TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CURRICULUM CHANGE IN THE BILINGUAL REFORM PROGRAMS IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

By

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Research Thesis submitted in part requirement for the Doctor of Education

School of Education

The University of New England

December, 2017

Abstract

This thesis explores teacher perceptions of change in the bilingual reform projects in government schools since 2008 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The aim was to uncover themes in the teacher experience of those directly implementing the bilingual program in government schools in the UAE, in order to inform practice and ultimately improve the support for teachers within the reform process, so that they may be more effective in their teaching and learning objectives. Using a constructivist, phenomenological approach, the study employed a qualitative interpretative analysis of interview data from the three participants to investigate their lived experiences in relation to rapid, 'top-down' (government) curriculum change.
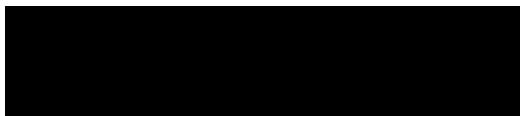
Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three teachers involved in the bilingual reform programs in UAE government schools to provide rich accounts of their authentic lived experiences. The interview data were analyzed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analytical (IPA) approach to identify themes regarding their perceptions of the change process in the bilingual reform project. The results showed that three superordinate themes arose related to how the participants' experienced curriculum change in the bilingual program: level of teacher agency; quality of ongoing professional learning opportunities; and concerns about the role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity.

From the insights gained through the interviews, recommendations are made for how sustainable reform may be supported in the current, and future bilingual education projects. This research contributes to limited original knowledge in the UAE bilingual reform project, through exploring teachers' perceptions, responses and receptivity to curriculum change. The study will help education policy makers develop appropriate professional learning activities to support the rapid reforms taking place in UAE government schools, and has the potential to usefully inform development and implementation of bilingual education programs in wider contexts.

Index words: *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), curriculum change, bilingual reform program, bilingual education, United Arab Emirates (UAE).*

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledge. I also certify the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.
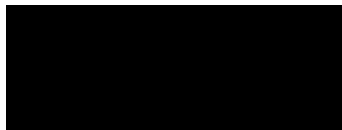
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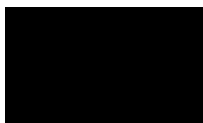
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother, who inspired my dreams and

encouraged me to travel far and wide. It is also dedicated to my husband, Hesham,

who supported and sustained my spirit throughout this journey.

Acknowledgments

There are many people who played a role in helping me complete this doctoral program. I would firstly like to thank my supervisors, Professor Anne-Marie Morgan and Dr Adele Nye who gave me excellent guidance and helped shape my writing. I would also like to thank the teachers who gave up their time to speak with me and share their experiences of the education reform programs. Without their participation, this study would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support of my husband, who was always there to encourage and sustain me, and also thank the rest of my family and my friends. We may be far-flung around the globe, but somehow I always felt your support and good wishes.

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Acronyms, Abbreviations and definitions

CAA	Commission for Academic Accreditation
CEPA	Common Education Proficiency Assessment
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EL	English Language (curriculum)
ESL	English as a Second Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
MAG	Madares Al Ghad (Schools of Tomorrow)
NMS	New Model Schools
MoE	Ministry of Education
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PPP	Private-Public Partnerships
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD)
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

Glossary

Arabian Gulf   Refers the six states lying along the southern,

eastern and western body of water known as

the Arabian/Persian Gulf: Bahrain, Kuwait,

Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United

Arab Emirates (Kirk, 2015)

Diglossia   When two varieties of the same language are used

within a community: "high" and "low" forms

(Gobert, 2009)

Emiratization   Initiative by the UAE government to employ its

citizens in the public and private sectors

Hermeneutics   An approach to research that posits that all is

interpretation, and interpretation is constructed

in language (Muganga, 2015)

Idiographic   A focus on the individual case typically used in

interpretative humanities (Englander, 2016).

Khaleeji   People of the Arabian Peninsula: or Gulf Arabic

dialect of Arabic language spoken on the Arabian

Gulf

Nomothetic   The study of classes of cohorts of individuals looking for general rules where knowledge results from aggregate values (Yin, 2017)

Phenomenology   The study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009)

Teacher Education student Student teacher involved in a teacher preparation program and working for teacher certification

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.0 Prologue

In August 2004, I arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to work on a joint project with the UAE Ministry of Education, an Emirati university and a leading Australian university. Our goal was to "Emiratize" the English language teaching profession by implementing a four-year Bachelor of Education program for female Emirati teacher education students. "Emiratize" and "Emiratization" refer to the UAE government initiative to ensure the employment and development of Emirati citizens. Prior to this, most teachers in the schools were expatriate Arabs from the region, for example, from Egypt, Syria and Jordan. During my six-year tenure in this joint project, we graduated hundreds of young Emirati women teachers from the program, who were specifically trained to use Western pedagogical student-centered English as a Foreign Language (EFL) methods to teach English to Emirati first language Arabic speaking students in UAE government schools.

When bilingual reform projects were launched in these government schools in 2008, the roles of many of these teachers changed suddenly. These teachers involved in these curriculum changes were placed in an extremely challenging position. Almost all were trained as English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, with little content or pedagogical instruction knowledge of the subject areas such as Mathematics and Science, which they found themselves teaching due to this shift to bilingual delivery of content areas.

Furthermore, during the teacher education practicums, I had observed that there was significant cultural resistance in UAE society to this bilingual delivery, and had also

witnessed that there were tensions involved in the "importation" in UAE schools of Western managers who knew little about local UAE culture and traditions. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of this rapid curriculum change from the point of the view of the female Emirati teachers involved, and to give voice to teachers who may not have had the opportunity to speak or have their views and situated knowledge valued in the workplace.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis was to present the lived experiences of teachers involved in curriculum change in the bilingual program in government schools in the United Arab Emirates. The research sought to uncover themes in the experiences of teachers directly involved in implementing the bilingual program in government schools in the UAE in order to inform practice, and ultimately to improve support for teachers within the reform process, so that they may be more effective in their teaching and learning objectives. Primarily, the study aimed to explore the lived experiences of female teachers involved in the bilingual reform project in UAE government schools, and how these participants in the reform process made sense of that experience. The research explored teachers' perceptions, responses, and receptivity to curriculum change. For cultural reasons, as the UAE is a segregated society, and the researcher is female, the study was limited to girls' schools and female teachers.

Secondly, from the insights gained through the interviews, the study sought to make recommendations for how sustainable reform may be supported in future projects. The data gathered will also contribute to original knowledge in the UAE education reform project which continues to seek to implement bilingual education in government schools, and to help education policy makers develop appropriate professional development to support the rapid reforms taking place in the government schools in the UAE. Lessons learned in the UAE may also be usefully applied to other global contexts, especially those with similar contexts of education and language use.

1.2 Organization of the study

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter 1 presents an introduction to the study, beginning with research aims (Section 1.2). Background to the study is provided in Section 1.3, which contains a brief overview of the history of the UAE (Section 1.4). The phenomenon of globalization and English language teaching are then explored (Section 1.4). Section 1.5 gives a broad outline of the history of formal education in the UAE. An overview of the structure of the UAE education system is provided in Section 1.6. Section 1.7 traces the introduction of bilingual programs in the UAE and outlines the various reform models that have been implemented (including Madares Al Ghad, the Public-Private Partnership Model, and the New School Model). In Section 1.8, Emirati students' performance in English is discussed.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant international research literature on bilingual education reforms (Section 2.1) and explores some of the issues within the specific cultural context of the bilingual program in the UAE, and discusses the reform within the context of bilingualism in an era of globalization (Section 2.2). The role of professional learning in sustainable school reform (Section 2.3) is then explored; and

in Section 2.4, the concept of "World Englishes" and bilingualism in the UAE is investigated.

In Section 2.5, the literature review investigates other bilingual programs in the Gulf: in Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. In Section 2.6, the literature on the effects of educational borrowing and globalization in the UAE is discussed. The chapter poses the research questions that arise from the issues explored in the literature review.

Chapter 3 outlines the rationale for the chosen Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodology (Section 3.1) and identifies the underlying epistemological and ontological framework (Section 3.2). This chapter also contains details of participants (Section 3.3), sampling (Section 3.4), and data collection (Section 3.5). In Section 3.6, the procedure is discussed, and in Section 3.7, the method of data analysis is outlined. Section 3.8 outlines the ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and how validity may be established in IPA studies.

Chapter 4 presents an interpretative analysis of the interview data, providing detailed idiographic analysis of each of the three participants' responses, whereby the narrative data collected from each participant is separately analyzed and subordinate themes are identified for each participant.

In Chapter 5, three superordinate themes common across the participants' responses are identified (Sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3), and the results of the research are discussed in relation to the research questions and relevant literature.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the IPA study, as well as recommendations for future practice and future research in implementing and supporting bilingual reform programs in the UAE region, including recommendations for appropriate professional development, and potential to inform bilingual education in other contexts.

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Brief overview of the history of the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) was founded in 1971, and is a Constitutional

Federation of seven emirates (political territories or principalities ruled by a Sheikh or

Emir): Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah, and

Fujairah. It is located in the Middle East and borders the Gulf of Oman and the

Arabian Gulf (referred to in literature outside the region as the Persian Gulf).

Neighboring countries include Oman, Qatar, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The official and

historical language in the UAE is Arabic, though English is widely used in business

and in education. According to the latest census figures published in 2015, the

population of the UAE is approximately 8.25 million, with 1.4 million being Emirati

citizens - around 11 %, and 7.8 million being expatriates of other nations, including

countries as diverse as the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, India, the

Philippines, the Russian Federation, Bangladesh, Canada, New Zealand, Indonesia

and Thailand (Federal Government and Statistics Authority, UAE, 2017).

1.4 Globalization and English language teaching

Globalization is defined by Gibson-Grey (2006, p. 120) as:

> *a set of processes by which the world is rapidly*
>
> *being integrated into one economic space via increased*
>
> *international trade, the internationalization of production*
>
> *and financial markets, the internationalization of commodity*
>
> *culture promoted by an increasingly networked global*
>
> *telecommunications system* (Gibson-Grey, 2006. p. 120).

Globalization has had a profound effect on the field of English language teaching. There is a broad spectrum of views on the nature of globalization, varying widely. These views include the hyperglobalist view, which posits that we are living in an unprecedented era where global economy, culture and governance have upset existing structures and ways of life, but that the spread of English is a benign outcome of globalizing forces (Block, 2004). The hyperglobalist view is in contrast to neo-Marxist sceptic views, which arose in the 1980s, in which the spread of English is viewed as linguistic language imperialism (Pennycook, 1994, 2010; Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017). In between these two positions, over the last thirty years, a variety of perspectives ranging from critical to post-modern have emerged, where the impact of globalization on ELT has been explored. The cultural appropriacy of ELT pedagogical approaches has been questioned (Canagarajah, 1999, 2002, 2006; Canagarajah & Said, 2011; Gray, 2002, 2010a, 2010b, Kramch, 1998, 2014) and, in particular, the wisdom of transporting ELT approaches around the world in the form of textbooks and using imported pedagogical approaches, such as the Communicative Approach (Ellis, 1996; Gahin & Mayhill, 2001; Koosha & Yakhabi, 2013).

There is a growing scholarly discourse in the area of globalization and educational change questions, challenging the political, ideological and social issues surrounding the concept of globalization and English language teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Lingard & Rivshi, 2011; Zhao, 2012). Lingard and Rivshi's work is of importance to this study as these authors suggest that there needs to be a shift in the way educational policy is analyzed in the era of globalization, where education is "shaped by a range of transnational forces and connections, demanding a new global imagination" (Lingard & Rivshi, 2011, p. 3).

There is no doubt that the UAE is subject to the forces of globalization. Like other nations, it is influenced by economic, political, social, and educational trends from abroad. In the case of the UAE, "educational borrowing", the copying or emulating of successful educational so-called "best practice" from other countries (Burdett & O'Donnell, 2016; Phillips, 2009; Phillips & Ochs, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2002, 2004, 2010; Takayama & Apple, 2008), has shaped its educational system since the introduction of formal education in the region. This blending of systems, ideas, and cultures can potentially create implementation issues and become "lost in translation" when transported to another cultural context. It is important to explore how these imported educational provisions are received by the stakeholders in schools. This study of teacher perceptions of the bilingual program enabled an evaluation of how these programs meet the needs of the students as well as the requirements of the state. The data collected are the voice of the teachers involved in the actual implementation, a voice usually silent in more official government reports.

The next section provides background on education in the UAE, from traditional education to more recent formal education, illustrating how the formal education system is very new (less than 40 years old), and is based on both the Kuwaiti curriculum and the Egyptian model, which in turn are broadly based on British schooling models.

1.5 The introduction of formal education in the UAE

Formal education in the UAE is still a recent phenomenon, having only been provided since the early 1970s, when the Ministry of Education (MOE) was formed to oversee educational standards in all the emirates of the UAE. Educational services did exist before this time, but in the form of self-education, apprenticeships, and neighborhood madrasas. It is important to note that these less formal modes of education were deemed as legitimate within the cultural context, and that self-education, the acquisition of knowledge through interaction with others, and passing down information via oral and written texts was a valued mode of transferring skills-based knowledge. The modern literature on the development of education in the UAE often omits these less formal modes of education, giving the impression the Arabian Peninsula had no legitimate system of education prior to 1971. There has been human habitation in the region by a number of tribes since the third millennium BC, and artifacts uncovered in the UAE show evidence of early trade with Mesopotamia and of a sophisticated and structured society (Morton, 2016). Therefore, it is important to establish the true nature of education and learning prior to 1971, and to validate the importance of oral and home-based education traditions passed down by generations, in order to both understand the background of the current educational reforms under investigation in this thesis, and to provide context for the teachers' perceptions of the curriculum reform currently underway.

The development of formal education can be divided into four phases of educational development (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Alnabah, 1996; Smith, 2004). These are the Mutawwa and the Katateeb, Educational Circles, Semi-organized education and the Modern Education System (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Alnabah, 1996; El-Sanabary, 1991).

1.5.1 Mutawwa and Katateeb

In the first phase of educational development, teachers called Mutawwas, who were typically the religious leaders of the communities, would share their world experience with the children of the neighborhood by teaching religious texts, the Prophet's Hadith (sayings), and the art of calligraphy. These classes were all delivered in Arabic. More wealthy neighborhoods would organize an external physical setting called a Katateeb, where local youth (only boys) were taught religious texts, writing, reading and basic Mathematics, with Arabic as the medium of instruction (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Alnabah, 1996; Davidson, 2008; El-Sanabary, 1991).

1.5.2 Educational Circles

In the second phase, around the 19th century, Educational Circles developed with a traditional teacher/student pedagogical model where a teacher would transfer knowledge by giving a lecture to a group of students. An example of this is found in Julphar, a famous pearl trading hub (now known as Ras Al Khaimah) which was renowned in the region for the quality of its Educational Circles (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Alnabah, 1996; Davidson, 2008; Alnabah, 1996, El-Sanabary, 1991).

1.5.3 Semi-Organized Education

According to the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) the third phase spanned the period from 1907-1953, during the time of British occupation (ADEC, 2013). It was again based on religious instruction, and was the result of a religious movement known as *"al-YaqaÐa al-'Arabiyya"*. This phrase means "the Arabian awakening", and represented a renaissance in the importance of upholding the Arabic language and Islamic cultural values. As a consequence of this, many schools were opened

throughout the Arabian Peninsula and these schools include: A'Taimiah Almahmoudiah School in Sharjah (1907), which borrowed sections of the Egyptian curriculum; Alahmadiah in Dubai (1910), Aleslah in Sharjah (1930), Fat'h in Ajman, Abdurrahman Bin Ateeq in Umm Al Quwain (1942), and Alma'areed in Ras Al Khaimah (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Davidson, 2008; Alnabah, 1996, El-Sanabary, 1991). The quality of teaching in these schools varied according to knowledge of the scholars, and these schools laid the foundations for the current modern, systematized education system.

A little mentioned fact is that during the early twentieth century there was also formal education in the UAE and Arab Gulf region established by the Ottoman Turks, however, attendance at these schools was limited to the children of elite wealthy Arabs and the male children of Turkish civil servants stationed in the Gulf region (El-Sanabary, 1991). The language of instruction was Turkish, which was viewed as a foreign language in the Arab world, and hence this education sector has largely not been included in the history of the development of formal schooling in the region.

1.5.4 Modern education system

Prior to the UAE being formed in 1971, the region was referred to as the Trucial States. From 1820-1971 these states were a group of sheikhdoms, and informal treaties were established with the United Kingdom, making the Trucial States a British Protectorate (Morton, 2016). The development of the modern education system in the UAE was established using models from the State of Kuwait, and also from the Arab Republic of Egypt, which had been a former British colony (Lootah, 2011). Alquasimiah School in Sharjah was the first organized modern school and was founded in 1930. Educational borrowing also occurred at this time, and, as in 1953,

the school adopted the Kuwaiti system, incorporating a Kuwaiti curriculum, course books, and teachers. A significant development during this time was the establishment of the first school for girls in 1955, also known as Alquasimiah but later renamed Fatima A'zahra'a (Al Hebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015). As the UAE is a segregated society, government schools, even to this day, are all gender segregated. This girls' school was also run under the Kuwaiti model, and established three stages for students: primary school, preparatory school, and secondary school. All students completing their secondary school certificates took their exams in Kuwait, until after 1967, when the exams were conducted in the UAE (Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015; Alrawi, 1996). At this time, many students were also sent to Egypt to complete further education.

With the establishment of the UAE as a nation in 1971, and fueled by increased revenue from the discovery of huge reserves of hydrocarbon resources, a modern systematized Kindergarten-Year 12 (K-12) education program was established, which not only borrowed heavily from the Egyptian model, but also had many of the teachers in the schools coming from Egypt. This educational borrowing from foreign educational systems, along with the reliance on expatriate educators from Kuwait, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, created a situation that currently still exists in the UAE.

Education became free for all Emiratis, and primary education was made mandatory for all Emirati girls and boys. In the early 1970s, the Ministry of Education was established to oversee the educational policies of all emirates. An additional milestone for UAE education was reached in 1977 with the establishment of its first university, UAE University in Al Ain (UAEU), in the Abu Dhabi emirate (Badri, 1991). With increasing demands for higher education opportunities for Emiratis, UAEU was followed by the establishment of the Higher Colleges of Technology

(1988) and Zayed University (originally an all-female English medium of instruction university). According to the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), a UAE federal institution responsible for licensing and accrediting both national and foreign higher education providers, the UAE now has over 75 licensed colleges and universities offering nearly 910 accredited programs of study (Commission for Academic Accreditation, 2017).

1.6 Structure of the UAE education system

The Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible for determining the general education strategy and planning and development of educational policy (Al Taneiji, 2014; Badri, 1991). However, there are also education councils in individual emirates to assist the implementation of these policies. The Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) develops policy in Abu Dhabi, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) drives education reform in Dubai, and the Sharjah Education Council oversees education in the Sharjah Emirate. It is important to clarify that public government schools are restricted to Emiratis and a small number of Arabic speaking students from neighboring countries, and that private schools cater to both Emirati and expatriate children.

Government schools are gender segregated from Grade 1 (though many private schools are not), and this segregation continues at the three main government tertiary institutions. Formal education is comprised of four levels: kindergarten, elementary, secondary and tertiary (Al-Hai, 1990; Alhebsi, Pettaway & Waller, 2015).

1.6.1 Public versus private education in the UAE

A notable aspect of the UAE education sector is the high number of private institutions compared to government schools. This can be attributed to UAE demographics where only 11.5% of the population is Emirati out of a total population of an estimated 8.25 million people living in the UAE, with the nation relying heavily on an expatriate workforce (see Federal Government and Statistics Authority, UAE, 2017). Expatriate workers whose income levels are high enough to be allowed to sponsor their families need schools to educate their children, so many schools have been established to provide the education systems and models of the home countries (Kirk, 2015). In addition, with few exceptions, only Emirati students are provided free education and enrolment in government schools.

