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In Search of Bilingualism in Dubai's Private K-12 Education Sector

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1. Abstract

UAE nationals ("Emiratis") constitute less than 10% of the resident population of Dubai. Despite having access to free education in the public sector, where Arabic is the predominant language of instruction, more Emirati families in Dubai choose to enrol their children in private schools, specifically English-medium schools, than public ones, believing that they offer better teaching and learning, better English instruction, and better school leadership. There is a growing fear among policy makers, regulators and Emirati parents that young Emiratis are in danger of becoming detached from their local language and culture. The regulatory authority for private schools in Dubai, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), is encouraging the private sector to explore bilingual educational models. This assignment attempts to design a research inquiry to establish the type of Arabic-English bilingual educational model that would suit Dubai's needs and to explore the circumstances by which it can take root in Dubai's private K-12 sector. The design will follow a mixed methods triangulated strategy utilising multiple sources of data generated through written arguments by students, questionnaires directed at students and parents and interviews with regulators/policy makers, school leaders and school owners/operators.

2. Introduction

2.1 UAE country background

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was formed on 02 December 1971 as a federation of seven states (Emirates), previously known as the Trucial Sheikhdoms: Abu Dhabi (the capital, which owns the vast majority of the UAE's oil reserves), Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah, Um Al Quwain and Fujairah. Until March 1971, the Trucial Sheikhdoms were under the protectorate of the British government.

Oil was discovered in Abu Dhabi in the early 1960's, and was first exported in 1962. Dubai started to export oil in 1969. As oil revenues began to flood in, particularly after the 1973 oil embargo imposed by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Abu Dhabi and Dubai embarked on a capital-intensive economic policy to develop their infrastructures and economies to bring them in line with the West in the shortest possible time (Karmani, 2005). As *rentier states*, Karmani argues that social, political and economic development in oil-rich Gulf states has been stunted, and that the pursuit of a capital-intensive policy has led to over-reliance on imported labour and foreign, often Western, expertise.

2.2 Liguistic dualism in the UAE

At present UAE nationals (also referred to as Emirati nationals or just Emiratis) constitute 13.3% of the total population in the UAE. 90% or more of the UAE's labour force is foreign. The public (federal and local governments) and semi-public sectors employ about 26% of the total labour force. Approximately 91% of UAE nationals who are in the labour force are employed by the public and semi-public sectors (UAE National Bureau of Statistics - Labour Force Survey, 2009).

The UAE's demographic make-up and distribution of its labour force has resulted in a *linguistic dualism*, where English, of superior status, is viewed as the language of "business, modernity and

internationalism", and Arabic, of inferior status, is seen as the language of "religion, tradition, and localism", (Clarke, 2007; Findlow, 2006). According to Findlow, linguistic dualism is not only manifest in the daily lives of UAE residents where an interaction in a government office is likely to take place in Arabic, while an exchange with a waiter serving you lunch is likely to be in English, but also across institutions. For example, the Ministry of Education (MOE), responsible for the K-12 sector, takes a traditionalist position when it comes to language policy, whereas the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE), responsible for the tertiary sector, takes a more pragmatic position of needing to impart on young Emiratis the skills necessary for the job market. The MHE's preference for teaching in English has contributed to the migration of Emirati pre-tertiary students from government schools, where Arabic is the dominant language, to English-medium private schools in a quest by parents to improve their children's chances to pursue a tertiary degree. This trend is particularly apparent in Dubai.

Both Karmani and Findlow raise the spectre of Arabic language loss in the UAE (Karmani, 2005; Findlow, 2006). Unlike Karmani who argues strongly for a locally based language education policy based on Arabic and Islamic values, and refers to the so-called English Language Teaching Industry as "mercenary and corrosive", Findlow leaves the question of whether learning English constitutes "an infringement or an enrichment" of human rights open for interpretation, taking into consideration the pragmatic realities of the demands of the UAE's labour market and the country's desire to compete in the global economy. Neither Karmani nor Findlow explores bilingual education as a potential model for schooling in the UAE, nor am I aware of any research studies that have done so.

2.3 Research objectives

This assignment attempts to design a research inquiry to establish the type of Arabic-English bilingual educational model that would suit Dubai's needs and the circumstances by which it can take root in Dubai's private K-12 sector. The research will have two objectives:

- Firstly, an attempt to establish a definition for bilingual education and its desired outcomes that is shared and accepted by the various stakeholders in Dubai's private K-12 sector, namely: students, parents, school leaders, regulators/policy makers and school owners/operators.
- Secondly, an attempt to identify the conditions needed to encourage and channel private investment into bilingual education.

2.4 Research questions

In line with the above objectives, the research questions proposed for the study are:

(1) Is a shared definition of bilingual education possible among the various stakeholders?

(2) What are the opportunities and obstacles to the expansion of bilingual education?

My study is principally exploratory in nature. Conclusions drawn from investigation of the first research question may potentially contribute to existing literature concerned with the typology of bilingual education. Outcomes of the study that relate to the second research question may be of assistance to policy makers as they contemplate introducing possible measures to encourage private sector investment into bilingual schooling, in Dubai or elsewhere (bearing in mind contextual and other localised boundary conditions). They may also potentially help school owners/operators as they: (1) seek to understand the market sentiment for this model of education, and (2) possibly lobby the government to develop an environment that favours such an investment. Researchers concerned about the public sector may benefit from some of the conclusions derived or methodologies employed in this study. Finally, outcomes of the study might assist researchers or practitioners in developing a curriculum framework for Dubai's bilingual educational model.

