languages they tend to select English for the better future; even English is considered as a colony language. English is perceived by these students as being more impressive, more developed and more technical, (72% of the students rank English, as being more useful for the future of Jordan, and as opposed to 28% who see Arabic as such). Moreover, more students wish they could speak and write English rather than any other foreign languages.

#### XII. ATTITUDES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

In attempt to investigate the attitudes of the university students toward English, I submitted a questionnaire sample of university students. Several observations perhaps are made regarding the responses to this questionnaire. According to my investigation, 35% of university students believed that they have selected to study English because it is the most significant foreign language, 40% believed that it will secure them a better job; and 25% claim they have selected English because they are very interested in English language and literature.

The prestigious status of English is more felt in the fields of communication and research. 41% write English outside class assignments, mostly to their love one and friends in Jordan and abroad. 48% read English and 11% speak English outside the class room. Moreover, the great majority of students, 84% believe that the general attitude toward English in society at large is positive. Thus, the university students' attitude toward English is very favorable, a fact which justifies the students' choice. As far as I have been able to determine, most of these students have strong material or instrumental insensitive, for learning English.

In addition to aforementioned percentages of students who choose English in order to have a better and good job. Most of these students believe that knowledge of English enables them to read textbooks in the university, using the internet in proper way, for instance, chatting with friends on face book, twitter all over the world. They also assume that this knowledge gives them the opportunity of getting along when abroad, or else they think that knowledge of English allows them to become broadly educated.

This instrumental motivation is significant in the sense that there is a direct correlation between an instrumental view of English and English proficiency and usage. In other words, the fact English is viewed as valuable for personal ends both results in and contributions to proficiency in English confirmed by (Quakrime 1986). University students also believe that English is suitable for more uses than Arabic or other languages universally. This is reflected in their subjective evaluations of English in terms of adjectives such as 'more beautiful' 'more musical' and 'richer' than Spanish or French.

Having considered the attitudes of secondary school and university students, we can mention the following: first secondary school and university students, as two sizable portions of society, can be told to somehow reflect the overall attitude of Jordanians, given that on the one side, these learners are in constant interaction with their families, relatives, friends, etc. On the other side, the questionnaire submitted to the sample of university students shows that the latter believe that the overall attitude toward English is positive. In fact, both people and decision makers harbor positive feelings about English. This is all encouraging in the sense that attainment has consistently matched expectation. This trend has been on the rise for a number of years now.

Secondly, if we compare the attitudes of secondary school and university students, we can tell that the attitude of the previous is more of genuine guide to the general attitude than the latter, because while the younger group has the opportunity to compare English to other languages and select one, the latter are already committed to English and hence will automatically favor it. Close to 37% are in this category, that is, the percentages of secondary school who select English. This situation has now lasted for so long that only a very restricted number of students take German, French and Spanish. This is also reflected in the size of English departments compared to German, Spanish and French departments. The phenomenon can be illustrated in part by the 'aura' which appears to characterize English in this country. Jordanian children are exposed to English at the early age of six, in life that English sounds more fashionable, modern and globally use.

In attempt to investigate the attitude of ordinary layman to English, a questionnaire (in Arabic and English) was submitted to 200 people of various ages, occupations, and interests. Among the respondents, there were teachers of Arabic, Spanish, French, and German, etc., doctors, civil servants, military officers, housewives, etc. The following are some of the findings obtained from this questionnaire. The great majority of the people, 87% believe that English even have a colony connotation for them but they still like it. Among the same percentage of people 81% believe that English is very useful language for Jordanians. The reasons they give the range from the practical utility of English particularly in international affairs and contacts to its special

utility in business and traveling, 50% of the participants hold the view that in the long run, English will emerge as a main rival to other languages and not opposed to this change.

### XIII. TOURISM

Tourism can also be stated as a force in spreading English in Jordan. In fact, it is mainly due to tourism that English is more and more tolerated outside the classroom. From the early 1980s onward, flows of tourists from Western countries and North America began pouring into Jordanian, which quickly became a significant international tourist spot. Tourists, not only from English speaking countries but from all over the world at large, use English which inevitably became a sort of lingua franca serving as a communication link between tourists guide. This intensified the influence of English on the youngsters of that generation. English has always been associated with popular waves of music such as Jazz and Rock and Roll twist etc. The gradual assimilation of these kinds of song and through them English was facilitated by the acquaintance that Jordanians had with Arabic culture.

### XIV. CONCLUSION

In Jordan, English is a foreign language which is kept mainly through the system of education and to a lesser extent through the mass media. The two state channels are constantly on the rise. Jordanians do not appear opposed to this, a fact which means that the use of English is not merely transitional; its link with education, a major field and force also constitutes a significant guarantee for its future spread. English operates like any other academic school subject and the factors which promote general academic success also promote success in English. Education being an ever dynamic domain, will always enhance the role of English because it places individuals at points of entry to many cultures and countries cross the world, a major force in the spread of any language. In fact, the demographic context of any language has a profound bearing on the spread and maintenance of that language. Jordanians are now, more than ever, fully aware of the especial significance of English. Their interest in it language is undeniable growing. An increasing number of young men and women are offered the opportunity to

learn English, a fact which naturally illustrates the strong correlation between English and youth in the Kingdom of Jordan; it is also a result of the spread of the international youth culture. In any case, it is perfect that attitudes toward English are positive because language attitudes have always constituted a strong input for language competence.

The analysis of the spread of the English in Jordan suggests that it is possible to retain a language of wider communication in functions which can be qualified as 'intergroup' or international' with no potential threat to the official or mother tongue language of the country. Jordan has now reached a stage of development which makes it more 'secure' in the sense that 'heated' nationalism' has subsided and Jordanians can view English as an advantageous means wider communication.

All in all, thus, English looks to be making an important inroads in Jordan, infiltrating into the educational, sociolinguistic, and political life of Jordanians. It is less and less characterized by contextual specifically. I do not claim that English will be used as a medium of oral communication to the extent that Arabic is, but it is certainly making steadily head way in that direction.

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