Another factor contributing to the high number of private schools in the UAE is that until the recent introduction of the bilingual reform models, Arabic was the medium of instruction, with only limited instruction in English for a few hours a week. In Dubai, where the expats outnumber the local Emiratis (only 10 % of the total population are Emirati), 85% of all students attend private schools (KHDA, 2017). These schools tend to be well-funded, have high fees, and are able to attract a well-qualified expatriate teaching staff, primarily from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia and Canada. The curricula follow foreign systems with the majority based on British, American, and Indian models (KHDA, 2017).

Wealthy Emirati families send their children to such schools, believing that a Western style education provides more life chances and opportunities, forgoing the free state education system and paying the high fees, which have been reported as being as much as US$36,000 per annum (KHDA, 2017). More and more Emirati students are

enrolling in private schools because parents perceive a correlation between the results of standardized international tests such as IELTS and the quality of education (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter). It could be said that for many parents, private schools are associated with better English teaching and therefore better career prospects (Kenaid, 2011; KHDA, 2010; Masudi, 2017; Nazzal, 2014; Pennington, 2015; Ridge, Shami, & Kippels, 2016). The rationale for this trend is that parents feel that their children get a better education in the private schools since improvement of the system in the public schools has been minimal (Nazzal, 2014; Ridge et al., 2016). In 2014, the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) indicated that there were 30,994 Emirati students in private schools in Dubai, which represented a 3.2 % increase from 2013, and an increase of 950 students (KHDA, 2014).

It is figures such as these which have been the driver of education reform in UAE government schools, as government schools are losing their brightest and best students to the private school systems with imported educational curricula. The perception that private schools offer better education has also been fueled by severe criticism of the government schools from the public in both the Arabic and English media (Lootah, 2006; Ridge et al., 2016; Thorne, 2011), to the point that it could be described that there has been a "public education in crisis" discourse in the UAE. This popular discourse mirrors some of the rhetoric heard around education reform projects abroad such as the 2001 USA Act, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002), and the Australian "Early Start - Back to Basics" policy pledged as a 2012 election commitment (Department of Education and Training, Queensland Government, Australia, 2017).

1.6.2 English language teaching in the UAE

In the 1970s, with the introduction of the first unified Emirati curriculum by the Ministry of Education, English was taught as a foreign language starting in Grade 7. This curriculum was textbook-based, using textbook series published by Longman, with a course book and workbook for each level, and utilizing an approach based on the Grammar Translation method (Al-Hai, 1990; Alwan, 2006). By the late seventies, in response to educational trends in EFL, the Ministry attempted to implement a new approach, based on the more recent Communicative Approach (Alwan, 2006), and began using the Crescent English Course as used in both Qatar and Kuwait. Though the Communicative Approach was promoted as the prescribed pedagogy, as in other parts of the world, many teachers did not follow fully its requirement for more oral interaction focused on meaning and less on correct form and grammar. However, as has been pointed out by various scholars, it is very challenging for a non-native speaker to use this teaching approach if they do not have complete mastery of the second language (Gahin & Mayhill, 2001; Ghanbari & Ketabi, 2011; Holliday, 1994; Kalanzadeh & Bakhtiarvand, 2011; Wei, 2011b).

By the 1980s, English was being taught from Grade 4, and a new English curriculum had emerged, which could be considered the first truly Emirati English curriculum. This curriculum combined elements of the Communicative Approach with explicit grammar instruction, and, as Alwan, a Ministry of Education curriculum designer and supervisor observed, it was designed to "meet the demands of local needs" (Alwan, 2006), rather than using a borrowed framework from texts from other regions.

The 1990s witnessed further changes in the way English language was taught in UAE government schools. Firstly, instruction began earlier, from Grade 1 level, textbooks

were replaced with the National Curriculum English for the UAE, "English for the Emirates", and a committee of supervisors formed to produce a set of materials for each level. Alwan (2006) reports that the process took 12 years, and was completed in 2003 with a set of materials for Grade 12. She also notes that these materials were in use for eight to ten years during the development process without any reviews, and that there is no evidence of a needs analysis being carried out (Alwan, 2006; Owais, 2005), or evaluation of their effectiveness, which are serious deficiencies for sustainable program development.

Table 1: Materials prescribed in the three main EL curricula in the UAE (Adapted from Alwan, 2006)

Grade Level	*Crescent*	*English for UAE*	*English for the Emirates*
1	-	-	Book 1: 1992-1993
2	-	-	Book 2: 1993-1994
3	-	-	Book 3: 1994-1995
4	Book 1	Book 1	Book 4: 1995-1996
5	Book 2	Book 2	Book 5: 1996-1997
6	Book 3	Book 3	Book 6: 1997-1998
7	Book 4	Book 4	Book 7: 1998-1999
8	Book 5	Book 5	Book 8: 1999-2000
9	Book 6	Book 6	Book 9: 2000-2001
10	Book 7	Book 7	Book 10: 2001-2002
11	Book 8	Book 8	Book 11: 2002-2003
12	Book 9	Book 9	Book 12: 2003-2004

"English for the Emirates" remained the curriculum program used in the government schools in the UAE until the introduction of bilingual reform projects.

In the 1990s, in response to Emirati parents' needs to send their children to government schools with the same teaching standards as the private schools in Dubai, Sharjah, and other emirates, but without the exorbitant fees, the Ministry of Education introduced Model Schools. These schools (also gender segregated) could be viewed as a precursor to the bilingual educational reform schools and they differed from traditional government public schools as follows:

- They had smaller class sizes (20-25) than government schools, which typically had over 35 students (Alwan, 2006)

- The schools included more extracurricular activities

- There was some attempt at differentiated instruction for at-risk and gifted students

- There was financial support for tuition fees

- There was more community and parental involvement

- They implemented rigorous student selection processes (Al Taneiji, 2014)

1.7 Introduction of bilingual programs in the UAE

The UAE government has initiated several reform programs aimed at including bilingual approaches to education. These programs, which are the focus of this thesis, have had varying degrees of success, in part due to the fragmented nature of the approach to reform, in which competing models have been used. The following section will briefly introduce the three bilingual education reform models adopted.

1.7.1 Madares Al Ghad (MAG) schools

In 2007, in response to the need to improve English levels for Emirati students in government schools and to provide an improved curriculum that prepares students for

the needs of a 21st century globalized job market, and where English is a *lingua franca*, the Ministry of Education launched Madares Al Ghad (MAG), translated as "Schools of Tomorrow".

The MAG program was initiated in Cycle 1 (Years K1-3) MOE schools, and its standards were adopted from the Abu Dhabi Educational Council (ADEC) in alignment with the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR). Its aim was to be a world-class model for education reform in public schools, and create a more learner-centered environment. It also aimed to increase the English language proficiency of Grade 12 students so that they could achieve direct entry into university degree programs without the need of a "remedial" foundation year. This remedial foundation year exists in all government universities and consumes more than a third of the education budget, so the Ministry was keen to promote a solution to this situation through reduced need for "remediation" (Kirk, 2015). Another of the MAG program aims was to produce bilingual UAE citizens who could compete in the knowledge economy. At its 2007 launch, the MAG program involved all of the seven emirates in the UAE and 50 schools were involved: 18 elementary schools, 13 preparatory schools and 22 secondary schools, with some schools operating at two levels. In MAG schools, the majority of the teaching staff and students were Emirati, with a minority of first language English speaking principals and teacher mentors coming from Western countries such as the US, Australia, the UK, Canada and New Zealand (Dada, 2011). The MAG approach promoted the use of modern management techniques, and involved teachers working in teams, with a mentor trained in "best practice" (Western) pedagogy. Principals in schools were also mentored by a principal from the West, which raised further questions about cultural appropriacy.

Though the MAG program introduced pedagogical strategies that promoted more cooperative learning and provided textbooks and materials that were more student centered, the assessment practices were not in alignment with the content delivered, with the focus remaining on endpoint exams and tests. To cope with this misalignment, many teachers reverted to a more textbook-driven, teacher-centered mode of delivery, which was at odds with the original aims of the bilingual reform program (Layman, 2011; Ridge, Kippels & Farah, 2017).

In addition, while some schools provided sound professional learning opportunities for teachers, other schools did not have such opportunities. This inconsistent approach to professional development caused concerns within the teaching community (MAG teacher, personal communication, May, 2016). There were also challenges in recruiting qualified and experienced Western teacher mentors, and, in some cases, these mentors from foreign countries did not make appropriate cultural adjustments.

Dada (2011) reports that some of the obstacles to the smooth running of the MAG were random scheduling patterns, absenteeism, and unreliable Internet connectivity in some school sites. A further issue was the strident public discourse that arose around the bilingual policy in the schools, where English was used as a medium of instruction. Parents, teachers, and other community stakeholders resented the perceived foreign threat of the bilingual curriculum (Ahmad, 2013; Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Gallagher, 2011; Habboush, 2009; Hopkyns, 2014).

Impassioned headlines appeared in local media such as "Being taught in English undermines local identity" (Ahmed, 2010), "Alarm bells over the future of Arabic language" (Al Jabry, 2013) and "Arabic must be the focus in pursuit of 'true'

bilingualism" (Al-Issa, 2012) signaling that for some in the community, Arabic identity and culture was under threat.

In 2015, the Madares Al Ghad program was gradually phased out, system-wide, and schools returned to instruction in Arabic using the former Ministry of Education curriculum (Jonny, 2015). Knowledge gained from this reform project includes the concept that buy-in from stakeholders is essential for sustainable education reform, and teachers need to be supported with systematic and continuous professional learning opportunities.

1.7.2 Public-Private Partnership model

In 2006, another competing model of reform, the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, was introduced when the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) assigned private companies to manage education reform in Abu Dhabi schools in preparation for the rollout of the New School Model (NSM) in 2010 (ADEC, 2014). This model was set in place at around the same time as the MAG schools, creating a fragmented approach to educational reform across the emirates.

The PPP model was initiated to use the expertise of private school operators to enhance the public school sector. Contracts were given to various well-established international private school companies e.g. Beaconhouse, CfBT Education LLC (UK), Cognition (NZ), Mosaica (US), Nord Anglia UK), Sabis (Middle East), School Improvement Partners (SIP), GEMS, Specialist Schools and Academy Trust (SSAT) (UK), and Taaleem Edison Learning (TEL). By 2010, PPP operators were in 176 public (government) schools in Abu Dhabi and Al Gharbia (ADEC, 2014 Private Schools; AlHassani, 2012). Private operator teams were contracted to work on site with the existing management and teachers for a three-year contracted term. These

teams generally consisted of a school management advisor, ESL trainer, and teacher advisors in core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, English, and ICT. The overarching aims were to improve levels of teaching, as well as to provide cost-efficient educational services. In line with the corporate business mode (rather than an educational model) in which these partnerships were run, if the individual school determined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for student achievement goals were not met, financial penalties were levied (AlHassani, 2012; Hourani & Stringer, 2013; Hourani, Stringer & Baker, 2012).

In 2010, four years into its implementation, the PPP model was presented as a key part of the UAE's education reform plan. His Excellency (HE) Dr. Mugheer Al Khaili, head of ADEC, announced to a meeting of representatives and officials from ADEC, the PP operators, and the Abu Dhabi Educational Zone (ADEZ), *"This project is key to the overall success of ADEC's 10 Year Strategic Plan"* (Al Emarat, 2010). Only one year later, though, in 2011, a phase-out plan for PPPs was announced, after operating for less than five years. In the media, it was reported:

> *Abu Dhabi education authorities have decided to terminate the*
> *services of 65 foreign operators and restrict school management*
> *to Emiratis from the next academic year, effectively ending the*
> *long-standing partnership system. The Abu Dhabi Education*
> *Council (ADEC) has already ended the services of 116 foreign*
> *firms managing the emirate's schools and the rest will be*
> *dismantled by the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year*
>
> (Olarte, 2011, para.3).

The report quoted the Director-General of ADEC as saying to the Arabic newspaper, Emarat Alyoum, "*The partnership system was successful and achieved the required*

results …, but we decided to dismantle this system so nationals will play their role in managing schools" (Olarte, 2011, para. 3). This lack of continuity in reform efforts, represented by the change in governmental positions, and lack of time allowed to allow reforms to develop and be evaluated, is a major challenge to sustained reform. It also repeats the same cycle faced by the MAG program, where bilingual programs and education reform was initiated, but the program gradually phased out after just a few years (Jonny, 2015).

1.7.3 New School Model

A third reform model, The New School Model (NSM) was introduced by ADEC in 2010. The NSM is being implemented in government schools, and as such, enrolment is restricted to Emiratis. The NSM introduced an integrated curriculum to launch in cycles beginning from Kindergarten to Grade 3, and then rolled out to Grade 12 by 2016. It is the latest implementation of wide-scale education reform and is being instituted in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, which comprises three zones - Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and Al Gharbia. (ADEC, 2016). The focus is on developing teachers, classrooms, school leadership, the community at large, parental involvement, and facilities. One of its overarching aims is to improve the level of student proficiency in core subjects such as Mathematics and English, so that students will be able to proceed directly to university degree programs, without the need of a remedial foundation year (ADEC, 2014).

In line with global trends, the New School model has a strong emphasis on STEM subjects with 50% of learning time focused on these subjects, in particular Mathematics and Science (Pennington, 2016). There has also been the inclusion of an Arabic Identity subject (called *Heywayati*), to improve students' awareness of UAE

history and culture. Of key interest to this study is the bilingual program in the NSM, and in particular, the teaching of Mathematics and Science to first language Arabic Emirati students through the medium of English. In 2016, the New School Model was renamed the Abu Dhabi School Model (ADSM) (Pennington, 2016).

At the beginning of 2017, the senior final exam results were disappointing (Pennington, 2017b). It is encouraging to note that the ADEC management viewed these results within the context of the reform, and publically recognized the complex number of factors that contributed to the results, instead of quickly reacting and denouncing the reform (see Qatar section in Chapter 6). The Director General of ADEC, Dr. Ali Al Nuaimi observed:

> *Unfortunately, the results were not satisfactory and did*
> *not turn out as we expected them to be... But they are*
> *real results and that makes all the difference, for we now*
> *know exactly where our educational reality stands and*
> *the reality of the outputs of our educational system.*
> *That will enable us to respond to this reality in a manner*
> *that will rectify those weak points and fill the gaps,*
> *instead of ignoring those matters and brush[ing] them off*
> *matter of factly.*
>
> (Pennington, *The National*, 2017b, para. 12).

This quote would suggest that the UAE has learnt from the experiences of neighboring countries, which abandoned bilingual programs abruptly when early results did not show rapid improvement. It has observed in the literature that there has been a tendency in the region (and worldwide) to expect results too soon, before the programs can realistically bear fruit (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2017; Boivin, 2011;

Gallagher, 2016; Kirk, 2015). This commitment on the part of ADEC management shows promise for the future success of the education reform program.

1.8 Emirati students' performance in English

In the last decade, like many other countries globally, the UAE has spent a great deal of money on education reform. The World Bank Report on education in the Arab World (World Bank, 2013) shows that these efforts have produced significant progress in mandatory education, high enrolment rates in university education and in bridging the gap between males and females in education. Despite this progress, students' performance in international tests taken in the UAE is still lower than the average performance of students in some countries with less economic development. Over the last ten years, results from standardized tests show very modest progress in terms of average English language proficiency for Emirati students, despite the implementation of bilingual programs over the past eight years (e.g. IELTS, 2015; PISA, 2012; TIMSS, 2015). This would indicate that the early results of these programs have not been as beneficial as expected.

For example, in the 2015 IELTS examinations, over half (51 %) the UAE Academic IELTS candidates failed to reach band 5.0 or above. To put this in context, we can compare candidates from Japan, where only 10% failed to reach Band 5.0 or above. Within the region, UAE candidates also scored lower numbers of Band 5.0 achievement than candidates from Qatar (33%), Oman (29%), and Egypt (5%). In 2015, the worldwide mean score was 6 for women and 5.8 for men. In the UAE, the mean score for all students was 4.9. In the reading and writing sections of the test, the average score in the UAE was 4.7 (IELTS, 2015).

In the 2015 PISA test, which is an international examination for 15-year-old students assessing Reading, Mathematics and Science competencies, carried out at three-year intervals, the results showed that students from the UAE had lower scores compared to their counterparts in OECD countries. UAE results were all lower by almost 50 points than the average results of students in OECD countries in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics. Within the region, the UAE may have scored the best among participating countries (Tunisia, Jordan and Qatar), but this still constitutes a considerable gap in achievement compared to students in OECD countries (Table 2).

Table 2: PISA 2012 Results for the UAE and selected comparison countries *Source:* **The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (***OECD) 2014*

General Averages	Reading	Mathematics	Science
OECD Countries (Average)	496	494	501
UAE	442	434	448
Jordan	399	386	448
Qatar	388	376	384

This achievement gap is further evidenced by the results of the field study carried out as preparation for the Arab Knowledge Report on final year students in the UAE, which also showed a weakness in students' cognitive skills. (Arab Knowledge Report, 2014).

a. 2011
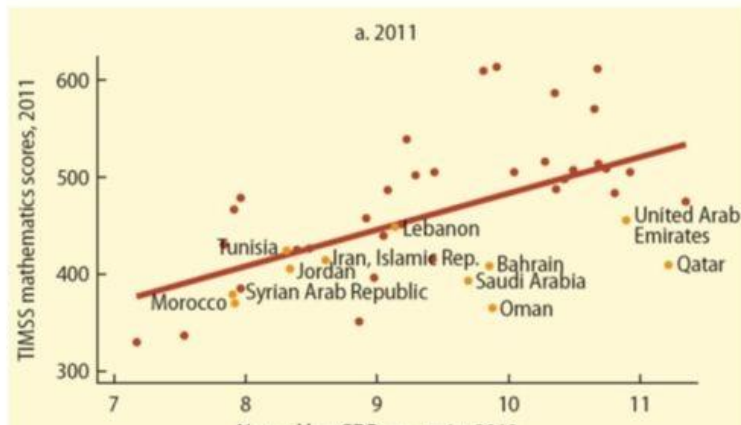
Figure 1. Quality of education is below international standards Source: World Bank. 2013a. Jobs for Shared Prosperity: Time for Action in the Middle East and North Africa. Washington, DC: MNSHD, World Bank, p. 172

When the latest 2015 scores for PISA were released at the end of last year, it was found the UAE scores had not changed significantly since the 2012 test. The Emirates moved up one notch in Mathematics (47th place globally), but fell two places in Science from 44 to 46; and in reading, the UAE dropped from 46th to 48th place (OECD, PISA, 2015). This result has implications for the bilingual reform program under discussion in this study and underscores why it is so important to talk to the teachers to gain their perspective on what is actually happening in the schools. A great deal of money and effort is being focused on bilingual reform, and little progress is being made in terms of PISA and IELTS scores. While it is a given that sustainable and positive change takes time, and it is arguable that the PISA and IELTS tests are not directly measuring bilingual teaching results, it is concerning that the UAE has actually gone down in the league tables.

General Averages	Reading	Mathematics	Science
OECD Countries 2016 (Average)	493	490	493
UAE	434	427	437
Jordan	408	380	409
Qatar	402	402	418

1.8.1 Common English Proficiency Assessment

There has also been little improvement in achievement scores in the Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) tests, which are a set of locally developed standardized tests used for placement and admissions for university entrance to federal institutions in the UAE. For direct entry to tertiary degree programs, UAE students need a score of 180. In 2013, only 20% of Emirati high school graduates achieved the required English proficiency threshold of 180, which meant that the majority of students need to complete a bridge/foundation year to study 'remedial' English and Mathematics, before entering Bachelor level study. This additional year of study is a drain on the education budget (Gjovig & Lange, 2013).