Should I be permitted to do so by the University of Bath, I intend to use this assignment as a blueprint for my EdD educational enquiry, and hereby lay out the design of the enquiry in full.

3. Context

Dubai is one of seven Emirates that form the UAE. The UAE is 41 years old and its population in 2012 was estimated at 9.2 million (World Bank, 2013). Dubai's population rose from approximately 50,000 in 1953 to 2.0 million in 2011 (Dubai Statistics Centre, 2012). Although the percentage of UAE nationals living in Dubai is not published, it is widely thought that only 1 in every 11 permanent Dubai residents is a UAE national.

3.1 A brief introduction to Dubai's educational landscape

According to Dubai's education regulatory authority KHDA, during the academic year 2011/12 Dubai had a total of 227 schools: 79 government and 148 private (KHDA, 2012). The total student population in Dubai that year was 235,269 students, 88% of whom attended private schools (KHDA, 2012).

Government schools offer the UAE National Curriculum. All subjects are taught in Arabic, with the exception of English language which is introduced as a second language as early as Grade 1 and runs through the years of compulsory education (up to Grade 9, or age 15). Government schools are open only to UAE nationals, although rare exceptions are made for some expatriate children, and generally charge no tuition fees. In contrast, Dubai's private schools offer 13 different curricula, three of which are considered English-medium: the National Curriculum for England (NCE), American, and the International Baccalaureate (IB). Dubai's 148 private schools charge tuition fees and the vast majority operate on a for-profit basis.

Despite having access to free education in the public sector, more Emirati parents elect to pay fees by choosing a private education over a government one for their children. This was not always the case: just 10 years ago, 34% of Emirati students were enrolled in private schools compared to 56% today

(please refer to Appendix A for a brief synopsis of a 2011 research report published jointly by KHDA and CfBT Education Trust which investigates the reasons behind this trend).

77% of Emirati students who receive private education in Dubai are concentrated in 24 private schools (KHDA, 2012). Approximately 65% of Emirati students in Dubai's private schools attend American curriculum schools, 15% attend UAE National Curriculum schools, another 15% attend NCE schools, 2% attend IB schools and the remaining 3% are distributed across other curricula (KHDA, 2012). All American, NCE and IB schools operating in Dubai claim to be English-medium schools. In other words they teach all subjects in English with the exception of: Arabic language instruction for native and non-native speakers, Islamic studies for Arabic native speakers only, and Arabic social studies for Arab native speakers only. In addition, other foreign languages such as French, German and Spanish may be offered. Typically in English-medium schools, an Arab native speaker in the primary years (age 5 to 11) or the middle years (age 12 to 16) is exposed to his/her native language for 18% to 25% of the school week. In post-16 education, that percentage can drop to zero. This means that at least 82% of Emirati children enrolled in private schools or, equivalently, 46% of Dubai's total Emirati K-12 student population, spend on average 75% or more of their time in school learning in English.

These facts and trends have sounded alarm bells among Dubai's indigenous population. In April 2012 the ruler of Dubai, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum, announced a series of government funded initiatives to nurture the Arabic language as a means to preserve national identity, including: setting up a dedicated programme at one of the local universities to teach Arabic to non-native speakers, establishing a faculty of translation at the Mohammed Bin Rashid Media College, in addition to rolling out poetry, reading and calligraphy competitions across Dubai schools (Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum blog). Dubai's regulatory body, KHDA, is concerned about the lack of progress in the teaching and learning of Arabic in private schools (DSIB Annual Report, 2012), and particularly the implications of this on Emirati children attending these schools. Emirati parents

interviewed by KHDA's school inspectors cited "the prominence given by the school to Arabic language and Islamic education" as well as the "emphasis placed by the school upon Emirati culture and heritage" as main factors contributing to their selection of a private school for their children (KHDA, 2012). In her 2011 report referred summarised in Appendix A, Kenaid mentions "parental dilemma" in selecting the appropriate private school. She quotes an Emirati parent: "Everyone would agree that Arabic language is most important. It is just difficult to find all elements in one school. You give up something for another." (Kenaid, 2011)

The KHDA is seeking support from private school operators and owners in establishing Arabic-English bilingual schools predominantly for Emirati children, and is probably contemplating the introduction of new policies and/or guidelines in relation to this. In my official capacity as founding Chief Executive Officer of Taaleem, the second largest provider of private K-12 schooling in the UAE, I have engaged in multiple discussions with high-ranking officials at the KHDA about this topic over the past four years. On most occasions our discussions would invariably make mention of the three high profile examples of bilingual schools operating in the region, namely: Ibn Khuldoon National School in Bahrain, Amman Baccalaureate School in Jordan and Al-Bayan Bilingual School in Kuwait. In the next section, I will briefly profile these three schools, highlighting some of the key characteristics that they have in common. In section 3.3 I will introduce Al Ittihad Private School, which is the only K-12 school in Dubai that lays claim to some form of a bilingual model, and contrast it with the aforementioned three schools.

3.2. Case examples from the region

Ibn Khuldoon National School (IKNS) was established in 1983 as a not-for-profit, co-educational, K-12 school in Bahrain. The school was conceived in response to a desire on the part of many Bahraini families to educate their children in an environment that meets high international standards while addressing the specific needs of Arab children through nurturing their Arab and Islamic values. As a

result, IKNS has bilingualism at the core of its philosophy. The school President's welcome letter on the websites states: "The school offers a bilingual program of study for students from Kindergarten to Grade twelve… We are very proud of our students who can access both Arabic and English with ease and lucidity from an early stage of their lives..." (www.ikns.edu.bh).