Table 4: Average CEPA-English score in UAE, by gender and overall (Source: Gjovig & Lange, 2013:4)

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Female	152.7	156.0	154.1	159.4	160.3	162.5	162.3	161.9	161.9	162.6	165.5
Male	147.4	149.1	147.5	154.3	155.8	157.9	158.3	157.5	157.5	158.1	161.0
Overall	150.8	153.4	151.6	157.3	158.5	160.5	160.6	159.9	160.0	160.7	163.5

In 2015, the CEPA organization reported in The National newspaper (Swan, 2015) that 29% of UAE students had attained scores for direct entry to degree programs, as opposed to 11% in 2010, although precise table scores are not available. It could be argued that these are not significant increases, and raises questions about the effectiveness of the educational reforms taking place in UAE government schools.

There are plans to completely replace CEPA in 2017 with another locally designed test called the Emirates Standardized Test (EmSAT). All Grade 12 students in government schools or private schools that offer the Ministry of Education curriculum will take this test and be evaluated on their English, Mathematics, and Physics attainment. EmSAT will replace CEPA as the accredited admissions test to gain a place in UAE tertiary institutions or receive a grant to study abroad (Pennington, 2017a; Ridge, Kippels & Farah, 2017).

The Ministry of Education piloted the EmSAT in Spring 2017, and in the future, the test will be used in Grades 1, 4, 6, 8 and 10 to assess the students' readiness for transition to the next two-year cycle (Pennington, 2017c). The advantage of these tests is that they will provide data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the education system, however the negative side is that it could be interpreted that the UAE is embracing the data-driven neoliberal performativity model which has been a part of schools in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia for over a decade, with debatable benefits (Addey, Lingard & Verger, 2017; Steiner-Khamsi, 2002).

The Ministry of Education in the UAE is putting together programs which are implemented on a large scale across the country, but evidence from standardized international tests, such as PISA and IELTs, as well as regional university placement

test such as CEPA, suggest that after ten years, these reforms are not making a

significant difference in student learning and achievement of learning objectives.

Therefore, there is a need to look at and listen to the teachers in these schools, to see

what they think of these programs and their implementation, as well as for identifying

possible factors for why these reform programs are failing to produce the expected

results. This need also highlights the importance of looking at teacher perceptions

and experiences of this curriculum reform and investigating how the reform is being

implemented right at the "front lines", and what this might mean for its chances of

success. This chapter has provided context and background for study. The following

chapter surveys the relevant literature underlying the research undertaken during the

study.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Chapter 2 surveys the relevant literature underlying the research undertaken in this study. In Section 2.1, the research on bilingualism and bilingual education is discussed. This is followed (Section 2.2) by surveying various models of bilingual education and describing the features of immersion models of bilingual education, as well as briefly looking at the European model of Content and Integrated Language Learning (CLIL). Focus is then turned to the UAE, and the discussion explores research in bilingual education in the UAE, followed by a section on bilingual education in relation to UAE identity, and Arabic literacy in the bilingual program. In Section 2.3, the role of professional learning in sustainable school reform is discussed; while in Section 2.4, the concept of "World Englishes" and bilingualism in the UAE is explored. In Section 2.5, other bilingual programs in the Gulf are examined with a focus on Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. The impact of educational borrowing and globalization on educational practices in the UAE is then discussed (Section 2.6).

The chapter concludes with the research questions, which arise from the issues explored and revealed in the literature review, and which become the focus of the remainder of the thesis.

2.1 International research on bilingual education

In the literature, numerous definitions have been proposed for the term "bilingualism" (Baker & Wright, 2017; García, 2011; Genosee, 2004; Grosjean, 2010) and no one definition is agreed upon universally. Baker and Wright (2017) make the important distinction between individual bilingualism, as a personal attribute, and societal

bilingualisms; and also between language ability and language use in bilinguals and multilinguals, saying that at an individual level there is a difference between a person's ability in two languages, and their use of those languages. Fishman's (1980) classical definition of bilingualism and biliteracy is "the mastery of reading in particular, and also writing in two languages" (Fishman, 1980, p. 49). Grosjean's definition of bilingualism places emphasis on the regular use of languages rather than fluency, saying that "bilinguals are those who use two or more languages or dialects in everyday life" (Grosjean, 2010, p. 4).

2.1.1 Bilingual education models

García states that "bilingual education is a simple term for a complex process" (García, 2011), and adds that, internationally, many models of bilingual education have been developed. Some of these are: submersion, which mainstreams non-native English speaking students into mainstream English-speaking classrooms; and transitional bilingual education that provides content area support in the home language while teaching the student English. These are both assimilationist models of education and typically result in 'subtractive' bilingualism, which results in loss of mastery in the home language (Baker & Wright, 2017; García, 2011). Baker and Wright define assimilationist models that result in subtractive bilingualism as "weak" models (Baker & Wright, 2017, p. 209). In contrast, strong models of bilingual education are models where the use of both languages in the curriculum is fostered with the aim of additive bilingualism, where mastery is attained in the new language with no loss to the home language (Baker & Wright, 2017; García, 2011). Immersion bilingual education is based on the Canadian model that was developed in the 1960s (Baker & Wright, 2017), and this model is internationally widely used. Australia, Finland, Hungary, New Zealand, Catalonia, Wales, and Singapore are among the

many regions or countries with schools that have adopted this model (Baker & Wright, 2017). Research has found that English-proficient immersion students are capable of achieving as well as, and in some cases better than, non-immersion students on international standardized tests of Reading and Mathematics (Genesee, 2006; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011). Recent international research (Blanco-Elorrieta & Pylkkänen, 2016; Blom, Küntay, Messer, Verhagen, & Leseman, 2014; Calvo, García, Manoiloff, & Ibáñez, 2015) indicates that bilingual education benefits students and provides them with increased mental flexibility, higher cognitive function, enhanced working memory, and improved intercultural skills.

2.1.2 Immersion models

Baker and Wright (2017) developed a typology for immersion models: early immersion (5-6 year olds), middle immersion (9-10 year olds) and late immersion (11-14 years old). The UAE has adopted a side-by-side early immersion model for its delivery of the curriculum reform for 5-6-year-old children. This is in contrast to the earlier "late-late" model (Gallagher, 2016) which the UAE had earlier adopted in its tertiary sector from the 1990s to the present, where students spent all K-12 years using Arabic as the medium of instruction, abruptly changing to English as the medium of instruction at tertiary level. It is not surprising that this late immersion model presented serious challenges to students, and all tertiary institutions in the UAE had to invest in an expensive Foundation year for students who did not meet the English language entrance requirements (Kirk, 2015). There have been several decrees from the Supreme Council to dissolve these Foundation year programs as they are perceived as a drain on the UAE budget, however the reality is that many students do not acquire sufficient competency in English (which is a modest IELTS Band 5) in the Arabic medium K-12 system to gain direct entry to universities and colleges. In

August 2017, the Supreme Council declared the year 2021 (postponing the previous 2018 date) the year for the closure of college Foundation programs (Pennington, 2017d). UAE policy makers view the bilingual K-12 curriculum reform projects under exploration in this study as the drivers to achieve the goal of eliminating the need for college Foundations programs.

Before moving on to discuss research on bilingual programs in the UAE, it is also important to consider the role of Content and Language Integrated Language Learning (CLIL) education, as the success of CLIL in Europe influenced the UAE education policy makers' decision to adopt bilingual curriculum reform in UAE government schools.

2.1.3 Content and Language Integrated Learning

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which is sometimes called Content Based Instruction (in North America), refers to a pedagogical model where some curriculum content is taught through an additional language (Baker & Wright, 2017; Marsh, 2008). It has been widely adopted in Europe, in over thirty European countries (Baker & Wright, 2017). However, CLIL cannot be understood from just a linguistic and educational perspective, it also has strong geo-political and ideological resonances and is part of the European Union's (EU) goal to create a multilingual Europe, where its citizens can speak two or three languages (Baker & Wright, 2017; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010). The term CLIL is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "language immersion"; however, while some of its practices and terminology are similar, the underlying ideology is different. In addition, the goal of language immersion is to produce biliterate students, whereas in CLIL, since the language of instruction may not be a locally spoken language, and the time allotted in

class for delivery may be shorter, there is not the expectation that the student will become completely biliterate (Eurydice, 2006, 2010; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010; Marsh, 2008). In Europe, CLIL instruction is also delivered to older students (i.e. late immersion), in contrast to language immersion programs, which are increasingly designed for early immersion (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2010).

2.2 Research on bilingual education in the UAE

There have been several recent studies on educational reform in the UAE in relation to the adoption of bilingual education in government schools. Gallagher (2011, 2016) raises important questions about the decision to give equal prominence to English in this sensitive geopolitical region, and explores some of the issues surrounding language acquisition, bilingualism and bilateralism. Gallagher (2016) also recommended that both Arabic and English be supported outside the school in order to achieve a truly bilingual population where English is not just a "colonizing language" (Gallagher, 2011, p. 73), but a language that can be used internationally, while still respecting the traditions, language and culture of the UAE.

2.2.1 Bilingual education and loss of Arabic identity

Other studies in the UAE have explored the possible loss of Arabic identity that bilingual education may bring. Al- Issa and Dahan (2011), Hopkyns, (2014), Salama (2010), and Sperazza (2012) all consider the role of Arabic in the formation of Arabic identity and while they recognize the importance of students learning English to enhance future prospects, they ask for a balance in the way in which the curriculum is designed so that Arabic culture and language is preserved and maintained.

2.2.2 Loss of Arabic literacy skills and bilingual education in the UAE

Concerns have been expressed about the loss of Arabic literacy skills in a bilingual education system in the UAE. The implications of this have been explored by Al-Issa and Dahan (2014), Badry (2011), Holes (2011), Gallagher (2016) and Raddawi and Meslem (2015). The recommendations from these studies are uniform in indicating that in order to maintain the Arabic language, the quality of Arabic instruction needs to be improved, and the curriculum, teaching strategies and materials modernized in order to ensure effective acquisition of both languages in the bilingual reform program.

2.2.3 Language learning policy in the UAE

Language learning policy in the UAE is another theme in recent research on bilingual education. Both Al Hussein and Gitsaki (2017), and O'Sullivan (2015) have investigated the agents and processes of the rise of English in formal education in the UAE and Gulf region exploring both policy and practice; while Randall and Samimi (2010) have explored the status of English in Dubai. Other recent studies have looked at youth attitudes towards Arabic and English literacy (O'Neill, 2014); and student attitudes to learning science through the medium of English have been examined by Kadbey and Dickson (2014), in order to identify the barriers science teachers may face in delivering the bilingual curriculum effectively and make recommendations to address these challenges.

2.2.4 The role of English in cultural and language imperialism in the UAE

The role of English in a globalized society and the specter of cultural and language imperialism have long been a theme in language studies. Canagarajah (1999, 2002,

2006), Coluzzi (2012), Crystal (2003, 2012a), Kumaravadivelu (2008) and Pennycook (1994, 2010) have written extensively on the status of English and its implications for other cultures that adopt English as a lingua franca. Phillipson (2003) and Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson (2017a) view the adoption of English as a *lingua franca* as a hegemonic tool that may endanger the local language and even lead to its extinction. In the UAE, a considerable amount of research has been done exploring this theme by Al Issa and Dahan (2011), who have looked at the phenomenon of global English and what they view as "endangered Arabic" (2011). Karmani (2005a, 2005b) also investigates themes of language imperialism in the UAE exploring the nexus of religion, English language, and oil, adopting the term "petro-linguistics" to describe the economic hegemony underlying the EFL industry. Findlow (2000, 2006) also ventures into this territory and speaks of the linguistic dualism, which pervades the Gulf region. Clarke, Ramanathan and Morgan (2007) extend Findlow's constructs on linguistic dualism and discuss how the UAE has "accommodated globalization" by relegating Arabic to be considered as the domain of "religion, tradition and localism" and English as the more sophisticated discourse of "business, modernity, and internationalization" (Clarke et al., 2007, p. 584).

2.2.5 Role of parental involvement in UAE school reform

It has been demonstrated that parental involvement is another key factor in sustainable school reform (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Avvisati, Besbas & Guyon, 2010; Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012; Goodall & Voorhaus, 2010; Goos, Lincoln, & Coco, 2004; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010). Typically, in Gulf states, there has been little contact between parents and the school as it was not an established cultural norm (Khasawneh & Alsagheer, 2007). Research carried out by Hourani, Stringer and Baker (2012) recognized that increased parental involvement in schools is vital for

school improvement. These authors identified the existing constraints on parental school involvement in the UAE and made culturally sensitive observations about how to set up communication channels between all the stakeholders in the school community, including the parents (Hourani et al., 2012).

2.2.6 Barriers to curriculum reform in the UAE

Several studies have looked at so-called barriers to general system-wide curriculum reform in the UAE. At the beginning of the bilingual reform projects in 2009, Farah and Ridge (2009) identified barriers to curriculum reform in the UAE government school context such as the limited scope of the existing school curricula, the importance of changing from rote learning to more student centered pedagogical methods, and the need to design more appropriate assessment strategies. Ridge, Kippels and Farah (2017) revisited these challenges eight years later in 2017 to evaluate the progress that had been made and to make recommendations for future reform policy. Tabari (2014) also investigated curriculum reform, with her focus being on asking the teachers, major stakeholders in the reform, their views of the factors apparently impeding this reform. In another study addressing the reform context in the UAE, Dickson (2013) interviewed the students, other important stakeholders in school reform, on their views of the curriculum reform taking place in their schools. Dickson's study, which surveyed 471 students in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, revealed that many students felt frustration with the rapid school reforms in the curriculum and displayed anger towards the presence of Western staff, framing their presence in some case as a "takeover" (Dickson, 2014, p. 282).

Other important stakeholders in the reform process in schools are school principals. Leadership of a school has significant effects on the quality of student learning

(Leithwood et al., 2006) and Thorne's 2011 study on the effects of the mandatory reform project on school principal's work in Abu Dhabi government schools found that principals felt pressure from the politics of management above them, particularly in regard to competing policies from the Ministry of Education and ADEC. Another finding in Thorne's study was that principals felt pressure from within in the form of a "moral struggle" (Thorne, 2011, p.11) to balance the requirements of the mandated reform, with the needs of both staff and student well-being. Dada (2011) also researched the area of school leadership in the school reform project to identify the attributes of successful leadership teams. Her findings showed that the most important factor identified by teacher leaders was the responsibility for professional development opportunities and the support of teacher development in the schools. This finding underlines the importance of investigating the experience of reform from the point of view of the teachers, who are also significant stakeholders in the process of bilingual reform, and who, along with students, have ongoing learning needs.

2.3 The role of professional learning in sustainable school reform

Al Taneiji (2014) examined professional development (PD) opportunities for teachers in the ADEC New School Model (NSM) in a qualitative study with seven teachers, and found that though rich resources were provided to improve teachers' professional learning, there needed to be a better alignment of PD to student and teacher needs, different formats for delivering the activities, and a more continuous long-term approach to providing professional development.

Numerous studies have shown that professional learning opportunities for teachers are vital for sustainable education reform (Cochran-Smith & Stern, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2010, 2013; Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002, 2009; Lynch,

Hennessy, & Gleeson, 2013; Ingvarson, Meiers & Beavis, 2005; Reid & Kleinhenz, 2015). In the UAE, researchers have studied the professional development offerings in the various contexts. AlHassani (2012) carried out an investigation of primary language teachers' views on professional development provided to them in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) reform schools finding that there was a lack of content focus, coherence, and lack of relevance to the EFL teachers' needs in the reform program. Poorly targeted professional learning is of little use to teachers, and is against the Vygotskian principle of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further developed by Warner in a pre-service teacher training context (2011), which recognizes and addresses the powerful influence of prior learning experiences, the local context and local teaching practices recognizes and addresses the powerful influence of prior learning experiences and local teaching practices on teacher professional learning. These findings on the need for better alignment of teacher professional learning opportunities and teacher needs highlight the gap in literature explored in this thesis, which focuses on teacher perceptions of change in the reform process and their views on the professional support offered to them during the reforms.

2.3.1 Pre-bilingual reform research in the UAE on curriculum change

Studies predating the bilingual program were conducted at a time when the medium of instruction for content subjects such as Mathematics and Science, was Arabic, and English was taught as a foreign language. Alwan (2006) analyzed female secondary school English teacher's perceptions of curriculum change during this time when English was taught as a foreign language. In her study, Alwan (2006) found that most teachers felt that they had little "teacher voice" or agency in the process, and that the major change had been a change of texts rather than teaching strategies. There was a

consensus that little had changed, only the books. In further research conducted in 2010, Troudi and Alwan used this initial data to consider the emotional (affective) dimension of teachers' feelings during curriculum change, which recognized the vital role of teachers' emotional engagement in implementing change. They found that the top-down processes that characterized the reform led to low morale and negatively impacted the success of the curriculum change (Troudi & Alwan, 2010). This aspect of the emotional impact of reform on teachers has also been explored in international research by Hargreaves (2001, 2005b, 2017) who coined the term, the "emotional geography" of teachers (Hargreaves, 2005b, p. 968). Hargreaves' emotional geography framework focuses on the physical, moral, sociocultural, professional and political aspects of school culture. Emotional geographies help us understand the conditions that support or impede the development of positive emotional states, which may in turn impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of school reform.

2.3.2 Teacher agency and the role of the teacher in school reform

In order to be an effective driver of school reform, a teacher must have belief in herself (self-efficacy) and her agency in being able to facilitate this change. Therefore, a sense of teacher agency is needed. Put simply, teacher agency refers to a teacher's belief in her ability to actively contribute to shaping her work and its conditions (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015). Numerous studies have stressed the pivotal role of teacher agency to effect continuous improvement and reform (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hőkkä, & Paloniemi, 2014; Vähäsantanen, 2015; Imants, Wubbles & Vermunt, 2013) and the defining characteristic of successful agency is that thoughts about teaching, and control of that teaching, is dynamic, responding to a constant process of construction and reconstruction of ideas and self-belief (Eteläpelto et al., 2014). Teacher agency is also intrinsically linked with identity, as teachers need

to be able to view themselves as having mastery of skills in order to be able to implement challenging and complex reform (Lai, Li, & Gong, 2016). Teachers also need to be able to feel part of "imagined communities" (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Piller & Pavlenko, 2009) so that they can renegotiate their multiple identities in their various communities of practice as part of a learning community (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002; Morgan, 2015; Wenger & Traynor, 2015).

In the literature, teacher's sense of self-efficacy and agency as described in countries such as Singapore and Finland has been found to be high (Dawood & Hirst, 2014; Mourshed, Chojioke & Barber, 2010) and there is an interesting correlation in the high results students in these two countries attain on international standardized tests such as PISA and TIMSS that place them at the top of the league tables of performance (Forestier & Crossley, 2015; OECD, 2015; Schileicher, 2016). Characteristics of teacher status in Finland include greater autonomy and decision-making power in school settings, de-centralized school management, fewer centralized assessments, and less surveillance and performative evaluation than in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (Eltäpelto et al., 2014; Vähäsantanen, 2015, Hőkkä, Eteläpelto & Rasku-Puttonen, 2010; Tucker, 2011). In Singapore, there is a strong culture of teacher collaboration, with Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (Wenger & Traynor, 2015). In addition, in Singapore there is a clearer career progression linked to a less-centralized inspection process based on collaboration and consultation (Dawood & Hirst, 2014; Mourshed et al., 2010).

There is also an extensive body of literature which stresses the critical role that teachers play as agents of change in education reform. Fullan (2011, 2015), Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006), Hőkkä (2012), and Hall and Hord (2015) have suggested that

change in schools is both constant and an ongoing process, and that teachers are a vital factor in sustainable change. Recent research conducted in both Norway and Germany (Falch & Mang, 2015) has corroborated this concept of the teacher as a vital element in school reform, recognizing that "the success of new teaching methods depends on the ability of the teachers to invent and apply these innovations". Also, research by Bush & Bell (2002), Hargreaves, (2017), Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), Hattie (2012), and Whelan (2009) has shown that the engagement of the teacher is essential to bring about effective systemic change, thereby making it a priority to encourage a strong and reflective teaching culture in schools. Hattie (2012) also stresses the pivotal role of teachers in educational reform, stating that in order to make a difference in students' learning, teachers need to be able to see themselves in the proactive role of change agent. Hattie (2012) also posits that visible learning is not just about structural change, but about what actually happens inside the classroom led by teachers.

2.3.3 Reading standards in UAE bilingual programs

There is a considerable body of research into the reading standards of UAE students in English (Assaf, 2016; Gobert, 2009). Recognizing that deficiencies in students' reading abilities were barriers to success in international standardized tests such as IELTS, Assaf (2016) conducted a study to determine if direct phonics instruction would increase the phonological and orthographic awareness of thirty 18-21-year-old male students studying in an English medium vocational center in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Assaf found that the group who had received direct, explicit and systematic phonics instruction outperformed the group who had been taught using the

whole language approach, with a 66.4% rise for students who had received phonics instruction, compared to only a 22.7% increase for students who had been taught using the whole language approach. The whole language approach advocates that spelling, reading, writing, speaking and grammar are integrated into the instruction and are not taught as separate components (Laney, 2011). The findings indicated that use of direct phonics instruction could improve the reading ability of Arabic students when learning English as an additional language.

There is also literature that suggests that student reading practices in Emirati students' first language Arabic also need development (Abu Rabia, 2002; Gobert, 2009). It is worth noting that in the 2011 PIRLS International test (PIRLS results for 2017 will be available in December, 2017), that ranks the reading ability of 15-year-olds in their mother tongue (first language), UAE students performed well below global averages, indicating the strong need to reinforce a culture of reading in the home language of Arabic (OECD, 2015).

Gobert (2009) has emphasized the importance of raising the awareness of the diglossic nature of Arabic, where two dialects are used by the same language community, and how it impacts Arabic students' ability to develop English reading proficiency. The colloquial languages of spoken Arabic vernaculars are far removed from each other lexically, phonetically and grammatically (Abu Rabia, 2002) to the extent that learning to read and write formal Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in school is akin to learning an additional language. The phenomenon of Arabic diglossia is discussed in the next section in more detail, as it has direct implications for the achievement of student biliteracy in the bilingual reform programs in UAE government schools.

2.3.4 Arabic diglossia in the UAE government school context

The concept of diglossia is well visited in the bilingual literature (Al Khatib, 2006; Al Sahafi, 2016; Al Sharhan, 2007; Hall, 2011; Hashem-Aramouni, 2011; Gallagher, 2011). As Gobert (2009) and Abu-Libdeh (1996) point out, merely learning the Modern Standard Arabic required of students in schools, is already a type of bilingualism, and learning English as an additional language presents a strong linguistic challenge in the primary years.

In the literature, there is evidence that suggests that children are not limited to learning one or two languages and that they have the capacity for several, if taught well, with sufficient attention given to all (Baker & Wright, 2017). However, the work of Al Sharhan (2007), points out that in the UAE there is actually a triglossic context (three dialects) that Emirati children must master: *Khaleeji* - the colloquial spoken Arabic of the Gulf; *Fus'ha* - MSA, the modern standard Arabic which is the medium of instruction in schools and the written language of the media; and *Classical Arabic*-the language of the Koran (Al Sharhan, 2007).

From my own experience in Emirati classrooms, and the close relationships I forged mentoring my female Emirati student teachers which gave me rare "foreigner" access to their homes and domestic lives, I would go even further and suggest there is a plurilingual context (Seidlhofer, 2011) or a heteroglossia (Bailey, 2007) whereby young Emiratis possess competence in more than one language and can switch between languages - from one language to another and vice versa – according to the social context.   A few studies have emerged in recent years in the UAE that acknowledge this same point (Holes, 2011; O'Neill, 2016; van der Hoven, 2016) but it is not widely discussed in international TESOL literature. The probable reason is the

intense public-private divisions in Emirati society, which mean that few expatriates get to visit Emiratis in their home context. However, the demographic and linguistic reality is that many Emirati students may speak an additional home first language dialect in addition to the Khaleeji dialect, depending on their ethnic background. In sum, this constitutes four or five languages that students need to gain control of, and has strong implications for the early immersion bilingual program. It means that young students may be simultaneously negotiating meaning across four or five languages: firstly, their 'ethnic' home dialect; secondly, the Emirati Khaleeji dialect; thirdly, Modern Standard Arabic and Classical Arabic; and, finally, English. There could also be language input from nannies and maids who may speak to the children in Tagalog, Indonesian, Urdu, or Tamil, and in many cases nannies are the main caregiver to the children and spend considerable time with them. A recent study carried out in the UAE showed that 93% of Emirati families have between one to seven maids in the home, with an average of three maids per family (Sabban, 2011, 2012). Hence, language variety at home can be considerable.

From outside the UAE, it may seem to Westerners and others that Emiratis are from a monolithic, ethnically homogeneous cultural and language background. The reality though is considerably more complex. Some Emirati families, for example, are of Iranian background and may use Farsi at home. Students with the family tribal name Al Baloushi, Al Balooshi, or Al Bloushi- who trace their tribal origins to Balochistan (a region located between southwestern Pakistan and southeastern Iran)- may speak Balochi, or Farsi or Urdu, as their home language, in addition to the colloquial spoken Gulf Arabic/Khaleeji (Heard-Bey, 1997). In the northern Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, those with the tribal name Al Shehhi, may speak a separate and distinct tribally-based dialect. The likelihood of a third home language has implications for the effective

delivery of the bilingual curriculum and is important in considering the notion of bilingualism and success in a bilingual program, because it means that very young Emirati children may be entering schools and facing the cognitive overload of processing four or five languages. Mastery of so many languages and the resultant code switching which occurs, may place a heavy cognitive burden on the young students, especially if there is an expectation of having competence in a shared first language, and may possibly limit their progress in some content areas taught in English. Recent research on translanguaging practices (*see the section below on translanguaging*) suggests, however, that multilinguals may use all languages in their repertoire to negotiate and construct meaning, and that far from being a cognitive burden, the use of all these languages can help multilingual children construct deeper understanding (Baker & Wright, 2017; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2011). What is critical for this to be effective, however, is attention to the plurilingual dimension of classrooms, and deliberate strategies to allow for the translanguaging, as well as multi-lingual processing time, and the possibility of constructing both oral and written responses in more than one language.

2.3.5 Additive versus subtractive bilingualism

Additive bilingualism, whereby the second is acquired at no cost to the first language (García, 2011), is the model most recognized as being of benefit to bilingual learners. This is in opposition to subtractive bilingualism where the bilingual learner's home language and cultural identity are overtaken by the second language (Cummins, 2000a, 2013; Lambert, 1975,1977, 1981). The Threshold Hypothesis put forward by Cummins (1976, 2000b) recommended that in order to minimize the possible subtractive outcome in second or additional language acquisition, students need to reach and maintain a threshold of competence in their home language or first

language(s). This has implications for the ways in which bilingual education is implemented, and suggests that simultaneous two language side-by-side immersion, or complete early immersion (in the new language) is not as effective as sequential immersion, which occurs when a person becomes bilingual by first learning one language and then another (Baker & Wright, 2017). The reasoning behind this is that students should have aural, oracy and literacy skills in the first language before learning the second (Cummins, 1976, 2000b; García, 2011). The added factor in the UAE context is the diglossic nature of Arabic as students are in effect learning a fourth/fifth language with English in addition to Khaleeji, MSA and Classical Arabic and an additional language (if there is an "ethnic" home language) including learning different orthography and scripts in English and Arabic. These theories of additive versus subtractive bilingualism have been influenced in recent years by the uptake and promotion of translanguaging, which is outlined in the section below.

2.3.6 Translanguaging

Various terms have been used by scholars to describe the interrelationship between the language practices of bilinguals, for example heteroglossia (Bailey, 2007), code meshing (Canagarajah, 2011), and metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010). A term that has become widely accepted is translanguaging, which was coined by Colin Williams in 1996 (Baker & Wright, 2017), and further developed by many applied linguists such as Baker and Wright (2017); García (2011); Gort (2015); García, Johnson and Seltzer (2016); Hornberger and Link (2012); and Wei (2011a, 2014).

In translanguaging, the language of bilinguals is not viewed as two separate linguistic systems (Baker & Wright, 2017; García, 2011; Velasco & García, 2014). Instead, bilinguals engage in their bilingual worlds selecting language choices from their

available repertoire (García, 2011). This process goes beyond 'code-switching', which considers languages as separate codes and that speakers switch distinctly from one code to another. In translanguaging, bilinguals select features in their linguistic repertoire in order to communicate appropriately and to facilitate communication and construct deeper understanding, without particular regard to which language is being used.

The term functional integration (Baker & Wright, 2017) is used to describe the way the two languages are used to negotiate meaning in translanguaging. In the UAE context, bilingual students use translanguaging to seamlessly move between the Khaleeji Gulf dialect and English, resulting in what García (2011) and Creese and Blackledge (2010) term dynamic bilingualism. In an early bilingual immersion setting, strategic translanguaging can be used to maximize student language repertoire and promote deeper and fuller understanding of not just form of the language, but also the academic content being presented (Baker & Wright, 2017; Cummins, 2013), leading to enhanced academic language skills in both languages. Translanguaging practices are of significance to the UAE bilingual classroom context, as teachers need to be mindful of opportunities to build on the strengths of a plurilingual classroom and develop deliberate strategies to allow students to construct both oral and written responses in more than one language.

In one sense, Cummins's Interdependence Theory (1979), which states that when emergent bilinguals are taught in, and develop their home language, it will benefit development of the second language, is the underlying principle of translanguaging. However, translanguaging goes further, as it views someone with bilingual resources as not having two separate linguistic repertoires, but one complex repertoire from which the bilingual selects the features that will be suitable for the communication

needed. This theory would suggest that side-by-side partial early immersion is desirable in UAE schools in order to develop biliterate students, where activities can be developed which make use of the students' range of semiotic or meaning-making resources.

2.4 "World Englishes" and bilingualism in the era of globalization

English is a global language (Crystal, 1997, 2003, 2012b) and has become an "evident functional reality" (Crystal, 2012b, p.177). It has become the language of business, commerce, and entertainment in most of the world. Not only is it spoken by people for whom it is their first language, it is also used a common mode of communication among people of various language backgrounds as an additional language as a lingua franca. For example, a Russian native speaker and a German native speaker may choose to use English as a common language through which to conduct business in Dubai, a first language Arabic speaking country. It is estimated that approximately 1500 million people speak English around the globe; 375 million of these are first language speakers, and 1125 million of these are additional language speakers (Statista, 2017). This means that there are more speakers of English who have acquired it as an additional language than those for whom it is their first language.

This situation has led to the term *World Englishes,* and Kachru's (1990) influential work describes it as the "three circles" model. He describes three circles – the Inner Circle representing the traditional cultural linguistic bases of English (such as the UK, the US, Australia, New Zealand); the Outer Circle representing in the institutionalized non-native varieties (ESL - countries who have gone through colonization such as Bangladesh and the Philippines) and the Extended Circle which, according to Kachru, includes countries such as Egypt, China and Korea.
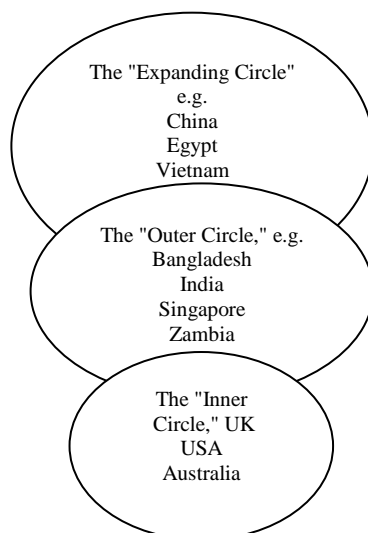
Figure 2: Kachru's Circles of English (1990). From Kachru, B.B. (2006). World Englishes and cultural wars. In B.B. Kachru, Y. Kachru and C.L. Nelson (eds) *Handbook of World Englishes* (pp. 446–471). Oxford: Blackwell.

At the around the same time, Crystal (1997) developed his concentric circle model which showed the type of spread, the patterns of English acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural contexts.
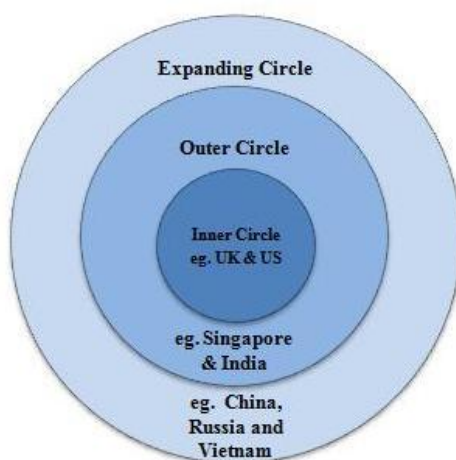
Figure 3: Crystal's Concentric Circle Model (1997) in Crystal, D.(2012b). *English as a Global Language*. (2nd ed.)

Used as a classification system, the concept of the three circles (Kachru,1990) and the concentric circles (Crystal, 1997) have been contested in the literature (Bolton, 2004; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009; Gorlach, 2002; Graddol, 1997; Gupta, 1997; Mufwene, 2001; Norton, 2013; Sharifian, 2009). In particular, the classification of the three circles based on national borders has been questioned (Canagarajah, 2006), as with

the spread of English, borders have become permeable. In Australia for example, it is possible to find Englishes from all circles in one country. The use of the terms "primary", "institutionalized" and "international" used by Kachru to define the roles and functions within society have also been problematized. It can be argued that the role of English as an international or global language (Crystal, 2012b) used to mediate communication renders the use of the word "international" as a category redundant and misleading, as English is used to communicate internationally as a *lingua franca*, among speakers from Expanding Countries as much as it is used by speakers in the Outer Circle or Expanding circle.

Nonetheless, both Crystal and Kachru's models have been widely used in scholarly work about English as a global language and international communication, and the concepts have value for the way in which they explain the increasing importance of English in global education. It is estimated that the numbers of English speakers in Kachru's Inner, Outer and Expanding circles are respectively about 320-380 million, 300-500 million, and 500-100 million, and it is projected that the number of learners of English will reach a peak of two billion by 2020 (Graddol, 2006).

The importance of being able to communicate in English, therefore, is reinforced, if you wish to improve your life chances, and do not have English as your first language. The geo-political reality is that if you are not a native speaker, then learning English as a second or additional language is perceived as very important for business and trade on a global scale. This interpretation has resonances for UAE education policy and has informed the decision to mandate English early immersion programs in the bilingual reform projects in the country.

2.5 Comparative bilingual programs in the Arab Gulf

Change does not occur in a vacuum, however, and it is important to consider the UAE bilingual reform project within the context of educational reform initiatives in neighboring and culturally similar countries to ascertain whether valuable lessons can be learned from their experiences. Other Arab Gulf countries are also following the trend of educational reform with the recent introduction of bilingual programs or updated English curricula in their mainstream government education systems.

The following section introduces the research context of English language teaching in Arab Gulf K-12 schools in the region, discussing the changes brought about by educational reforms and the initiation of bilingual K-12 programs. Particular attention will be given to Qatar, as it is the only Gulf Co-operation Country (GCC), other than the UAE, that has established a mandatory nationwide early immersion bilingual reform program.

2.5.1 Qatar

Qatar's experiment with bilingual immersion programs warrants close attention. Only one hour away from the UAE capital of Dubai, and sharing similar culture, language, and demographics, there are lessons to be learned from the neighboring country's experience with bilingual education, both in K-12 school and tertiary education. At the time of writing in 2017, the UAE's relationship with Qatar is troubled ("Qatar Crisis", 2017), nonetheless, its proximity and close cultural and language similarities make investigation of its bilingual policy important for this study. Qatar implemented bi-lingual education in the last decade at both K-12 schools and tertiary level, and has now reverted back to Arabic as the main medium of instruction in both government schools and universities.

Qatar is located on a peninsula on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and its sole land border is with Saudi Arabia. In 2017, Qatar's total population was 2.6 million: 313,000 Qatari citizens and 2.3 million expatriates. A small strait separates Qatar from the neighboring country of Bahrain (United Nations Statistics Division, 2017).

In Qatar, bilingual education in the K-12 school system, and the use of English as a medium of instruction at tertiary level has been abandoned, after a huge investment in bilingual education in the last decade. Bilingual education was instituted in government mainstream schools in 2001 as a response to Qatari students' poor outcomes in the TIMSS and PISA tests, where students' results were lower than global averages (Romanowski, Cherif, Al Ammari, & Al Attiyah, 2013).

The American RAND corporation, a non-profit global "think tank" whose name stems from the term "research and development" (Medvetz, 2012), was brought in to implement and manage wide-scale education reform using Western pedagogical models and teaching strategies. Their initial analysis revealed similar deficiencies in the education system that have been found in the UAE prior to education reform, for example reliance on rote memorization, non-student centered teaching pedagogy and an outmoded curriculum, as well as absence of performance indicators to check achievement, and a highly centralized system where directives from higher management are passed down without school level consultative processes (Romanowski et al., 2013).

The reform in K-12 schools was named *Education for a New Era* and was based on approaches to charter schools in the United States (Zellman et al., 2009) which are essentially corporatized entities supported by public funds, which operate within a

charter approved at state, rather than federal level. Consultants from RAND stated that the adoption of the charter model in Qatar would improve learning standards and improve educational outcomes for Qatari students.

In hindsight, it can be seen that as the project was not piloted before the widespread implementation of Independent Schools, many challenging issues arose. These issues are typical by-products of rapid educational change and include teacher and parental resistance, lack of consistent and relevant professional development support for teachers, cultural inappropriateness of materials, and lack of English threshold competence for many students, making the adjustment to the bilingual curriculum difficult. The whole process of initial assessment of the existing education system, to design and implementation of the curriculum, was rushed through in two years, and in 2004, the first twelve Independent Schools (charter schools) were set up. In these schools, English and Arabic were taught from Grade 1 and English was prioritized over Arabic (Zellman et al., 2009). In addition, it was a 'top-down' model, mandated by Emiri decree (the ruler is called the Emir in Qatar) to the system, schools, teachers and students and wider community. No consultative processes were in place during the decision-making process of the reform, and similarly, no teacher, school leader input was sought, thus setting up a context where many major stakeholders were marginalized.

The project received widespread criticism in the community. Parents were worried about the sudden adoption of English as the medium of instruction (EMI), and saw it as privileging English language over Arabic. The new system was perceived by many stakeholders in the community as a threat to Qatari identity, a popular discourse which has parallels in the UAE experience of implementation of bilingual education in schools. EMI was also perceived in Qatar to be not only a threat to identity, but also

to religious values and traditions (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). Boivin (2011) observes that although the reforms were visionary, they "lacked attention to the socio-cultural identity of the Qatari students, thereby keeping power within a Western autonomous framework" suggesting that the RAND corporation had an outside imperialistic purpose (Boivin, 2011, p. 239).