IKNS's educational programme in the early and elementary years is anchored around language courses, placing equal emphasis on Arabic and English. For instance, subjects such as mathematics and science are taught in Arabic until the middle of Grade 3, when a transition to English language instruction takes place in those subjects. Homeroom teachers working in the kindergarten and elementary years are categorised as "English" or "Arab" based on the language they use in their instruction. The "English" department in kindergarten is composed mostly of Arab bilingual teachers, with a few Western expatriates. The opposite is true in the "English" department in elementary school, where the faculty is mostly Western expatriate. In higher grades the faculty is composed mostly of Arab bilingual speakers, with the exception of English language instructors who are predominantly Western expatriates.

IKNS has graduated IB Diploma Programme (IBDP) students since 1992, and is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (MSA). At present, student enrolment stands at 1,450 of mostly Bahraini students.

Established in 1981 in Jordan, Amman Baccalaureate School (ABS) is a not-for-profit co-educational K-12 school which aims to provide a bilingual education that meets "…in quality and breadth, the highest international standards, whilst remaining firmly rooted in the Arab Islamic heritage…" (www.abs.edu.jo). In the early years, children spend an equal amount of time learning in Arabic and English, with two homeroom teachers working simultaneously with every kindergarten class. In the primary years (Grades 1 to 5), students spend about 60% of each week studying in the Arabic programme, which includes Arabic language, religion, mathematics, social studies, drama and physical education. In the middle school (where ABS offers the IB's Middle Years Programme) the balance of

languages shifts in favour of English, and by the time children join the Diploma Programme (Grades 11 and 12), the only exposure that they have to Arabic is through the Arabic language (A or B) subject.

ABS is accredited by the Council of International Schools (CIS) and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). It has 1,164 students on roll, the vast majority of whom are Jordanian or Arab native speakers. The 71 strong teaching faculty is a mix of Western expatriates and Arab bilingual teachers.

Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) was established in Kuwait in 1977 with the aim of creating "…an education bridge between the progress of the West and the traditional values of the Arab culture…" (www.bbs.edu.kw). Kindergarten children have two homerooms, Arabic and English, and their school day is split equally between them. The equal weighting in instructional time between the two languages carries over into the elementary school (Grades 1 to 4). In middle school (Grades 5 to 8) and beyond, only Arabic language, Islamic Studies and Social Studies are taught in Arabic. The majority of students attending BBS are Kuwaiti nationals or Arab expatriates, and the faculty is a mix of Western and Arab bilingual professionals. BBS is accredited by CIS and NEASC.

I chose to highlight the above mentioned schools because of their long-standing provision and reputation for excellence among the communities they serve. Between them, the three schools have graduated over 5,000 students in the last 30 to 35 years, many of whom have pursued tertiary education in some of the world's leading universities, and subsequently built very successful careers.

The three schools have four common threads:

- They are all 30 years or older and have an international position or attitude (they are all IB World Schools, and are accredited by one or another of the leading international accreditation bodies).

- The vast majority of students attending them are either nationals of the host country, or otherwise are native speakers of Arabic.
- The faculty in those schools is a mix of Western and Arab bilingual teachers. Western expatriate teachers tend to populate the early and primary years, while in the middle and upper school Western expatriates are by and large exclusively employed as English language teachers.
- The three schools were founded for the purpose of marrying "the best from the West" with the values of Arab and Islamic culture and heritage. All three schools use the term 'bilingual education' explicitly in their philosophy statements, and in the case of BBS the word 'bilingual' is incorporated into the school name. Furthermore, substantial instructional time is devoted to teaching subjects using Arabic as a medium of instruction, particularly in the early years and primary school, where instructional time in Arabic and English is given more or less equal weighting.

3.3 Case example from Dubai: Al Ittihad Private School (AIPS)

AIPS in Al Mamzar was established by royal decree in 1975 with the original aim of serving the educational needs of Emirati children from mixed marriages (Emirati father, non-Arab mother). The Dubai government continued to fund the school until the year 1992, when the school was sold to a group of Emirati parents. Since then, AIPS has opened a second branch in Dubai and two additional branch campuses, one in Abu Dhabi and another in Al Ain. The two Dubai campuses have a combined total student population of 3,660, with Emiratis constituting 86%. The remaining 14% is made up mostly of Arab expatriate children (www.ittihadschools.com).

Although the overwhelming majority of students enrolled in AIPS's two Dubai campuses are Arab native speakers, the schools adopt a time-table that is typical of English-medium schools in Dubai; in other words, Arabic is taught solely as a language in the school (with a maximum 25% of lessons

conducted in the language for any year group) and not as a medium to deliver multiple subjects. AIPS's claim to being 'bilingual' relates to environmental factors such as the nationality of the children and their inclination to communicate with each other in Arabic rather than English. The fact that most teachers employed in the school, with the exception of teachers of English language and humanities, are bilingual and freely switch between Arabic and English in their lessons is a reinforcing environmental factor.

AIPS offers a hybrid American curriculum, and is a candidate for joint accreditation by CIS and NEASC. While AIPS in Dubai shares the first three characteristics common to the three schools profiled in section 3.2, it crucially differs from them when it comes to the fourth characteristic. I know of no school in Dubai that shares all four traits which personify IKNS, ABS and BBS.

4. Literature review

The case examples highlighted in the sections 3.2 and 3.3 all lay claim to providing bilingual educational programmes. Some of these schools share many common qualities, but they are certainly not identical, and in the case of AIPS the differences stand out markedly. Therefore we are left with the need to bring some frame of reference to: firstly attempt to understand the diverse set of variables that characterise 'bilingual' schools and, secondly, possibly categorise them into some form of typology.