In 2013, after a decade of reform, the RAND Corporation did have its contract renewed (MacLeod & El-Kheir, 2016; Paschyn, 2013). The reason given was that the projected improvement in student outcomes had not been reflected in the PISA international tests, with Qatar being the fifth worst scoring country; and that 21.3 percent of the students in Grades 4-11 had failed their preparatory and secondary exams. In addition, a decision was made, at the highest levels of the Supreme Education Council, to revert to Arabic as the MOI in schools. During this same time, as a result of the K-12 schooling decision, tertiary institutions, such as Qatar University, which had switched to English medium delivery in 2007, reverted to a policy for MOI to be changed back to Arabic (MacLeod & Abou-El-Kheir, 2016). Some education experts claim that RAND was not to blame, and instead believe that the reforms were not given enough time to work (Khatri, 2013; Boivin, 2011; Paschyn, 2013). A Qatar University study (MacLeod & Abou-El-Kheir, 2016) surveyed 18 of the Independent Schools and found that principals, teachers, and parents generally viewed the reforms positively. Principals however, specifically mentioned the detrimental effects of "continuous and sudden change" and a "rush to get results" from the Council. In retrospect, a report stated that "Council members acknowledge that school reforms typically take 15-20 years, and officials had expected "too much too soon" and had made "many knee-jerk" reactions (Paschyn, 2013, para. 9). In another official report commissioned by the Supreme Council, it

was stated that "there is now knowledge, mistakes and successes, which provide a wider perspective in terms of finding practical opportunities and constraints that will put ahead a pathway of possible options for the next reform stage" (Al-Banai & Nasser, 2015, p.682). With the MoE reverting to Arabic in K-12 schools, and English taught as a foreign language, there is concern that students graduating from high school may be disadvantaged and may not have achieved a level of English high enough for entrance to international universities or even direct entry to Qatari universities (Cupp, 2009; Pasaniuc, 2009; Paschyn, 2013; Qureshi et al., 2016). Qatar University states that they still have bridge programs to cater for students who need time to acquire additional English competence, however the scope and scale of these programs have been greatly reduced. It is too early to judge the long-term effects of this decision, and there is a lack of empirical research in this area. Over the next decade, the outcome of these decisions will be realized in the educational outcomes of Qatari students. The experience of Qatar with bilingual education provides valuable information for the UAE reform project about the importance of providing continuous support to those implementing the change, and also highlight the need to allow time for the reforms to take effect before abandoning the program.

2.5.2 Kuwait

In Kuwait, education reform was implemented in 2003 when a World Bank team carried out a study on public expenditure on education in Kuwait, with the aim of identifying how to strengthen the education system in the country. Kuwait is a constitutional state with a semi-democratic political system and has the fourth highest per capita income in the world (World Bank, 2017). Kuwait has a population of 4.2 million people; and 70 % of the population is expatriate equating to: 1.3 million Kuwaitis and 2.9 million expatriates (World Bank, 2017).

The Kuwaiti education system is a four-stage system with Kindergarten, five years of primary education, four years of intermediate education, and three years of secondary education. In Kuwait, English is neither an official language, nor a national language; but as in the UAE and Qatar, English has become a *lingua franca* for business and cross-cultural communication, and mastery of English is seen to be a vital requirement in most high-status jobs. In addition, the most prestigious universities are English MOI institutions, so a high standard of English proficiency is essential for admission (Abdulmohsen, 2015).

In the government schools in Kuwait, which are the focus of this section, English is taught as an additional language in forty-minute lessons, five times a week. Instruction in English starts from Grade 1 and goes through to Grade 12. The curriculum is centralized, with the Ministry of Education and the Language Teaching General Supervision Department (ELT) developing textbooks and curricula for the gender-separated schools (Abdulmohsen, 2015; Tryzna, 2017).

Unlike both the UAE and Qatar, in the Kuwaiti government schools, there is no bilingual education. There are around 481 private schools, some of which have bilingual English/Arabic curricula, but in the government schools, the principle language of instruction is Arabic, and English is taught as a foreign language. Thus, in Kuwait there is a dual tier system - Arabic language as the MOI in government schools; and bilingual or English MOI in the many private schools. The demand for private school education is high among both Kuwaitis and expatriate families, and children of the latter are not allowed to attend government schools (Arab Times, 2017). As was the case in the UAE before the bilingual reform projects in the government schools, parents perceive Kuwaiti private schools to offer a better standard of education with more advanced curricula.

Since 2010, the Kuwait government has worked with the World Bank to implement curriculum reform in the public education system. Its aim is to develop a competence-based system across general education, improve the teaching and learning strategies of the teachers, and monitor the impact on schools (Times Kuwait, 2017). Dr Merza Hasan, World Bank Group Executive Director and Dean of the Board, stated in 2015 that a key element of the Kuwaiti reform is that it claims to be "developed by Kuwait for Kuwait" (World Bank, 2015). In this sense, the program purportedly relies less on educational borrowing than reform projects in neighboring Gulf countries. Whether this is merely rhetoric needs closer investigation, and future evaluations of the program will be able to determine how effective their Arabic as a MOI, and more "homegrown" reforms are.

Reports issued by the World Bank speak positively of the achievements made over the past six years, but they make no mention of the TIMSS results. In 2015, Kuwaiti students actually performed worse in the TIMSS results than they had in 2011 at the beginning of the reforms, and, in general, the Gulf countries are low scoring on the league tables, particularly in Mathematics (TIMSS, 2015). As is widely documented by educators, sustainable reform takes time (Fullan, 2011, 2015; Hargreaves, 2017; Hőkkä, 2012; Mourshed et al., 2010), so it is too early to decide whether or not the Kuwaiti education reform project has been successful.

2.5.3 Oman

Oman is another of the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) and is located in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula. It has a small population of 4,550,538, - around 2.46 million are Omani and 2.08 million are expatriates (National Center for Statistics and Information, NCSI, 2016).

According to a report from the Omani National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI, 2016), the majority of Omani students have their entire curriculum taught through Arabic. In 2016, it was reported that there were total of 641, 928 students in basic education in Oman in government schools, where Arabic is the MOI, and 101,860 in private schools where classes are taught bilingually (NCSI, 2016). This means that only 14.1 percent of K-12 students in Oman have their curriculum taught bilingually (National Center of Statistics and Information, 2016).

English language as a subject came relatively late to Oman and was introduced into the curriculum in 1970, when the current ruler Sultan Al Qaboos came to the throne (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Issa, 2013). There are around 1052 public government schools in Oman enrolling student 724,395 students, and there are 67,901 teachers, both Omani and expatriate. Around 40% of teachers in government schools are non-Omani, and in particular, as in the UAE, there are few local male teachers in the system, as teaching is not perceived as an attractive or prestigious option for Omani males (NCSI, 2016). It is of note that in Oman, unlike other GCC countries, Omani female teachers outnumber expatriates (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012), an encouraging statistic that shows that Omanization of the workforce is developing.

In Oman, bilingual Arabic/English programs have been launched in some of the early childhood centers due to growing understanding by Omani parents of the importance of children learning English in a globalizing world context. However, these pre-schools are not part of the government public education system, as the Omani public education system does not comprehensively cover early childhood education. These bilingual projects in private early childhood centers come under the oversight of the Ministry of Social Development and Ministry of Education, but early immersion

programs in Oman are predominantly controlled by the private sector (Al-Issa & Al-Bulushi, 2012; Al-Kalbani, 2004).

2.5.4 Bahrain

Bahrain is the only island state of the GCC countries and is also ruled by a constitutional monarchy. The population is around 1.4 million, and 55% of the population is expatriate (Ministry of Information Affairs, Bahrain, 2017). Bahrain has had ties with Britain since the 19th century (some troubled and some mutually beneficial), and therefore English has been a *lingua franca* for trade and business in the region, despite the official language being Arabic. British Petroleum has been in Bahrain since the 1930s, following the discovery of oil, and the British Navy established a base there in 1935. In World War II, Bahrain fought with the Allies, and in addition, since 2004, Bahrain has had a free trade agreement with the United States (Al-Khalili, 2008). Therefore, it is not surprising that the role of English in Bahrain is pervasive throughout the society, and many of the tertiary institutions in Bahrain use English as the MOI.

As a result of these ties, formal schooling was also set up earlier than in other countries in the Gulf, and the process of change in the schools has been more gradual than in the other GCC countries (Abou-El-Kheir & MacLeod, 2016). In K-12 government schools, however, the policy has been to retain Arabic as the MOI. Consequently, as with Oman, the only bilingual curricula are found in the private schools, which tend to cater for the Bahraini elite, and are also attended by expatriate children. Like other GCC countries, Bahrain has looked overseas to "buy-in" successful educational programs, and in particular has worked with Singapore. Singapore is viewed as a thriving economy, and its schools produce students who

scores rank at the top of the league tables for PISA and TIMSS (Kirk, 2015; OECD, 2015). The Bahrain Teachers College (BTC) was established in 2008 as a special unit within the University of Bahrain, and borrowed heavily on the Singaporean teacher education model. However, like the UAE, this importation of foreign curricula, often not contextualized to the region, has not had a significant effect on either student attainment scores, or on teacher quality (Kirk, 2015). Importing curricula from countries whose geopolitical, social and religious backgrounds are not in alignment with GCC cultural values, norms and goals poses challenges, and Bahrain, like the UAE, is finding that international transfers of foreign curricula have not lead to instant improved results in student attainment scores in international standardized testing (Hayes, 2015), and the challenge to fulfill local needs must be balanced with an awareness of the global perspective (Kirk, 2015).

2.5.5 Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest of the GCC countries. The population of Saudi Arabia is around thirty-two million, and the Saudi culture is deeply traditional and firmly rooted in conservative Wahabi Islamic principles (Alhazmi, 2015). The official language is Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) and there are three main Arabic dialects spoken: Najdi Arabic, Hejazi, and Gulf or Khaleeji Arabic (Aldosaree, 2016). As in other Gulf countries, rapid change has been unprecedented in this generation. Reforms in education in the region, though, particularly at K-12 level, face challenges in providing the type of education the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) students need to engage more widely in the modern world.

As with other GCC countries, Saudi Arabia has recognized the importance of English in the globalized world, and since 2004, has incorporated the teaching of English as a

foreign and additional language in the school curriculum from the elementary stage of education from Grade 5 (Alabbad & Gitsaki, 2011; Al Hazmi, 2015). The outcomes of this teaching however, have been reported as unsatisfactory (Alabbad & Gitsaki, 2011; Al-Hajailan, 2003; Alhamdan, 2008; Al-Hazmi, 2015) and students complain that English is "one of the most difficult subjects to study in school" (Alabbad & Gitsaki, 2011, p. 7).

It is worth noting that there had been an earlier attempt to incorporate English into the primary curriculum in 2002, and 300 Saudi teachers and 900 foreign teachers had been recruited to teach the new curriculum. The plans for the program came to a sudden halt when the powerful Saudi religious establishment declared the project as a threat to Islamic identity and Saudi culture (Gulf Today, 2002, as cited in Gallagher, 2016). This underscores the dual tension in Saudi Arabia. The *lingua franca* of international business in the country is English, yet the leadership of the country is fiercely protective of Saudi culture and the Arabic language, and views the teaching of English in schools as an existential threat.

Consequently, in Saudi Arabia, bilingual education in the early years of schooling has not been adopted, despite the strong presence of English as a lingua franca in the business community in Saudi Arabia. In private international schools, which cater to expatriate children and elite Saudis, the MOI is English. In tertiary institutions, English is a major discipline in the departments. In the Science colleges (Medicine and Engineering), the MOI is English. In addition, there is also growing emphasis on the need for English proficiency in order to secure jobs at the major companies in Saudi Arabia (Alabbad & Gitsaki, 2011).

There have been studies in Saudi Arabia which point to the deficiencies in English language teaching in government schools (Al Hazmi 2015; Al-Nasser, 2015; Khan, 2011; Rahman, 2013), which note that students graduating from secondary school are not sufficiently proficient in English to manage the rigor of English MOI in Science-based universities in courses such as Medicine, Engineering and Computing. Calls have been made to reform the English language teaching curriculum and delivery of the subject (Al-Hazmi, 2015; Alzahrani, 2012). However, in Saudi, there is a strong distrust of English as a hegemonic tool that poses a threat to Arabic and Islamic identity.

Alabdan (2005) believes that English will never be needed as an official second language in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, because of the conservative culture of Saudi society, the role of Arabic as the language of the Koran, and the fact that Saudi Arabia has never come under direct European colonization. However, there are subtler ways of colonization and hegemonic influence, and it could be argued that English is already the *de facto* second language in the region, and the spread of English as a *lingua franca*, and attendant spread of Western culture via the media has already infiltrated GCC culture, including that of Saudi Arabia (Karmani, 2005a, 2005b; Phillipson, 1992, 2003; Said, 2003).

There is ongoing national debate in Saudi Arabia about the lack of competent and qualified English teachers, inadequate materials to teach an effective curriculum, and lack of means to determine the best way to improve English proficiency. Plans have been established for education reform, including revamping the English curriculum, in the policy document Vision 2030 (Mosaad, 2016), in which it is hoped that an education infrastructure will be built that will prepare Saudi students for the

workforce. Given the current situation in Saudi schools, these goals will be challenging.

2.5.6 Summary

The previous section has set the context for bilingual education curriculum reform in the Gulf region and places the UAE in a much broader regional framework. It has outlined the various approaches taken by neighboring countries in the region, which share a similar cultural, religious, social and linguistic heritage, to meet the challenge of balancing the need for English proficiency with Gulf Arab cultural identity and norms.

2.6 Educational borrowing and globalization in the UAE

The concept of educational borrowing and globalization is another important theme that emerges in the literature on educational change. While there is considerable international research on educational borrowing in education (Burden-Leahy, 2009; Burdett & O'Donnell, 2016; Findlow, 2000; Harris & Jones, 2015; Kirk, 2015; Oates, 2015; Steiner-Khamsi, 2002), little has been written in the UAE context on the implications of educational borrowing at the K-12 school levels. The reform programs have all borrowed imported curricula, using models from Western pedagogical traditions, for example, Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) has used the Australian New South Wales curriculum as a basis for the New School Model, and Madares Al Ghad is based on the curriculum of various Western models. Educational borrowing can bring the benefits of the knowledge and experiences of others, however, in the pursuit of better educational outcomes and system performance, it is important to consider the cultural and contextual differences that may exist between the country the reform is "borrowed" from, and the country into which it is being

implemented (Burdett & O'Donnell, 2016; Forestier & Crossley, 2015; Harris & Jones, 2015; Muijs & Reynolds, 2010; Oates, 2010).

In the local UAE media, there is lively public debate about the loss of national identity and Arabic language which may result from the introduction of bilingual English/Arabic curricula, and the perceived threat of creeping infiltration of Western attitudes and values into Arabic culture (Al-Dabbagh, 2005; Al Shamsi, 2017; Burden-Leahy, 2009; Dahan, 2013; Holes, 2011; Hopkyns, 2014; Khelifa, 2010). This line of enquiry raises questions related to language imperialism and the Arabic language (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2017; Canagarajah, 2002, 1999; Holliday, 2013; Karmani, 2005a; Phillipson, 2012; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017b) and the notion of cultural hegemonies (Al-Issa & Dahan, 2011; Kumararavadivelu, 2008).

In a UAE policy study, Kirk (2015) has explored some of these tensions and identified that the 'top down' mandated approach and the orthodoxy that characterizes government agencies in the Gulf region, coupled with the reliance on non-indigenous education reform models, pose considerable challenges to sustainable curriculum reform. In addition, while the features of borrowed interventions may be easily transferable, the cultural and contextual conditions in which those reforms were successful are not so easily transferred (Forestier & Crossley, 2015). Lingard (2010) recommends that in order for policy borrowing to be sustainable, it must be accompanied by "policy learning" (p.155). A policy learning approach is one that supports the development of tailored national policies and takes into account careful consideration of national and local histories, rather than policies taken "off-the-peg". These findings highlight that a study such as this examination of the teacher perceptions at the micro-level of this reform is a valuable enterprise, to inform ongoing and future practice.

It is useful to investigate teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual reform program, and the contributing factors toward such attitudes. The results of such a study could then be used to help inform future bilingual reform projects and assist policy makers and managers in making nuanced decisions that will enhance educational outcomes in the UAE. This study aims to give a platform to those teacher voices and explore their authentic lived experiences of the reform, and presents them using an interpretative phenomenological epistemological approach and methodology.

2.7 Research questions

Research questions in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) do not aim to test a predetermined hypothesis, and therefore the research questions are typically framed broadly and openly. The objective in IPA to explore an area of concern in detail (Brocki & Weardon, 2006; Charlick, McKellar, Fielder & Pincombe, 2016; Gill, 2014; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015), which in this study is teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual program in government schools in the United Arab Emirates. From the sections on UAE background and the literature review, it can be seen that there is considerable research being done into the implications of the bilingual reform program, however, few studies have taken a phenomenological approach and explored the lived experiences of the teachers involved in implementing the reforms. Consequently, it is important that the authentic voices of teachers involved at the chalk-face of the bilingual program be consulted and that their views and perceptions of the curriculum change be heard.

The evolving review of the literature led to two research aims. The first was to gain insight into how teachers at the forefront of this curriculum change in the bilingual

program reform view these changes, by exploring the lived experiences of the
participants (Brocki & Weardon, 2006; Charlick et al., 2016; Gill, 2014; Smith &
Osborn, 2015; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The second aim was to consider how
this insight can be used to inform future practice and implementation of reforms in the
UAE educational context, and to improve professional development support. Based
on these aims and the findings of the literature review, the research questions
developed are:

1. How do teachers in UAE government schools perceive curriculum change in the
bilingual reform program?

2. How can an interpretation of key themes arising from the accounts of these lived
experiences inform future projects in curriculum reform in the bilingual program in
UAE government schools?

These questions underpin the research undertaken in this study. To address these
questions, an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis theoretical framework and
research methodology were adopted as suitable approaches to achieving the aims of
the study.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodological principles and processes that underpin the research. The theoretical framework employed is Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) developed by Smith (1996), and further developed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) and Smith & Osborn (2015). The rationale for the selection of this approach as an ideal lens through which to explore teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual reform project in UAE government schools is outlined (Section 3.1), followed by a more detailed explanation of IPA.

Section 3.2 provides the ontological and epistemological framework underpinning the IPA methodology. In section 3.3, the participants are described, followed in Section 3.5 by an outline of the sampling methods used. Section 3.6 outlines the data collection tools including interviews and document study. Section 3.7 describes the data collection procedures, and Section 3.8 the stages of IPA data analysis. Finally, Section 3.9 covers ethical considerations, validity in IPA studies, and limitations of the current study.

3.1 Research design

The research study is a phenomenological research design that employs the qualitative approach and methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as developed and elaborated by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2012), and Smith and Osborn (2015) following initial work by Smith (1996), to explore teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual reform project in government schools in the UAE. Since its original development by Smith in 1996, IPA has become widely used as a popular methodological framework in qualitative research in many disciplines

including education, psychology, medicine and sociology to explore how participants make sense of their personal or social world (Brocki & Weardon, 2006; Charlick et al., 2015; Gill, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). While IPA was originally developed in the United Kingdom, there is a wide network of IPA interest groups and research being produced in such countries as USA, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, China, South Africa, Lithuania, Romania, and the Czech Republic (Todorova, 2011).

Smith and Osborne (2015) describe IPA as a qualitative approach that examines how people make sense of their personal and social worlds. It focuses on personal experiences and significant existential issues of importance to the participants. Information about these experiences is obtained through one-on-one semi-structured interviews that provide valuable insights into a phenomenon under study, as they are authentic lived experiences (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Wagstaff et al., 2014). The transcripts of these interviews are then analyzed according to the specific IPA protocol, involving six iterative stages (outlined in detail below), and the research findings are then presented using the original descriptions provided by the participants.

IPA was selected as the methodology for this research based on a number of key factors. Firstly, IPA is based on phenomenology, which explores the examination of lived experience and people's 'sense-making' of that experience (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Wagstaff et al., 2014). The research questions aimed to explore the essence of teacher perceptions of change, so speaking directly to teachers and exploring their authentic views and beliefs was a highly suitable approach to address these questions.

Secondly, IPA is *idiographic* (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2015), which means that it focuses in detail on the experiences of a few participants within a specific context and how they make sense of those experiences. The term "idiographic" comes from the Greek word *"idios"* meaning "own" or "private". It means that the study is concerned with the particular (Beltz, Sprague, & Molenaar, 2016; Shinebourne, 2011) and IPA shares this focus. This is in contrast to a 'nomothetic' approach (Giorgi, 2010; Smith et al., 2009), which focuses on discovering what we share with others, and making generalized claims from a larger sample and for wider generalizability. The term "nomothetic" comes from the Greek word "nomos" meaning "law" (Beltz et al., 2016; Giorgi, 2010; Smith et al., 2009). In this study, the idiographic focus enables the researcher to interpret the participant's account of their experience in order to understand the experience. This results in a *double hermeneutic*, which is a two-stage interpretation process where the researcher is attempting to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). In other words, the researcher is trying to understand what an experience is like from the participant's perspective, and this interpretation will always include the researcher's perspective as well (Pietkiewicz, 2012). Given my intercultural status, which provides me with insights into both Western and Arab world views, my interpretations will be of value to ongoing research and practice in the area of education reform in the UAE.

The third reason for using IPA is its hermeneutic emphasis. The term 'hermeneutics' comes from the Greek word "to interpret"; or "to make clear". In hermeneutic study, the researcher seeks to understand the mindset of the participant and to examine the language used to '"mediate" their experience (Freeman, 2008). Thus, IPA is underpinned by three theoretical methodologies: phenomenology, idiography, and

hermeneutics. It is descriptive because of its synthesis of phenomenology and

hermeneutics, and interpretative because of its ontological orientation that recognizes

that there is no such thing as an uninterpreted phenomenon (Pietkiewicz, 2012).
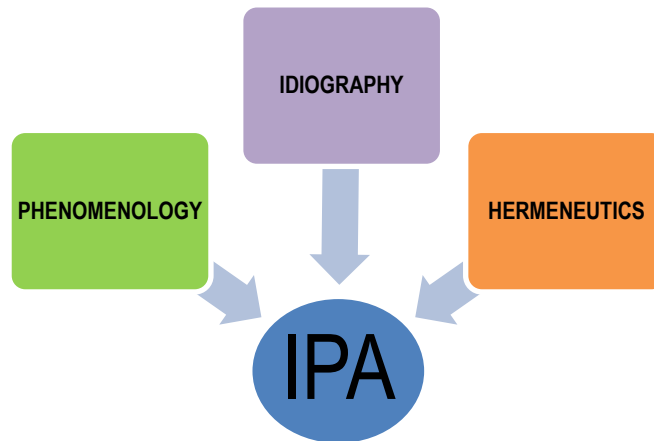
Figure 4: Three theoretical areas of IPA (adapted from Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009)

Therefore, IPA, as developed by Smith et al. (2009), with its emphasis on both

describing and interpreting the phenomenon, offered the potential to achieve the

research aims, and to explore the research questions. The ontological and

epistemological framework underpinning this IPA methodology will be explored in

the next section.

3.2 Ontology and epistemology

This study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm (Cresswell, 2017). An

interpretivist paradigm supports the view that there are many truths and multiple

realities (Cresswell, 2017; Kroeze, 2012; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) and also

provides opportunities for the authentic voices, perceptions, and practices of the

participants to be heard. An interpretative paradigm also recognizes that there are

many truths, that reality is subjective and that different people have different

perceptions and needs. This is in contrast to a positivist paradigm, which is based on

the epistemological belief that only one truth exists, and that there is only one

objective reality which can be quantified and measured (Cresswell, 2017). Based on

the work of Denzin and Lincoln (2018), Table 4 illustrates the characteristics of

interpretivism as used in this study, and outlines the purpose of the research, the

ontology (nature of reality), the epistemology (beliefs about knowledge), and the

methodology used.

Table 5: Characteristics of interpretivism and IPA - adapted from Denzin and Lincoln (2018)

Feature	Description
Purpose of research	• understand and interpret teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual reform project in government schools in the UAE
Ontology	• social constructivist • there are multiple realities • realities can be explored, and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions (Cresswell, 2017)
Epistemology	• contextual constructivism • not one reality • both researcher and participant are conscious and interpreting beings situated within a cultural context • events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts • those active in the research process socially-constructed knowledge by experiencing real life inquirer and inquired into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing- for the benefit of all (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Cresswell, 2017)
Methodology	• utilizes processes of data collected by interviews/reflective sessions/observations/ document analysis (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2016) • research is a product of the values of the researcher (Cresswell, 2017)

3.2.1 Ontology of IPA

This research study adopted an interpretative phenomenological ontology. Ontology is concerned with how knowledge exists and what there is to know (Cresswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). IPA is grounded in the experiential dimension focusing on individual "lived experience" and how individuals make sense of that experience. It is also grounded in a social constructivist approach, which observes that "sociocultural and historical processes are central to the way we experience and understand our lives, including the stories we tell about these lives" (Charlick et al., 2015; Eatough & Smith, 2008; Pietkiewicz, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2015). This means that a person's experience is seen as being subject to interpretation. IPA shares some ontological commonalities with other qualitative methods such as Foucauldian discourse analysis (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015) because it examines how people's worlds are discursively constructed; and also shares some features with grounded theory (Charlick et al., 2015; Willig, 2012), because of its common focus on systematic analysis of a text to identify themes and categories.

3.2.2 Epistemology of IPA

Epistemology is concerned with the theory of knowledge (Cresswell, 2017). This research study adopted a contextual constructivist position that does not assume the presence of one reality, and where the researcher and the participant are actively involved in the construction of knowledge. The contextual constructivist position also acknowledges that knowledge is dependent on the situation and that meaning can be altered by context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This has implications for the researcher, as it means that the results of research are not generalizable, and they will only be true for the context in which the data are collected and the analysis conducted

(Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). The research

findings are embedded in the lived experience, and the original descriptions are

collected from the participants. The study is idiographic, contextual and

phenomenological.

3.2.3 Choice of methodology over alternatives

Initially, a mixed methods approach had been considered, using the Concerns Based

Adoption Model (CBAM) (Hall & Hord, 2015), which employs both quantitative and

qualitative data. While CBAM was considered as a methodology as it allows the

exploration of themes in educational change contexts (Çetinkaya, 2011; Christou,

Eliophotou-Menon, & Philippou, 2004; Gitsaki, Robby, Priest, Hamdan, Ben-

Chabane, 2013; Van den Berg, Sleegers, Geijse, & Vandenberghe, 2000), for the

purposes of this study, IPA better captures the lived experiences of the teachers and

places the individual voices of the participants at center stage. The primary focus of

the research was to foreground silenced voices, as it had emerged during the literature

review that few studies on UAE reform had focused specifically on the perceptions of

the teachers who are at the "chalk face" of the reforms being implemented. In asking

teachers to speak reflectively about how they had experienced the curriculum reform,

depth of insight and understanding into the phenomenon being examined would

occur, and would fill a gap in the literature (Brocki & Weardon, 2006; Charlick et al.,

2016; Gill, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Secondly, due to access and cultural issues, the participants for the research are drawn

from a limited sample. Therefore, IPA is an ideal methodology as it provides the

opportunity to create a detailed, holistic picture and gather 'thick, rich data' in a

contextualized setting (Cresswell, 2017). The term "thick rich data" refers to the way

in which qualitative data can yield nuanced "thick" descriptions, and interpret the complexities and the richness of what is being studied (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Small samples are ideal, and indeed recommended for IPA, as the focus is to study each individual's experience in-depth, and to foreground and interpret the experiences as lived by the participants (Brocki & Weardon, 2006; Charlick et al., 2015; Gill, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015).

Recognizing that the cultural context was a vital element of the inquiry, an ethnographical design was also considered. While there were some aspects that addressed the descriptive nature of the phenomenon under examination in an ethnographic design, the opportunity to study elements beyond the scope of cultural knowledge were desirable (Cresswell, 2017). Similarly, discourse analysis was also discarded, as exploration of the experiential side of the participant's perceptions, in addition to analyzing and deconstructing the content of their accounts was considered critical (Cohen et al., 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.3 Participants

A total of ten public school (female) teachers involved in the implementation of the bilingual reform program were invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews. This was purposeful sampling as the chosen teachers were graduates of the teacher education program at the UAE university in which I worked between 2004 and 2010. It was believed that these teachers would have the rich experiences to explore the phenomenon under inquiry. All ten teachers were employed at UAE government schools. From the ten teachers invited, four consented to participate in the semi-structured interviews. A further two interviews were obtained through the contacts of these teachers. It became important to focus on fewer participants, to garner the depth

of insights and analysis needed. Three participants were finally selected, on the basis

of cases that provided the most in-depth insights pertinent to the research questions.

These teachers are (pseudonymously): Sara, Maitha, and Noura.

3.4 Sampling

In IPA, the concept of "sampling" relates to choosing "informants" (Cohen et al.,

2011; Cresswell, 2017). This differs from other qualitative research methods such as

grounded theory, where sampling is more about where to go to obtain the data

(Cresswell, 2017), or case study, where sampling decisions focus on finding cases and

selecting the unit of analysis that best helps the researcher understand the case (Yin,

2017).

In this IPA study, purposeful sampling was used as it provided the opportunity to find

participants who would be knowledge and perception-rich cases for in-depth study.

Participants who were immersed in the context of the bilingual reform program were

chosen so that they could offer insights and understanding into the phenomenon being

explored (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Shinebourne, 2011; van Manen, 2014). These

participants were chosen for their knowledge of the context, and their ability to give

authentic, lived experience accounts of their perceptions of change in the reform

program. In addition, as they had trained as English as Foreign Language (EFL)

teachers and were fluent in both Arabic and English, they possessed the eloquence to

be able to express these perceptions across two languages.

Qualitative sampling is not a single planning decision, but rather an iterative series of

decisions made throughout the research (Emmel, 2013, DeVaney, 2016). It is

important for the researcher to be reflexive during the research process, and be

responsive to the flow of the research. Qualitative research requires the researcher to

be constantly considering her role as a researcher and her biases and assumptions. To be reflexive during research refers to the process of examining both oneself as researcher, and the research relationship (Shaw, 2016). Therefore, when it was found that not all of the ten participants selected in the original purposeful sample were available to participate, another sampling procedure was employed. Teachers were able to recommend other teachers involved in the bilingual reform program who might be willing to participate, and in this way, two more participants were contacted and became involved in the study. This type of sampling is termed as "snowball sampling'", and the metaphor is derived from the process of the "snowball" effect of the participant referring the researcher to another key actor, who in turn, refers the researcher to other key actors, making it an accumulative, dynamic, and diachronic process (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Yin, 2017). Yin (2017) also advocates that snowball sampling is beneficial in qualitative research provided the researcher uses it purposefully, and carefully measures whether the recommended participant may add extra information and value to the findings in the study.

3.4.1 Sample size

The appropriate number of interviews for an IPA study is a small sample, usually between three and six people (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Gill, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Brocki & Weardon (2006) note that the trend is for IPA to deal with very small participant groups. There are several reasons for the recommendation of this sample size. Firstly, a small sample size allows the researcher to develop a deep, interpretative analysis, rather than a superficial sweep over a larger group of participants. As IPA is idiographic, it requires a detailed, rich account of each individual's personal experiences and perceptions. Secondly, in a qualitative study such as IPA, having a sample size of between three and six

participants also allows sufficient scope for the researcher to look for similarities and differences among the participants. This is in contrast to quantitative research, where the sample size corresponds with the representativeness of the results to the population at large (Englander, 2012, 2016; Shinebourne, 2011).

From the sample of 12 potential participants, I finally interviewed six teachers, taking into account that there was a possibility that participants may choose to drop out. While none of the participants did drop out, due to the scope and scale of the thesis, and the large amount of detailed data generated in three instances in particular, I elected to analyze three interviews. These participants were also chosen on the basis that they were a homogeneous group - all were Emirati, all female, all had undergone the same training, and all taught in the primary sector of the bilingual curriculum reform project. It is recommended practice in IPA studies to seek a homogenous sample, a small group chosen purposively for whom the research question would be significant (Englander, 2016; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Shinebourne, 2011). In addition, with the small sample that is recommended for in-depth IPA enquiry, there is no intention to look for random or representative sampling. A small homogenous sample allows not just in-depth, idiographic focus, but also allows the researcher to identify common characteristics and circumstances, and convergences and divergences in the themes (Englander, 2016, Shinebourne, 2011, Smith, 2016).

3.5 Data collection

3.5.1 Interviews

Data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Smith et al. (2009), who wrote the influential text that underpins current IPA practice, state that the best way to access the participants' experiences and perceptions is to "invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first person account of their experiences" and to then study them in depth (p. 56). Because IPA is *idiographic*, each individual case is given intensive and detailed analysis before the researcher moves to the next case, and before the researcher begins to look across cases (Smith et al., 2009; Shinebourne, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Semi-structured interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015) allow the researcher to facilitate a flow of conversation to create a dialogue and gently raise key questions or areas the researcher wants to discuss further for the purpose of the research. It is the goal of phenomenological research not to "lead the participant", but rather to "direct the participant" (Giorgi, 2009, p. 123) so that the researcher does not impose their understanding of the phenomenon on the participant's narrative (Englander, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). Accordingly, a set of questions was developed ahead of the interviews to address the focus issues of this project. The interview protocols constructed were informed by the literature and theory about the phenomenon under study. This is consistent with Smith et al. (2009) who state that a researcher using IPA should commit to "exploring, describing, interpreting and situating the means by which our participants make sense of their experiences" (p. 40). The interview was set up as an exchange between conversational partners (Englander, 2012; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The questions were framed in a broad and open-ended fashion so that the participants would feel comfortable as if they were in an informal conversation. My extensive experience in

using interview protocols as an IELTS examiner prepared me well for this exercise, as I had undergone specific training in listening attentively, building rapport, and engaging with the participant.

The interview protocols developed for the interview had questions ranging from the general to the specific, asking less complex, non-challenging questions, to put the participants at their ease, before moving on to more challenging and thought-provoking questions. Nevertheless, as it is often the case with such interviews, a number of additional questions stemming from the information that the participants were providing were used in order to delve deeper into the issues that were under investigation. In this way, fresh insights were obtained so that the participant could offer new perspectives and beliefs that were way beyond the parameters that may have been initially formulated by the researcher (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

There were 16 semi-structured interview questions used in the data collection that functioned as triggers for the participants to discuss their perceptions of the change in themselves, their students, their colleagues, their classrooms and their communities. There were also 10 background questions asked about the participant's teacher education and teaching experience, their home languages, and demographic information such as age, and the emirate in which they live. The questions used can be found in *Appendix 1*. The interviews were conducted between September, 2015 and March, 2016, and took place in mutually convenient and culturally appropriate sites, coffee shops and ladies' clubs. Full details of the interview schedule can be found in *Appendix 2*.

All the participants were female and were aged 26, 26 and 27, and were graduates of a four-year Bachelor of Education program at a UAE tertiary institution and had been

employed in the UAE government school system. As such, they constituted an

homogenous sample, in alignment with IPA methodology (Englander, 2016). More

details about the participants are provided in *Appendix 3*.

3.5.2 Bilingual reform program documents

In order to prepare for the interview and to further enhance interpretation of the

qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews with the teachers,

other data were collected by the researcher such as Ministry of Education documents,

strategic plans, Parent Information Booklets and school development plans. The

purpose of sourcing these documents was to find information related to school

priorities and professional development planned for the next three-year period.

While these documents were valuable in providing the vision of the bilingual

educational reform program, it was also important to directly ask teachers in the

interview what type of initiatives actually took place in their schools, in order to

separate the rhetoric from the reality, and to confirm their own experiences and

interpretation of the policies. Official documents are quite difficult to obtain in this

region where transparency is not an automatic given in the government sector, and a

prevailing sense of "being seen to perform" rather than actually performing has been

anecdotally recounted by many in the system. It is worth noting that unlike in

Western countries, in government schools in the UAE, there is very little parent

involvement in the running of the school. Teacher-parent associations, boards of

governors, parent committees are rarely, if ever, found, and this is largely attributable

to the power distance issues of the state versus the individual (Hofstede, 2010) and

also the segregation issues. This is not the case in private schools in the UAE, but this

research was based in government UAE schools where students attending are

Emiratis. This is a dimension of the study that is quite different from a Western context, where one would factor in parental attitudes as a key variable in the school culture and direction.

3.6 Procedure

Each participant was interviewed individually face-to-face. Each interview lasted on average 70 minutes. Each participant was asked to choose a place for the interview where they felt most comfortable and at ease. All chose to meet in coffee shops in areas close to where they lived. This choice of interview venue promoted a relaxed and informal atmosphere, and even though the sites were public venues, we were able in each case to find a private booth area in which to conduct the interview in relative privacy. In most cases, the participants chose to meet in coffee shops located in private women-only clubs, which is consistent with UAE cultural norms about public/private spaces for women, and further reinforced a feeling of safety and security for the participants, as UAE Nationals.

The interviews were conducted in English, but at the interview, I was accompanied by an Arabic speaker who acted as a translator when necessary. I had elected to bring a translator in case the participants wanted to express opinions and ideas that required more technical vocabulary and they could not do it in English. While I was known to the interviewees, the person acting as the translator was not known and so she was introduced at the start of the interview and her role was explained to the interviewee. The Arabic translator assisted with language support only when necessary, and was not part of the "conversation" of the interviews.

At the start of each interview, the interviewee was given the information letter and received a copy of the consent form. Both the information letter and the consent form

were explained in detail and the interviewee was given the opportunity to ask any questions about their involvement in the project (either in English or in Arabic). Further explanations were provided when needed, and then the participant was asked to sign the consent form. Following that, I would start the interview with the predetermined, semi-structured questions.

Each interview was recorded using a digital recorder placed in plain view between the researcher and the interviewee. There was no video recording, as in the UAE this is inconsistent with cultural norms in the public sphere for female Emiratis. Each interview was subsequently transcribed and member checked, with a copy of the transcription provided to each participant in order to check for accuracy and also to give each participant a chance to add, delete, or change things before data analysis occurred (Cresswell, 2017).

In order to establish an audit trail, I kept a personal reflexive diary in the form of "field notes" in which I recorded my initial thoughts, impressions, and emerging interpretations about the interviews and the phenomenon under inquiry. This is a recommended practice (Englander, 2012; Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015), and I tried to write in the personal diary as soon as possible after the interview, and also during the data analysis stages of this research. By frequently reading and re-reading my written reflections throughout the research period, I was able to keep track of my developing interpretations of the phenomenon under inquiry.