In his book *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, Fifth Edition,* Colin Baker argues that 'bilingual education' is an ambiguous concept (Baker, 2011). For example, the term is commonly applied to classrooms in which instruction is structured around the fostering of bilingualism, and contrastingly, to classrooms where bilingual students are present but where bilingualism is not a defined goal. Even when the stated aims are similar, the approach and, arguably, the outcomes of bilingual education can be very different; the four examples presented in sections 3.2 and 3.3 are a case in point.

4.1. Bilingual typology

Baker introduces a typology matrix based on the different aims of bilingual education. While recognising the limitations of typologies in terms of their static nature, their tendency to simplify unsympathetically to context, and their inability to explain successes and failures, Baker argues that there is still merit in the conceptual clarity that a typology can provide. In all, he presents 10 types of bilingual education, classified under three categories (Baker, 2011):

- Category 1 is a **monolingual form** of education for bilinguals and has three types: *mainstreaming with structured immersion*, *mainstreaming with withdrawal classes*, and *segregationist*. All three category 1 types aim to produce a monolingual outcome and are based on a philosophy of assimilation or, in the case of the segregationist type, apartheid. In the latter type, the powerless segment of society is educated in an 'inferior (native) language' and is denied access to the 'power language' of the ruling elite.
- Category 2 is a **weak form** of bilingual education for bilinguals. It too has three types: *transitional*, *mainstream with foreign language teaching* and *separatist*. The philosophy of transitional bilingual education is one of assimilation, as the majority language usage is increased at the cost of decreasing usage of the home language in a school setting (Villareal, 1999). The aim is to produce relatively monolingual students. Although it shares the same philosophy as Category 1 types, transitional bilingual education differs in that the minority language speakers are allowed temporary use of their home language in school: two years in the case of 'early exit' transitional bilingual education and up to six years in 'late exit' (August, 2002). Mainstream education with foreign language teaching singles out a majority language as the medium of instruction and reduces the minority (or as the case may be foreign language) to a subject in the curriculum. While this type of education may result in limited enrichment of the minority/foreign language, it rarely produces functionally bilingual children. Baker presents the Canadian example whereby English-background students were found to be incapable of communicating in French with French Canadians, despite being taught French as a foreign language in school for 12 years (Baker, 2011). Mainstream education with foreign language teaching is the prevalent type among Dubai private schools, producing limited bilingual students. Finally, separatist education occurs in the rare instances where a section of society

seeks independent existence by separating itself from the language of the majority (Schermerhorn, 1970).

- Category 3 is considered by Baker as a **strong form** of bilingual education for bilingualism and biliteracy. It has four types: *immersion*, *maintenance*, *dual language* and *mainstream bilingual*. All category 3 types aim at bilingualism or biliteracy. In the first three types a hierarchical relationship exists between the two languages of instruction, whereas in type four the interplay is between two majority languages. Immersion and maintenance bilingual education for bilingualism and biliteracy are in some ways opposite sides of the same coin. While they have common educational aims of pluralism and enrichment, the former immerses majority language speakers in a second language while the latter emphasises a first language to minority language speakers. Schools adopting a dual language education for bilingualism and biliteracy cater to an equally balanced cohort of language minority and language majority speakers. In such schools the ethos is bilingual and the two languages (major and minor) are given equal instructional time for at least four to five years. However, equal instructional time does not necessarily mean the two languages are balanced (Oller and Eilers, 2002), as a power play between the two languages can often negate any numerical equity. For example, it is typical that the majority language is more prevalent in the environment outside school (such as the media), which may lead such schools to counterbalance their effect by accenting the minority language in school. The fourth type, mainstream bilingual (sometimes referred to as bilingual education in majority languages), uses two majority languages in the classroom, positioning the two languages on an equal footing. Schools adopting mainstream bilingual education typically exist in countries where the majority of the population is bilingual, such as Singapore and Luxembourg (Baker, 2011).

The three schools profiled in section 3.2 all belong to Baker's strong form of bilingual education for bilingualism and biliteracy, although an exact fit into one of the four subtypes (the leading candidate being *dual language*) of Baker's strong form may be a bit more problematic, particularly given the dominance of group (locals and Arab expatriates) in the demographic composition of the student population. AIPS, on the other hand, does not fit at all into any one of Baker's 10 bilingual education types. Although it shares some of the basic tenets that characterise type 5 (mainstream education with foreign language), positioning Arabic as the 'foreign language' in AIPS's educational model is certainly problematic. How can the home language of the majority of students, their parents, and teachers in the school be considered 'foreign'? If any language were to be labelled 'foreign' in AIPS's case, it would have to be English, the chosen lingua franca of the formal curriculum in the school. AIPS, and other schools like it, may well belong to a type of bilingual school unidentified in Baker's framework, which I propose may be entitled: 'mainstream education *in* a foreign language'. The majority of the constituents in schools adopting this approach share a common first language. Although these schools choose to deliver their curriculum through a foreign language, and the first language is taught only as a subject, classroom discourse will typically feature free switching between the first language and the foreign language, while intra-student/staff and inter-student/staff discourse outside the classroom will typically be in the first language. Whether 'mainstream education *in* a foreign language' falls under Baker's weak or strong category of bilingual education depends on the stated aims of the school, and the extent to which the first language is supported by the school's less formal educational programme, such as: after-school activities that support the first language, school productions or events conducted through the first language, etc.. AIPS presents an interesting case study for researchers who might wish to test the effectiveness of its adopted approach, by measuring the linguistic competencies of its students against those experiencing one of Baker's strong bilingual models.