3.7 Data analysis

The data from each interview were transcribed and analyzed using IPA methodology. IPA methodology involves an iterative and inductive cycle that is supported by the

stages identified below. Smith et al. (2009) note that researchers who use phenomenological inquiry are guided by a focus on the phenomenon of interest, and do not all follow a strict and rigid set of guidelines. While there may be some flexibility in the use of IPA, Smith et al. (2009) have developed a heuristic framework for analysis, which is very useful, especially for beginning researchers. Firstly, the interviews are transcribed verbatim. Smith et al. (2009) mention that pauses and tone of voice do not need to be indicated in the script, however, in other IPA literature (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2009; Jeong & Othman, 2016), researchers consider it a recommended practice, consistent with practices used in other qualitative methods (Cresswell, 2017). In conversations, the way people speak can convey a great deal of information. A proportion of the message is communicated in the actual words used, and a larger proportion of meaning can be transmitted in the way people speak. The tone and inflection of speech can be important indicators (Anyan, 2013; Bailey, 2008; Corby, Taggart & Cousins, 2015). As teachers of English, a common understanding of the significance of inflection and tone is understood, and hence was also important for this group and in this context. Therefore, I made the decision to add any pauses or changes of tone to the transcript as it added an additional dimension whereby pauses, hesitations, speech dynamics such as tone, pace and rhythm gave greater resonances to the written text and helped me recall the atmosphere of the interview.

In order to analyze the interview data after transcription, seven stages were followed. These stages were:

1) Reading and re-reading

2) Initial noting and exploratory comments

3) Developing emergent themes

4) Identifying connections across emergent themes

5) Moving to the next case

6) Identifying patterns across cases

7) Taking interpretations to deeper levels.

Stage 1: Reading and re-reading

I listened to the voice recording twice and then listened again while reading the transcript to totally immerse myself in the data and gain the overall meaning of the participant's dialogue. As IPA is idiographic, it is important that each script is listened to and analyzed independently of the others, before going on to analyze the next interview (Englander 2016; Smith & Osborn, 2015). During this first stage, I wrote down any initial reflections and observations and compared them also to the field notes in my personal diary that I had taken at the time of the interview. In this way, I could "bracket" the data, and maintain a balance between my own initial perceptions while still remaining focused on the data itself (Smith et al., 2009).

Stage 2: Initial noting and exploratory comments

I had prepared the transcripts so that there were wide margins on both the left-hand and right-hand sides. In the exploratory stage, I would write down comments on the left-hand side of the text using a color-coded system. I divided the exploratory comments into three discrete areas: descriptive comments, which focused on the content of what the participant had said (key words/phrases) were written in red ink; linguistic comments (repetition, emphasis, tone and fluency) exploring analysis of the

language used by the participant were written in blue ink; and conceptual comments, where I engaged with the text on conceptual and interpretative level were written in black ink (Englander, 2011; Smith, 2016). *Appendix F* contains a larger example of marked-up script.
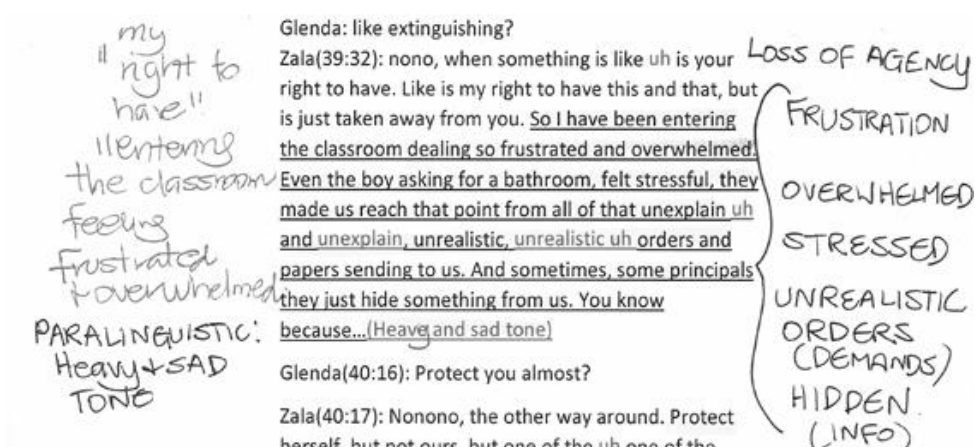
Figure 5: Example of marked-up script with initial comments.

Stage 3: Developing emergent themes

In this third stage, I developed emergent themes, and wrote these themes on the right-hand side of the manuscript. This process involved working with the notes and comments I had written in the earlier stage, rather than with the original transcript. The identification of themes meant a reduction of the volume of the data, however, it was important not to over-simplify and to be mindful of retaining the complexity of the data. This process forms part of the hermeneutic cycle- reading, reflective writing, and rigorous interpretation (Holland, 2014; Laverty, 2003). The goal of this stage is to produce a concise statement of what is important in the transcript (Smith et al., 2012). I then transferred the notations I had written on the transcript to a table.

Stage 4: Identifying connections across emergent themes

In this stage, I considered how the emergent themes might fit together to form subordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015). In order to facilitate this process, I wrote each emergent theme on a post-it note. I am a tactile and kinesthetic learner (Gardner, 2006) and found it helpful to create a board on which to move the post-it notes around, so that I could actually physically move the emergent themes around to consider how they might relate to each other. I was guided in this process by groupings put forward by Smith et al. (2009), for example by looking at the frequency with which an emergent theme occurs in the data (numeration); putting like with like (abstraction); bringing together a number of themes, and thus making an emergent theme a subordinate theme (subsumption), and also by identifying binary oppositions (polarization). I also looked at the mix of positive versus negative themes (function) and narrative themes that framed the participants' understandings. I then made a subordinate theme list for the transcript. An example of one of these lists for the participants is illustrated below.

Table 6: Excerpt of subordinate theme list for a participant

Sara : Sub-ordinate themes	Emergent themes
• limited resources in schools pre-reform • rote learning, students "like parrots" (pre-reform) • teachers "stuck in time" • modern pedagogy	**Conditions in pre-reform traditional schools versus reform program**
• Inclusion of phonics a positive aspect of reform	**Best practice: Phonics as a positive aspect of curriculum change**
• lack of qualified help in her school • EFL teachers need additional training in science/math pedagogy • some years had a great deal of support/other years almost none • irrelevant PD	**Not enough appropriate PD (professional development) support**

• mandatory PD in holidays • mixed gender PD	

Stage 5: Moving to the next case

This stage involved moving to the next transcript, and starting the process all over again. It is important in utilizing an IPA approach to bracket off the ideas (a concept sometimes termed *"epoche"* in phenomenological literature) that emerged from the previous case and to treat each new transcript on its own terms (Englander, 2012, 2016; Giorgi, 2009, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). In this way, new themes may emerge with each new transcript. It is highly likely that themes will be shared across transcripts, and Smith et al. (2009) advise that it is appropriate to use these earlier themes in addition to any new emergent themes. This starts an iterative and cyclical process whereby the researcher reads new transcripts, identifies new themes, and then may even go back to the earlier transcript to modify themes as she becomes more familiar with the data.

Stage 6: Identifying patterns across cases

This is the final stage of the process and involved looking for patterns across the cases. Smith et al. (2009) refer to this as looking for convergence and divergence. This stage reinforces the interpretative element of IPA, showing that it is not only descriptive but also interpretative. The goal is to move from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative (Englander, 2016; Smith et al., 2009). In order to find these connections, I again employed a kinesthetic approach,

and actually cut up the subordinate theme tables for each of the transcripts. This meant that I could physically move them around and visually consider relationships between them to generate superordinate themes. A helpful metaphor to understand how to make these connections was developed by Smith and Osborn (2015), who suggested that some themes are like magnets, drawing in concepts and helping to make sense of them. Smith et al. (2009) advise that developing both subordinate and superordinate themes is an interpretative process, and therefore not prescriptive. Smith advises that a researcher needs to be creative, exploratory and innovative in order to identify patterns across participants and use abstraction (putting like with like), subsumption (bringing together a series of related themes) and polarization (looking for oppositional relationships between emergent themes). Developing a board where I could use color codes for participants and emergent subordinate themes and move the pieces of paper around, allowed me to creatively group emergent themes and see connections far more easily than if the themes were text on a flat computer screen.

Figure 6: Development of subordinate themes and clustering into emergent themes

When this stage was completed, I collated the themes into tables to represent the superordinate themes and the subordinate themes across the participants and finally generated a master table of themes, a tool used in IPA to provide an overview of findings (Holland, 2014). Table 7 shows an example of a master list of superordinate themes across participants.

Table 7: Example of master list of superordinate themes across participants

Superordinate Theme	Sara	Maitha	Noura
Old pedagogy versus new pedagogy	✔		
Insufficient PD support	✔	✔	
Instability/lack of consistency	✔	✔	✔
Stress/struggle	✔	✔	
Resilience	✔	✔	✔
Not enough time given to evaluate project	✔	✔	✔

Teacher agency	✔	✔	✔
Emirati identity	✔	✔	✔

Step 7: Taking interpretations to deeper meanings

Once all the data were coded, themes were categorized in order to provide answers to each of the research questions, and the data pertaining to each theme were gathered from all the interviews in order to explore connections across the themes.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

There were a number of ethical considerations addressed in this research study. Smith (2015) notes that ethical research practice is a dynamic process. Accordingly, throughout the research, I monitored my ethical practice throughout the data collection, analysis, and write-up stage. An ethics application was completed and approved by the UNE Ethics committee prior to participant recruitment (Ethics Approval number HE15_216 - see *Appendix D*).

Informed written consent was obtained from all participants, and they were guaranteed anonymity. All participants were fully briefed as to the aims of the study and it was clearly stated in writing that participation in the research was voluntary and could be terminated by the participant at any time without consequence for the participant (Cresswell, 2017). In addition, member checking of each transcript was obtained before analysis of the data began, so participants could be clear as to what the data were and how they were being analyzed.

All audio recordings and transcripts were secured in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality, with the understanding that they would be destroyed after five years. Participants were offered the opportunity to receive a summary of the research findings, and one of the participants elected to receive this summary.

3.9 Assessing validity in IPA

It is important to review the validity and quality of IPA research by specific criteria recognized as appropriate. Smith (2016) recommends Yardley's criteria (2011) be used. These criteria include four principles: sensitivity to context; commitment and rigor; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance. In this study, all of these criteria were addressed.

Sensitivity to context

Sensitivity to context was a cornerstone of the research and as a researcher I was careful to abide by the shared cultural norms of UAE society. The way in which I phrased my questions, pursued some areas, while being mindful of the inherent sensitivities and power relations of a hierarchical and 'high context' society (Hofstede, 2017) reflected this awareness. Similarly, my background in education reform as a known and trusted figure in the local education context, allowed me to closely engage with the participants and to gather the idiographic and particular data needed for rigorous IPA analysis. If I had not shown sensitivity to local context, and earned their confidence, the participants would not have freely shared their authentic lived experiences during the study.

Commitment and rigor

I demonstrated the second principle, commitment and rigor, by ensuring that the chosen sample of participants could give relevant data to answer my research questions. During the interviews, I also demonstrated my commitment and rigor by picking up on important cues during each interview, and asking further questions which would trigger greater insights from the participants. Rigor was also displayed in the systematic approach I took to data analysis, by dealing with each subject in turn (idiographically) and then moving to a level of interpretation based on combined analysis.

Transparency and coherence

These criteria were addressed in my research in the write-up of the study. The methodology was clearly identified and the underlying philosophical and epistemological assumptions were explicitly identified. The process through which the sample was identified and chosen was clearly outlined in the study, as well as the steps used in the IPA analysis. In terms of coherence, there was a strong fit between the research done and the underlying theoretical assumptions of the approach being implemented. My research closely followed the steps recognized as characteristic of an IPA approach (Smith, 2016), and the reader was made explicitly aware that they were positioned as reading a study where the researcher is attempting to make sense of the participant's experience.

Impact and importance

These criteria were addressed by the significance of the study. In this research, I explored a gap in the research literature on education reform in the UAE, by

specifically speaking to the teacher stakeholders and giving voice to teachers who may not have had the opportunity to speak or have their views and situated knowledge valued in the workplace. Further importance is placed on the intention to publish and disseminate the findings, and to provide research insights into a discernible gap in the field literature. This dissemination would place value and importance on the perspectives of the participants and have impact in being provided back to the community about which the data relate.

3.9.1 Limitations of the study

As with any study, there are limitations that must be considered. The sample size of three participants means that the perceptions and findings were not generalizable for all contexts (as was intended), but, rather, provided a snapshot of these teachers' perceptions in this cultural context. Nonetheless, the deep, thick data generated from this IPA analysis lifted a veil on previously unchartered areas for stakeholders in this education reform context. The research provided valuable insights into female Emirati teachers' perceptions of the education reform, and its effects, opportunities and barriers, and the challenges they experienced.

Similar studies on male teachers' experiences and the education of boys in the UAE would obviously need to be conducted by a male researcher in this context, hence this potential limitation of the study was outside the control of the researcher.

CHAPTER 4: Data analysis

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, an interpretative presentation of the research findings is offered using the theoretical framework and methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The analysis revealed that three master superordinate themes were shared by the three participants in the study. These superordinate themes are:

Figure 7: Three master superordinate themes

Analysis of each individual case around these three superordinate themes is provided case by case, with a focus on the intensity and detail of each case, before moving on to the next case, and finally, looking across cases (Englander, 2016; Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2016;). In order to reinforce this idiographic, or individual importance of each case, three individual pen portraits were written to reveal and analyze the key themes that arose from each of the participants, before doing further analysis to look at connections among the participants. After each individual case was described and analyzed, a table of emergent (subordinate) themes was created. After all three cases were analyzed, a superordinate list of themes shared across all the participants was constructed.

In the analysis, transcript extracts feature strongly in order to enable the individual voices of the participants to be heard, as their lived experience and how they make sense of that experience (Gill, 2014; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). It is vital that the

superordinate themes developed are illustrated by direct quotes from participant accounts so that it can be clearly shown that the interpretative analysis done by the researcher is anchored in the voice of the participants' observations. Accordingly, in my role as a researcher, I needed to be reflexive and systematically document each step of the analysis, mindful of personal assumptions and bias, to show that the study is based on a rigorous and transparent process (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Roberts, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2015), while still retaining the individual stories of the participants.

In the following section, a "pen portrait" of the first participant is outlined. A pen portrait is an informal description of a person which may cover age and other 'hard' variables, but also focuses on softer dimensions such as attitudes, appearance and perceptions (The Association for Qualitative Research, 2016).

4.1 Pen portrait of Sara

Sara is Emirati and 26 years old. She completed a four-year Bachelor of Education and taught for seven years in Cycle One (various grades from Grade 1 to Grade 3). Sara's responses were rich and detailed. She spoke fluently, openly and enthusiastically about her experiences teaching in the bilingual program outlining both the positive and the negative experiences. A resonant theme for Sara was conflict between old versus new pedagogical styles. She was full of the enthusiasm of a fresh graduate and embraced the new program, but during the interview also expressed another theme related to her dissatisfaction with the lack of organization and structure provided, particularly in the last three years of her seven years teaching. Sara's responses regarding the support she would like to have received regarding professional development were extensive, and she gave a detailed account of the type

of PD she would recommend for future programs, particularly related to support for

teaching science in English.

Table 8: Sara: Subordinate and emergent themes

Sara : Sub-ordinate Themes	Emergent Themes
• limited resources in schools pre-reform • rote learning, students "like parrots" (pre-reform) • teachers "stuck in time" • modern pedagogy	**Conditions in pre-reform traditional schools versus reform program**
• inclusion of phonics a positive aspect of reform	**Best practice: Phonics as a positive aspect of curriculum change**
• lack of qualified help in her school • EFL teachers need additional training in science/math pedagogy • some years had a great deal of support/other years almost none • irrelevant PD • mandatory PD in holidays • mixed gender PD	**Not enough appropriate PD (professional development) support**
• reform "not stable" • constant change • unclear steps/chaos • top-down change with unclear direction "lost in translation" to teachers below	**Instability/lack of consistency in implementation of reform**
• feeling lost • journey framed as a "struggle" • the future going to a "darker place" • feeling of being on a hamster wheel, running in the same circle	**Stress/struggle**
• funding issues • resource rich to resource poor in one year	**Budget cuts/lack of resources**
• use the materials we have • adjust/ be flexible • handling obstacles with humor	**Resilience**
• need to give the program a chance • give it ten years, a full cycle • leadership change/program change	**Not enough time given to evaluate project**
• unrealistic demands • feeling overwhelmed • "hidden" information/lack of transparency • in good years - sense of agency about when subjects can be taught during the week • opportunity to choose/pride in the school	**Teacher Agency (positive and negative)**
• Science should be taught in mother tongue Arabic • belief that the bilingual program is additive bilingualism • importance of English as a lingua franca for students in the future while still maintaining Arabic as official L1	**Emirati identity**
• the B. Ed program changed us • feeling of belonging to a community of practice (using new pedagogy among colleagues) • safe haven • working from the heart • during successful years of program felt a sense of community; "it was heaven"	**Concepts of self and identity/ community of practice**

An analysis of the subordinate themes in Sara's script revealed nine emergent themes, which are illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9: Sara: Emergent themes

Sara : Emergent Themes
1. Old pedagogy versus new pedagogy
2.Insufficient professional development (PD) support
3. Instability/lack of consistency in curriculum approach/texts
4. Stress/struggle
5. Resilience
6. Not enough time given to evaluate project
7. Teacher Agency
8. Emirati identity
9. Concepts of self and identity

4.1.1 Script 1: Sara

The nine emergent themes in the above table, all fit into three subordinate themes. The following section contains an analysis of Sara's interview in relation to these three superordinate themes: teacher agency; professional learning and professional development.

4.1.2 Lack of Agency

At the beginning of the interview, Sara reflected on how she was taught in UAE government schools when she was a student, and how English as an additional language was taught before the bilingual reform process. She acknowledged that reforms had already taken effect when she joined the program in 2009, two years into bilingual reform process, so she felt "*lucky"* (Sara: line 10) as her first year of teaching did not involve her being in the "*before picture*" as an educator (Sara: line 12).

Sara spoke with slight derision of the earlier teaching modes, which she stated relied on rote learning and memorization. She felt strongly that the "*limited*" (Sara: line 15) nature of this teaching style, repeating how all they did was "*recite words... like a rehearsal*" (Sara: lines 16-17), and "*recite information*"(Sara: line 17) and "*memorize, memorize*" (Sara: line 26). This use of repetition indicates her strong feelings about the limitations of this method. Sara then used another compelling metaphor to typify the nature of the way in which she experienced learning English in UAE government schools, describing that the teachers' goal was to have them recite "*like parrots...who can say whatever you teach them...instead* (of creating) *students who can think"* (Sara: lines 61- 63).

Sara reflected on her own learning style, observing that she felt stifled by the way in which lessons in traditional schools pre-reform had been taught. She self-identified as a *"free-spirit"* (Sara: line 34) and spoke of how "*people cannot control me from that age*" (Sara: line 35). She looked back on her time at college during the Bachelor of Education, and fervently observed "the [Bachelor of] *education program changed us"* (Sara: line 40). Sara saw a sharp contrast between the pedagogical theory and

teaching methods that she learnt at college compared to the actuality of teaching in the traditional curriculum government schools. She vividly described her surprise and dismay at the reality of practice teaching in the government school system before reform, saying that "*it was like going from a world where everything is right...to one where teachers are stuck in time*" (Sara: line 54).

This use of metaphor, "*stuck in time*", revealed Sara's positive orientation towards school reform and curriculum change. It is well documented in the literature that teacher beliefs play a strong role in the success of education reform (Cochran-Smith & Stern, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fullan, 2015; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016; Hattie, 2012; Hőkkä, 2012), so Sara's belief that reform is both welcome and needed in government schools is evidence of her strong commitment to the curriculum change process. Her identity is aligned with the "new", the curriculum reform, in binary opposition to the old, "*outdated*", rote-learning memorization methods.