I have purposely chosen in this section to present a detailed synopsis of Baker's typology for two reasons: (1) its relevance to the first objective of my research study, which aims to establish a definition and model for bilingual education that can gain acceptance by Dubai's various stakeholders, and (2) the prominent role it will play in my research design (see section 5.1). However, I should like to emphasise here that in conducting my data gathering and analysis, I shall take every precaution not to force fit the emerging conclusions into one of Baker's 10 models. I hope to achieve this by presenting Baker's typology to the research participants (students, parents, school leaders, regulators/policy makers and school owners/operators) as a useful tool that is meant to assist them in framing the problem, while underscoring that the best-fit model for Dubai, which I hope will arise from the study, may not necessarily fit one Baker's 10 types. To drive the message home, in my engagement with the research participants I will mention examples of schools, such as the ones highlighted in section 3.2 adopting a bilingual educational approach that fits, more or less, Baker's typology, as well others, such as the school profiled in section 3.3 that do not.

5. Research strategy and design

In this study I seek to explore the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of the various stakeholders[1] in Dubai's private K-12 sector in relation to the existing power relation between Arabic language, seen by many as intricately linked to the cultural identity of the nation, and English language, considered to be the language of modernity and progress. Research questions that are of an exploratory nature, such as those I have proposed, and which deal primarily with intangible and immeasurable variables such as people's thoughts and opinions, invariably rely on qualitative research designs in their attempt to either generate or extrapolate theory (Punch, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). However, as I am also interested in discovering the extent to which a certain view, hope or fear regarding bilingual education is shared among Dubai's stakeholders, I will incorporate a quantitative component into my design. Consequently, I propose to employ a mixed method triangulated strategy performed over four phases, utilising multiple sources of data generated through written arguments by students (Phase 1), questionnaires directed at students and parents (Phases 2 and 3) and interviews with school leaders, regulators/policy makers and school owners/operators (Phase 4).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie, mixed methods have an advantage over single method designs when it comes to: (1) answering research questions that other methodologies cannot, (2) providing stronger inferences and, (3) presenting a greater diversity of divergent views. Historically, quantitative research has been concerned largely with theory verification and as such by its nature is *confirmatory*,

[1] *For the purpose of my study I have included under the definition of stakeholders: students, parents, school leaders (a broad category which includes principals, heads of school, faculty leaders and curriculum coordinators), regulators/policy makers and school owners/operators. Although their views will likely prove very useful, teachers who are solely engaged in classroom instruction are excluded from the study, as are support staff members in schools, simply for the purpose of reducing sampling complexity. Other stakeholders excluded from the study include the media, corporates, charitable foundations and individuals who, in one way or another, engage with Dubai's private K-12 sector.*

while qualitative research has focused on theory generation, in other words is *exploratory*. Mixed methods designs can do both (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The research questions I seek to answer are intrinsically both confirmatory and exploratory. Implicit in question 1 is the understanding of the dual language dilemma among Dubai's Emirati society: the pull towards Arabic language driven by the desire of Emirati parents to preserve their language and heritage, versus the push towards the acquisition of English language dictated by the needs of the job market and everyday interactions. The question as presented assumes that bilingual education has a role to play in resolving this dilemma, and as such the design of the study seeks to confirm this assumption. At the same time, the question does not make any presumptions as to the nature and type of bilingual model that will best suit Dubai's needs, and therefore that aspect of the design is exploratory. Similarly, research question 2 seeks to confirm (or as the case may be, refute) that a demand opportunity in the Dubai market exists for a bilingual educational model, but leaves open the question of how Dubai's education regulator and private industry can make the most of this opportunity.

In terms of their potential to provide stronger inferences compared to single method approaches, these stem from the adoption by mixed methods research designs of one (or more) of five reinforcing functions: *triangulation*, *complementarity*, *development*, *initiation*, and *expansion* (Greene et al., 1989). Triangulation will feature prominently in my research design, and so too development/initiation, as the data collected and analysed in Phase 1 of my research (a qualitative phase) will generate the questions that will be asked in Phase 2 (a quantitative phase).

Finally, when it comes to presenting a greater diversity of divergent views, several authors have emphasised the benefits of this, as the discovery of divergences can lead to falsification of underpinning theoretical assumptions (Erzberger & Prein, 1997), internal validity audits (see section 7.1) or simply an extension of the investigation with, say, another phase or a new study altogether

(Rossman & Wilson, 1985). Furthermore, mixed methods designs are more open to different voices and perspectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). As I have argued previously, the dual-language dilemma in Dubai society is at the focal point of my research inquiry. Therefore, a divergence of views between one individual and another, and also within a single person, is an important component of my investigation. This is the main reason why I have chosen to utilise tension statements in the second, third and to a lesser degree fourth phases of my research design (see sections 5.2 to 5.4), not only as a means to reinforce my conclusions through triangulation, but also to provide me with direct insight into the diverse views of the various segments of Emirati society who either experience or are subject to this dilemma.

5.1. Phase 1 design

In Phase 1 data will be generated directly by students and coded into loose networks. As students are the most affected by the language policy of their schools, it is important that the student voice be the primary source of data in the study. Role play will add an interesting dimension helping to illuminate the various perspectives from the standpoint of students. Phase 1 will follow a qualitative approach in which written data will be collected in the form of essays authored by the students that address the two research questions. These essays will later be coded into 'loose networks' (Gough & Scott, 2000).

5.2. Phase 2 design

In Phase 2 'tension statements' (Gough & Scott, 2000) will be generated which parallel the dilemma strains implicit within the research questions, namely: (1) preservation of culture and the demands of modernity as it plays out through Dubai's Arabic-English language fault line, and (2) the opposing forces of government intervention versus a free market strategy. Phase 2 will follow a quantitative approach in which the tension statements derived from the analysis of the data gathered in Phase 1 will be put to the same students who had participated in Phase 1 in the format of a questionnaire.

Feeding the tension statements back to the students is a means to validate the data analysis, and forms part of the triangulation approach I have built into my design.

5.3. Phase 3 design

In Phase 3 the same questionnaire which was developed and utilised in Phase 2 will be put to all Emirati parents in the 10 participating schools. As the primary decision makers when it comes to school choice, it is important for the validity of the study that I gauge the direct voice of the Emirati parent. As in the case of Phase 2, Phase 3 follows a quantitative approach, employing an online parent questionnaire. This method is appropriate as it will allow me access to a statistically significant volume of participants. The employment of the same questionnaire used in Phase 2 with students reinforces consistency and validity in the research design.

5.4. Phase 4 design

In Phase 4 I will attempt to widen the audience participation by directly soliciting the views of school leaders (selected from the 10 participating schools), regulators/policy makers and school owners/operators. As founding Chief Executive of Dubai's second largest provider of private education, I believe that my standing in Dubai's private K-12 segment will allow me the opportunity to engage with these stakeholders. I realise, however, that my position and reputation may lead to certain internal validity issues, which I will briefly discuss in section 7.1.

Phase 4 will follow a qualitative approach, employing in-depth semi-structured interviews with two to four individuals from each category. Although the interviews will utilise open-ended questions relevant to the interviewee (for instance school leaders will be asked to comment on the challenges of delivering an international curriculum such as the IB in a bilingual setting; investors will be asked to remark on the barriers to investment in this segment and the measures/actions required to overcome them), by way of complementing the previous two phases, participants will also be asked to comment

on a subset of the tension statements generated in Phase 1 and used in Phases 2 and 3. Emphasis will be placed on those tension statements identified as frequent or strong, and the views of the interviewees in relation to them will be recorded. Phase 4 is yet another triangulation attempt intended to unveil the views of the actual bracket of people (albeit a small sample of them) whom the students had role played during Phase 1.

5.5. Ethics

I will conduct my study with ethical respect for all participants and will pay due respect to the sanctity of knowledge, democratic values and academic freedom (BERA, 2004:5).

- I will seek written consent of parents/legal guardians of all student participants, after explaining to them thoroughly and in writing the aims of the study and its basic methodology.
- The participation of children from the 10 selected schools will be voluntary.
- I shall guarantee the anonymity of all participants at all stages of the study including the write-up of the final report.
- All data collected from participants in the study (Phases 1 to 4) will be held in the strictest confidence.

One of the ethical questions raised by my proposed study relates to the extent to which the data gathering process will be construed as a disruption to the normal programme of studies that the participating schools would have planned for their students. To address this ethical difficulty, I should like to point that the UAE Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Education Council, has recently announced its intention to develop over the next three years a curriculum themed around 'Emirati Identity', with the Arabic language constituting a significant component of it. I intend to use my position in the education community alluded to earlier, to link my proposed study with the Ministry's recent initiative, and thus legitimizing its relevance to the participants and the wider

interests of the UAE's educational system.

6. Methods of data collection and analysis

6.1 Phase 1 data collection and analysis

100 Emirati students with both parents being Emirati by birth, will be selected from 10 English-medium private schools in Dubai (offering an American, a NCE, or an IB curriculum). 10 students will be selected per school. Participation in the study will be voluntary, and I shall solicit written approval from parents of participating students after briefing them on the objectives and methodology of the study. Participants must be 15 years or older, and must have spent the majority (50% or more) of their combined primary and secondary schooling years in English-medium schools. The students in each school will be divided into two cohorts, with five students per cohort (this division will assist in ensuring the group discussion is manageable). Each student in the cohort will choose one of five role plays, as I shall explain further in this section. In total each cohort will convene four times over a period of six to eight weeks. All four sessions will be conducted with the assistance and support of the social science departments in the 10 participating schools. In order for the exercise to be meaningful for the students, final submissions will be assessed by a teacher and grades awarded (I have address ethical considerations in relation to this in section 5.5).

At the start of Session 1, each student will be asked to respond to a simple questionnaire which aims to map his/her language background scale (Baker, 1992). Through this questionnaire, composed mostly of closed-ended questions, I will collect basic biographical data from each participating student. The majority of the questions will be closed-ended where, on a five point scale starting with “Almost always in Arabic” and ending with “Almost always in English”, each participant will be asked in which language he/she speaks to his/her father, mother, brothers/sisters, housemaid, friends in school, friends outside school, etc. This information is intended to clarify the linguistic context of the sample,

and may lead to interesting correlations or patterns between linguistic backgrounds of students and their positions with regards to the two research questions. (A sample of the language background questionnaire that I intend to use is provided in Appendix B).

Subsequently, the cohorts will be presented with a briefing document on the various types of bilingual education and general aims and outcomes of each type (see section 4.1). I will also share with the participants examples and brief profiles of schools from Dubai or the Arab Middle East that claim to offer bilingual educational programmes (see sections 3.2 and 3.3). As I present Baker's typology framework to the students and attempt to relate some examples from the region to it, I will stress the point that Baker's theory and typology should be taken as a framework, and that the best-fit model for Dubai which the study aims to define may not necessarily fit one Baker's 10 types. Some of the examples I will use (e.g., AIPS, as described in section 3.3) will purposefully not fit Baker's typology.

Each student will then be asked to develop his/her own views on the topic of what type of bilingual programme will resonate with stakeholders in Dubai's K-12 private system, having selected one of five role plays: (1) student, (2) parent, (3) school leader, (4) policy maker in the government, (5) school owner/operator. Students will use the rest of the session to discuss their ideas within their assigned groups and to lay outlines of their written arguments.

In Session 2, held a fortnight later, each student will have authored a 500-600 word written argument which he/she will present to his/her peers for feedback. Following this a final draft of each student's argument will be submitted to the teacher selected by each participating school to assist me in the data collection process. The teacher will assess the quality of the work of each student and assign it a grade, and the final graded arguments will be submitted to me for analysis.

Sessions 3 and 4 repeat the same pattern as 1 (excluding, of course, the language background mapping exercise which need not be repeated) and 2, with the difference being that students will be addressing the second research question presented in this study, namely why private investment in Dubai has, to

date, generally shied away from the bilingual model and what are the opportunities and obstacles to the expansion of bilingual education within Dubai's K-12 private system. In all, by the end of Phase 1, each student will have submitted two arguments addressing the two research questions.

As part of the analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), each student submission will be coded into a 'loose network' where key words/phrases will be identified from the text and links between them signified through connecting lines: a vertical line indicating a serial or causal link, and a horizontal line indicating a parallel association (Gough & Scott, 2000). As argued by Gough and Scott, this method allows for ready access to data in a condensed and systematised format, while preserving to the greatest extent possible words, phrases and meanings used and/or intended by the student. The reason that these networks are referred as 'loose' is because the coding will emerge from the data due to the emic nature of the research inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); in other words I will not use a pre-coded framework when generating these networks.

The remainder of the analysis comes in the form of 'dilemma analysis' (Winter, 1982) whereby 'tension statements' will be derived from a study of the loose networks. In line with Gough and Scott's approach, wherever the slightest possibility of a 'tension' appears in the loose network, this will be identified and recorded, and later categorised according to Winter's classification criteria, as:

(1) an *ambiguity*, manifesting certain complexities in context, but requiring no specific action on the part of the respondent,

(2) a *judgement*, where difficulties can be navigated through skill, or

(3) a *problem*, in which the inherent tension negates any reasonable course of action.

6.2 Phases 2 and 3 data collection and analysis

In Phases 2 and 3, tension statements derived from the data analysis exercise completed in Phase 1 will be collated into an online questionnaire. In Phase 2, the questionnaire will be put to the students who

took part in Phase 1. In Phase 3, the same questionnaire will be put to all Emirati parents in the 10 participating schools. Phase 2 and 3 participants will receive a link and a password to the online questionnaire, and three reminders to complete the questionnaire. The respondents will offer their opinion on each tension statement based on a five-point scale: “1. Strongly Agree”, “2. Somewhat Agree”, “3. Do not know”, “4. Somewhat Disagree” or “5. Strongly Disagree”. Responses by the 100 Emirati students selected in Phase 1 and the Emirati parents from the 10 participating schools from Phase 1 will be collected electronically and analysed.

In my statistical analysis of the student and parent responses to the questionnaire I will attempt to identify, compare and rank: (1) the frequency of occurrence of each tension statement, and (2) the strength of each tension statement (Gough & Scott, 2000). I will also look for any links that may exist between the background language scales of the student participants (collected in Phase 1) and their responses to the questionnaire. Furthermore, in my analysis I will compare the frequency and strength of each tension statement from the two different perspectives, that of the student and the parent, with the objective of identifying commonalities, divergences or trends. It is my hope that some common truths or themes will emerge from the analysis that would help define a suitable type of bilingual education for Dubai schools and its desired outcomes, as well as possible courses of action that may facilitate private sector investment in this area.

6.4 Phase 4 data collection and analysis

The interviews I will conduct in this final phase will each be split into three parts. In part 1, I will introduce the topic, the objectives of the study and the methodology utilised, and I will explain to the participants how data was collected and analysed in the preceding phases. In part 2, participants will respond to two open ended questions, related to the research questions which concern the study. I will voice record this part of the interview, after seeking written and signed permission from each

participant. I will later draft transcripts of this part of the interview based on the audio recordings, and share the draft transcripts with each participant for his/her approval in order to validate its authenticity. Final transcripts, once approved by each participant, will then be coded into loose networks following a similar method as described in Phase 1, and an investigation into the tension statements implicit in those networks will be conducted and compared with those derived from student generated data. Finally, in part 3 of the interviews, participants will be presented with a subset of the tension statements generated and applied in Phases 2 and 3 and asked to rate each statement using a five-point scale: “1. Strongly Agree”, “2. Somewhat Agree”, “3. Do not know”, “4. Somewhat Disagree” or “5. Strongly Disagree”. The participants’ responses will be compared with the statistical results from Phase 2 and Phase 3 and any significant variations will be noted.

7. Validity and reliability

7.1 Validity

Internal validity refers to whether the data gathered represent what they purport to represent, and the extent to which the data gathered are relevant to the objectives of the study. External validity refers to how the conclusions are consistent with existing knowledge and can, potentially, be extrapolated to comparable settings (Denscombe, 2010).

To address internal validity audit matters, I have employed the triangulation approach extensively throughout my design; to list a few: (1) feeding back coded data derived from student submissions to the original source in the form of tensions statements, (2) using the same tensions statements on parent participants, (3) applying the same methodology used to code data derived from students to generate loose networks of the transcripts of interviews conducted with school leaders, regulators/policy makers and school-owners/operators. As for the design being relevant to the objectives of the study, the student role play exercise in Phase 1 is structured around the two research questions, as are the semi-structured interviews planned for Phase 4. Through triangulation and the use of mixed methodology in my design, I also hope to reduce as much possible my own inadvertent influence on the data, which arguably is exacerbated by my position within Dubai's education sector.

Concerning external validity, I have sought through my sampling of participating schools and students to: (1) seek the type of schools most sought after by Emiratis, and (2) homogenise to the extent possible the student sample by age, nationality, parental background and language profile, and years spent in English-medium schools. My study will lay no claim to generalising its conclusions to the wider population of Emiratis living in Dubai, nor does it intend for its conclusions to be extrapolated to other

comparable settings. Rather it seeks to inform the existing literature on the topic, and hopes to advance certain methodological approaches that may prove relevant or useful to other researchers.

7.2 Reliability

Reliability asks the questions: “are the data gathered derived from a dependable source, and if the study were repeated with the same participants, would it generate the same data?”. The qualitative nature of the role-play and interview phases of the design (Phases 1 and 4) sets certain natural limitations on reliability. My design attempts to partially address these limitations by: (1) selecting student participants in Phase 1 who are 15 years or older, and who will therefore possess sufficient cognitive maturity to be able to reflect and debate the concepts of linguistic dualism, heritage language, the realities of the job market, and other related themes raised by this study, (2) preserving to the extent possible the key words/phrases used by students and meanings intended throughout the coding process in Phase 1, and (3) as mentioned in section 7.1, using a feedback loop with students through the application of tension statements (Phase 2) and sharing interview transcripts with the interviewees in Phase 4.

8. Timetable

I intend to complete all data gathering activities within a single academic year. The advantage of doing so is to ensure consistent access to the same cohort of students between Phases 1 and 2, which are of course sequential and separated by a fairly labour intensive period during which I will generate loose networks and tension statements. Therefore, I intend to complete Phase 1 data gathering by the end of the first academic term, while Phase 2 data gathering will take place about five or six months later, towards the end of the academic year. Phases 3 and 4 can take place simultaneously with Phase 2. The subsequent analysis and composition of the enquiry will require another 12 to 18 months.

9. Conclusion

In this research design study I believe that I have demonstrated and outlined a coherent methodology that relates directly to the research questions and stated objectives of my enquiry.

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Appendix A: Why Emirati Parents Choose Private Schools

A 2011 research report entitled "In Search of Good Education – Why Emirati Parents Choose Private Schools in Dubai" (Kenaid, 2011), commissioned and published jointly by CfBT Education Trust and KHDA, points to three key driving factors that influence Emirati parents' choice of private over government schooling:

(1) a perception that private schools provide better teaching and learning,

(2) better English language instruction, and

(3) better school leadership.

Other factors quoted by the study include socio-economic reasons as Emirati families aspire for their children to be integrated within a higher and/or wealthier social bracket.

The author of the report, Kaltham Kenaid, selected 10 private schools of the type preferred by UAE families. She derived her data through conducting 10 focus groups, with 75 Emirati parents taking part. All parents in the study sample had a child in kindergarten and were looking to place him/her in Grade 1 the following academic year. The report claims a strong correlation between Kenaid's conclusions and results extracted from Emirati parent surveys conducted independently by KHDA over a three-year period (2009 to 2011), where 50% of respondents quoted "better quality teaching and learning", 22% quoted "better English language instruction", and 10% quoted "better leadership" as reasons for choosing a private school over a government one (KHDA, 2011). 12% of survey respondents declared "a more convenient location" as an influencing factor.

Appendix B: Language-background Questionnaire

Name: _____ **Date of birth:** _____

Nationality: _____ **Country of birth:** _____

Country of birth of father: _____ **Country of birth of mother:** _____

How many years have you been a student at your current school? _____

Please name the last two schools you have attended and the countries they are in? _____ _____

* * *

1. In which language do you speak to the following people? (*please choose one answer*)

	Almost always in Arabic	In Arabic more often than English	In Arabic and English about equally	In English more often than Arabic	Almost always in English	Not applicable
Father	○	○	○	○	○	○
Mother	○	○	○	○	○	○
Brothers/Sisters	○	○	○	○	○	○
Grandparents	○	○	○	○	○	○
Other relatives	○	○	○	○	○	○
Maids/Household help	○	○	○	○	○	○
School friends in the classroom	○	○	○	○	○	○
School friends in the playground	○	○	○	○	○	○
Friends outside school	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○	○	○

2. Which language do you use with the following? (*please choose one answer*)

	Almost always in Arabic	In Arabic more often than English	In Arabic and English about equally	In English more often than Arabic	Almost always in English	Not applicable
Speaking on the telephone	○	○	○	○	○	○
Text messaging	○	○	○	○	○	○
Computer/internet	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching TV/DVD	○	○	○	○	○	○
Listening to radio/music	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reading newspapers/comics/magazines	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reading books	○	○	○	○	○	○
Shopping	○	○	○	○	○	○
Playing sports	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eating out	○	○	○	○	○	○

3. Do you speak any languages other than Arabic or English at home? (*please circle Yes or No*) **Yes** **No**

If yes, please list them here: _____ _____ _____ _____

4. Which language/(s) is/(are) your favourite? _____

Why? _____