Only four minutes into the interview, Sara expressed the essence of her feelings towards the reform project. She enthusiastically declared her happiness with the project saying:

> *Honestly, when I start with bilingual project.*
> *It feels right...it feels like what I learned is*
> *applied. The ways of teaching, the way of*
> *management, the resources is all...as it meant*
> *to be.* (Sara: lines 72-76)

That happiness, though, was to be short-lived, as Sara observed wistfully in the next sentence "*Unfortunately sad that it is gone...*" (Sara: line 77), and offered her perception of the main reason for its decline being "*it was not stable, the bilingual reform project wasn't stable. This is the only thing that teachers and students*

struggle with" (Sara: lines 78-80). The word *"struggle"* is a strong verb, connoting frustration and thwarted effort. These words, *"hope"* and *"happiness", "instability"* and *"struggle"* frame the narrative of Sara's perception of her lived experience of the bilingual reform program.

As an enthusiastic, free spirited pre-service teacher, Sara had been keen to apply the best practice pedagogical strategies she had learnt at college, and for a brief time, she felt she had the agency to do that in the bilingual reform program. However, within a few short years, the system became *"unstable"* (Sara: line 79), and she and her colleagues struggled in the reform program. Sara's words reflected her belief that the decline of the reform program represented a kind of lost opportunity, a paradise lost. Her narrative showed a journey from a time full of promise, to a time of struggle and frustration, which eventually led to her resignation from teaching.

In Sara's perception, the cause of the instability was the way in which the curriculum change was implemented. She believed that while the Ministry may have had a "*clear vision*" (Sara: line 87) of the end goal, they did not articulate a process to achieve that vision. Sara's use of the words "*they want a final product*" (Sara: line 89), indicated a sense of a lack of concern for the human element in the process. The word "*product*" connotes a unit, or a commodity, rather than a living, breathing human that needs care and attention. She expressed in these words that the teachers and students were not being treated as people with needs and emotions, but rather as units and "*products*". Sara expressed deep frustration in her tone, describing how the teachers were given no clear steps to follow to achieve the reform, and that "*they don't want* (to deal with) *students...they don't want to discuss with you or the steps to do that*" (Sara: lines 90-92), ending with a dramatic declaration that *"it was...a chaos"* (Sara: line 92).

Sara observed that even though she worked in the reform project at the school for five years, that she really had no clear vision about the final goals of the project. She attributed this lack of clarity to the constant change in the curriculum and believed these changes were because the people guiding the reform process were constantly changing. She observed *"They* [the Ministry] *wanted results, but the people controlling MAG were in between...British people...then Australian...and they bring all the things they are familiar with...changing from curriculum to curriculum"* (Sara: lines 105-115). She noted sadly, *"they didn't give it a chance"* (Sara: line 111).

Sara observed that in her later years in the program, it was *"semi-stable"* (Sara: line 118), *"because is the same people [at the top]"* (Sara: line 121), and they stayed longer. During this period Sara's resilience and sense of personal agency shone through. She stated that while she started the year with no books, she felt she could cope. She remarked that *"OK, we don't have books, we don't have material things. But we can still give the information...reach to the brain of the students"* (Sara: line 168). Not all the teachers around her had Sara's resilience though and she observed that for some, this "*chaos*" "metastasized" into anger. Sara's observations and coping behavior showed that she was not fundamentally affected by the changes, and that she still felt a sense of agency in being able to *"reach the brain"* of her students (Sara: line 168).

Sara also perceived positive elements of the reform. For example, she noted that the renewed emphasis on phonics instruction was *"honestly very good"* (Sara: line 185) and produced good results with the Grade 1 students. She contrasted this successful phonics approach with the older rote learning style of traditional ABCs (decontextualized letter names), thus setting up a binary opposition in her mind of new versus old. Sara lamented that she would start them off in Grade 1 and Grade 2

with phonics, and then because the books were unavailable, and the curriculum changing at school level, in Grade 3 she would find that the teaching approach would switch *"to the old way"* (Sara: line 230) of what she termed *"ABC rote learning"* (Sara: line 211). Sara described how with phonics, the students were able to *"blend letters"* (Sara: line 218) and make words, but observed that with the old approach, they could not easily learn new words. This was problematic she noted because as they were learning Science and Mathematics in English (not their first language) they were challenged with unfamiliar English words and concepts for which they had no background or vocabulary. Sara was frustrated as she described how she had to teach them Science in Grade 1, when they could not speak English and noted *"this was a main thing, the main struggle I faced..."* (Sara: line 221). She echoed a theme heard often in the public debate about the use of English as a MOI in UAE government schools where the Arabic is the first language and said *"why teach Science at this age in a foreign language... at this young age you should do it with the local (the Emiratis) with the mother tongue... because Science is in English...they don't have the first thing of English...how can they understand this one?"* (Sara: lines 264-272)

Here, Sara was processing her own beliefs about teaching Science in English rather than in Arabic. She went on to observe that this was particularly a struggle since she had trained as a teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL teacher) observing, *"we didn't graduate from university knowing that we would be teaching Science in English"* (Sara: lines 279-281). Sara searched her memory to recall how she felt as a fresh graduate of the Bachelor of Education program observing how she felt the *"enthusiasm of a graduate"* (Sara: line 314). While she had not been trained to teach content subjects such as Mathematics and Science in English, she felt initial excitement. She remembered her head being full of *"the things we learned in*

college". (Sara: line 339) and how eager she was to see if they would work in *"real life or just in theory"* (Sara: line 341).

4.1.3 Professional Learning/ Professional Development

When asked about the professional development programs available for her to help her bridge this gap and feel confident to teach content subjects in English, she said the only support she had was a support teacher placed in the school, a mentor teacher, who was placed there by the Ministry. She stated that there were three people in her school from the Ministry - a Head teacher, and two other teachers - all expatriate teachers from first language English countries. In Sara's case, though, her support teacher was, in her words, *"not a strong teacher"* (Sara: line 393) and as a result *"she wasn't much help for me"* (Sara: line 398) and could not control the class. This underscores the need for support teachers who are not just experienced and qualified, but also familiar with the cultural context so that they can provide real support for teachers within the reform program. During the course of the interview, Sara revealed that while many of the mentor teachers were effective, there were many who were not.

One of the themes that emerged strongly with Sara was her disappointment in the quality of relevant professional development (PD) training. Formal PD training was offered for two weeks each year. Sara laughed when asked about the nature of this PD, saying wryly *"we had two weeks of training every year…by force…by signature"* (Sara: line 583). Sara's disdain for this PD was especially noticeable, evidenced from her tone of voice and strong emphasis when stating that *"it was held where the holidays were supposed to be"* (Sara: line 587). In fact, during the interview, the

words *"mandatory PD"* (Sara: lines 604- 606) were repeated often by her, almost as if they were a collocation, which would indicate that this "*mandatory PD"* had been the subject of much conversation and derision by Sara and her colleagues. Even the use of the word *"mandatory"* is of interest, as it would not be a high frequency word for a second language speaker in her school environment, highlighting that it was likely a phrase passed down from the management to enforce their attendance.

Sara spoke of the PD sessions as if they were an imposition, rather than a support. She observed *"most of them were boring, honestly"* (Sara: line 666) and she felt that most had no relevance to the needs of the teachers. The subjects of the PD she said were *"things I already know... but things we needed on the other hand...we didn't get."* (Sara: line 696). Laughing loudly, she said that she had sat in the back and played Candy Crush on the phone. However, not all the PD sessions were ineffective and she recounted that those sessions given by people sent from the Ministry (as opposed to Zone Supervisor led sessions) were useful, in particular some "model lessons" on teaching Science concepts in English. This underscores the importance of conducting a needs analysis in each zone to ascertain the subjects for PD that would be of most use to the teachers, rather than just giving a top-down announcement about mandatory PD, and leaving it to the zones to fill up the time with whatever is available. Sara expressed that she and her colleagues felt alienated in these PD sessions, that they were in the wrong PD at the wrong time, and that she was there just to *"clock in the forty hours of PD to fill the Ministry requirement…just to clear their slate"* (Sara: line 764). While she was saying this though, she expressed that she understood the system, and understood that she was there fulfilling a performative task, to be seen to be there, and tick a box, rather than being there to gain real benefit.

One of the unexpected themes which emerged strongly in Sara's interview was her discomfort with the PD sessions being of mixed gender. The UAE is a segregated society, and the teaching profession in government schools has typically attracted women as it offers a protected environment with only female staff. Many families, particularly those in more conservative emirates such as the one where Sara lives, only allow young women to work in the public arena in areas such as teaching where all staff are female. However, while the schools are segregated, the PDs, held in zone headquarters, were of mixed gender. While this may seem the norm in Western communities, in the UAE, it is not. Sara, a young married Emirati woman, felt uncomfortable in this learning environment. She was already out of her comfort zone travelling to another emirate for the Zone PD sessions, and then also found herself in closed quarters, for extended time in a mixed gender environment, with expatriate Arab men (not Emirati men). While she expressed that the men were not disrespectful, Sara said that she and her colleagues felt uncomfortable speaking in the sessions in a mixed environment. She observed *"you have to attend the courses* (with the men)*, and discuss with them, you have to interact with them"* (Sara: lines 621-624)*.* She spoke of losing her sense of a safe controlled environment, an *"all lady community... a closed community"* (Sara: lines 635-636)*,* stating that "*you feel like you get less and less of the thing that keep you going in this…special place*" (Sara: lines 642-643). She went on further to say that in general, the changing conditions in teaching were leading to fewer Emirati women being happy in teaching saying *"This is one of the things that makes ladies leave teaching now...they like that is a controlled environment. But when they lose that, khalas* [Arabic word for "finish"] (Sara: lines 649-651).

Sara's observation about losing the benefits of female only sessions underscores the need for cultural sensitivity in planning the PD. If the women teachers are in a more familiar and non-threatening environment, they will be more willing to embrace the PD and thus pass on the knowledge to their colleagues and implement the strategies learnt in PD in the classroom. When I asked why they had been planned that way, when surely Emiratis in the Ministry were aware of the cultural norms, Sara shrugged and said that things get *"lost in translation"* (Sara: line 727) and that *"something in the chain gets lost"* (Sara: line 721) showing that the reform needs to be carefully organized, not just at top Ministry level, but also for the teachers at the chalk-face who will be the people actually implementing the curriculum at the school level.

4.1.4 Teacher agency

In the interview, Sara showed genuine enthusiasm for teaching, speaking warmly about her experiences using EFL approaches such as Total Physical Response (TPR) and the Communicative Approach (CA). She spoke of how in the early years of the reform, she was able to employ these approaches successfully and that the students were responsive. *"I enjoy singing and acting out the words* (Sara: line 814), and that it worked well with the students and the vocabulary "*stuck in their heads*" (Sara: line 818). Her whole demeanor when recounting her experiences showed that she truly enjoyed teaching the children. However, she related that in the later years of the reform she felt stressed and overwhelmed from all the directives passed down, directives that were not fully explained. She observed *"like is my right...to have this and that but is just taken away from you...we were given unrealistic and...uh...unexplained orders... and papers sending to us...and sometimes some principals just hid something from us"* (Sara: lines 833-840). The sense of agency that Sara felt in the early years of teaching has been replaced by a sense of

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powerlessness and loss of teacher agency. She spoke in a heavy tone of how she felt frustrated and overwhelmed in the teaching environment. She used the image of there being "*no carrier*" (Sara: line 724), no middle-man between the Ministry and the teachers, and that the school management was not conveying and contextualizing the information to the teachers. Her words conveyed that she felt that there was no transparency in the system, just directives from a top- down source with little support from her school management. Her voice displayed anger, and her choice of words was strong when she recalled *"they say you cannot do that and it is all lie...and they just think about themselves*" (Sara: lines 840-858). It was from this point that Sara indicated that she felt she would need to leave teaching as she was finding the atmosphere unsustainable and stressful. Her words became more emphatic, and she used repetition saying over and over how the teachers became *"angrier and angrier to the point that it explode"* (Sara: line 874*). This use of repetition and the strong emotions conveyed show how much Sara had lost faith in the program, in teaching and in her vocation as an educator, and show how she felt a complete loss of agency and thus, disinvested and disinterested in the goals of the reform program.

4.1.5 Evaluation of the reform program

Sara was unaware of any formal evaluation having been carried out on the program. She agreed that there must have been evaluations carried out at some level, but as a teacher at school level, had not been informed either of evaluations being carried out in the school, or of any wider evaluation programs taking place. This is consistent with many institutions in the UAE, which in terms of Hofstede's cross-cultural studies (1984, 2017) is a country which is considered to exhibit high power distance. Power distance is the extent to which people accept a hierarchical order in a society where everybody has a place and which needs no further justification (Hofstede, 2017).

Despite her lack of knowledge of formal evaluation taking place at higher levels, Sara showed signs that she had done her own informal evaluation of the program and had thought carefully about the reasons for program being phased out. She attributes it to a lack of patience *"sabura"* (Sara: line 930) in Arabic. She expressed:

> *They didn't give it a chance...I honestly believe in it (the reform) ...and it would have work (sic)...if they give it like ten years' time. Because you cannot judge something without giving it a time...because you know it is like a kid you know, when it is first born, it is just like a little bit easier... because he don't need many things...just a bottle...and then, when he grows a bit bigger, you have to give more. There is a problem at every age...without giving time - how can you judge it really work? So you cannot judge like curriculum from 2005-2015 - that's only eight years...you have to give it at last two or three more years...let the boys who started with MAG (the reform), graduate with MAG...because if you stop it before they reach college, how can you measure the effectiveness? MAG, without reaching the boys that started with it, to end up with it and to see the results in college.* (Sara: lines 895-916)

In this reflection, Sara showed that she is aware that effective curriculum reform takes time, and that patience is needed to see the implementations take hold and become effective. She was aware that there is no quick remedy, no quick fix and that a full cycle needs to take place in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the reforms. She is aware of the cultural context and attributes the abrupt end of the program to political changes and change in ministry appointments. Due to cultural norms, Emiratis are very cautious when discussing the leadership of the country and it is important as a researcher in this context to respect these norms. Sara expressed her opinion very carefully that the minister must have had "*other ideas for the students*" (Sara: line

928) and that he is "*a hard worker with good ideas, but needs to consult with the people in the field, not the people under him directly"* (Sara: lines 955-957). At this point, it was obvious to me that this was uncomfortable territory, and from the tone and register of her voice, Sara signaled that this was all that could be said by her about the sudden end to the program. This highlights the power distance in public institutions, and gives insight into the reasons why it is difficult to effectively implement wide-scale top-down reform in UAE government schools. If information is restricted in going top-down, then, conversely, the mechanism for reporting on how the reforms are progressing have the same difficulties in being communicated up to management and Ministry levels. This underscores the need for more research such as this study that collects data on how teachers at the forefront of the reform project experience these changes at classroom level.

4.1.6 Sara: Recommendations for future reforms

When asked about future reform, Sara observed that there is a great need to go forward with a *"continuous plan"* (Sara: line 986), as opposed to just *"being thrown in the classroom with a new book...or...without* [a book]" she said wryly (Sara: lines 971-972*)*. The strong image Sara employs of being *"thrown into a classroom"* is symptomatic of the distress she felt about the lack of continuous PD support in the bilingual program.

Sara repeated that she believed the leadership had been premature in evaluating the program. While she was in favor of introducing English as an additional language in Grade 1, and held the belief that Mathematics could be taught in English because "*Math is logical, semi-easy to teach...universal in any language"* (Sara: lines 975-976), she believed that Science was better taught in their first language of Arabic. She

observed "*because some of the words are really hard, and you need to uhm...pronounce them right*" (line 980) and "*you have words that are different when you translate it...so Science should be taught in the mother tongue*" (Sara: lines 1020-1021).

On the subject of Arabic language attrition, Sara had nothing to convey but scorn. When asked about her response to the public debate in the UAE about the loss of Arabic as the dominant language due to the bilingual programs she said emphatically:

> *Did you hear the sarcasm in my voice? Come on,*
> *they have exactly the same time being taught in*
> *Arabic and being taught in English...so who is*
> *losing the language? Nobody!* (Sara: lines 1011-1012).

Sara's views on the use of Arabic and English in the early years of schooling are consistent with current views on translanguaging, and she described how it was implemented simultaneously in Grade 1, Grade 6 and 10, with additional years added each year. She could not understand how they could "*judge*" (line 1005) the program before the first graduates who had started in Grade 1 had gone through the full system. She said, "*They didn't have the full picture...the full experience of MAG, so you cannot judge that...you cannot judge something without giving it a time.*" (Sara: lines 1005-1007). Sara used a vivid metaphor to describe how the bilingual program needed time to develop comparing the program to a child. Her metaphors connote the need to nurture, they are metaphors drawn from the family, and indicate the way in which she views education as an organic and growing entity, that needs to be looked after and "fed", with resources, professional learning and a sense of community belonging.

Sara's perceptions on teaching English as an additional language, alongside Arabic in the early years in the bilingual reform program are consistent with theories of translanguaging (Valasco & García, 2014) or dynamic bilingualism (García, 2011; García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2016) in our 21st century globalized economy, where it is viewed that the additional language should come at no cost, and the use of both languages leads to improved linguistic outcomes and academic success (García, 2011).

Sara perceived that in the beginning of the reform process, there had been local Emirati resistance to the program because some of the foreign teachers brought in to mentor on the program were not mindful of cultural norms. She stated, *" all the foreigner teachers ... some of them weren't respect for all the culture. So they were wearing short clothes"* (Sara: lines 1103-1105). She showed strong awareness of the spectrum of values that might exist in her community, even among the Emiratis saying that:

> *When it comes to school, you are teaching the*
> *first grader who is the first child, a spoiled*
> *brother in the house, and with the first grader*
> *who is the last child with an old mother who*
> *don't read. So you have the diversity of all...*
> *umm...community? All people from the*
> *community* (Sara: lines 1119-1124).

From here, Sara went on to speak fondly of the sense of community she felt during the more stable years of the program. She spoke warmly of the staffroom being "*a safe heaven"* (Sara: line 1165), and of being able to sit with other teachers and discuss issues and school affairs. She described in positive tones being able to plan her

timetable, showing that the feeling of teacher agency was strongly linked to her feelings of being comfortable and content in her role. She spoke of these early days of the reform program, when she perceived there was more consistency and organization in glowing terms. She was extremely happy at the school, observing, *"I was so so proud of the place I am in...and the school I chose. I felt I was so lucky* (Sara: line 1303) and that she could *"work from the heart"* (Sara: line 1302).

This was not to last, and Sara recounted that within twelve months, the smooth system had broken down and duties had become mandated from the top down. Sara spoke again of *"feeling a little bit struggling"* (Sara: line 1176) and that she felt *"pressure"* (Sara: line 1195) with *"no time to mark...and you go to the classroom acting like crazy...and they force you to teach"* (Sara: lines 1198-1120*). She observed, *"I should be able to choose...to plan which days I will teach Science or Math or English"* (Sara: lines 1202-1230*). The deterioration in the organization of the schedule, and the sudden changes made her feel disenfranchised, with a lack of autonomy and teacher agency (Fullan, 2015; Priestley, 2011; Hőkkä, 2012).

4.1.7 Translanguaging, code-switching and diglossia

Sara's beliefs about language learning were derived from her university training as an EFL teacher. She had been taught theories about the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967, 1972) whereby it was believed that there the best time to learn a language was between the age of five and puberty, and code-switching (Wei, 2009, 2011a), which had shaped her ideas about how and when a second language should be taught. She observed:

> *My uncle is an engineer…umm…went to Chicago*
> *university to do a Master's…and it was like he had*

> *to review English all over again…it was like his*
>
> *English hadn't stuck…but if we started from the early*
>
> *age…with practice…it will stay forever* (Sara: lines 1364-1367).

While this view is not shared equivocally by many theorists (García, 2011; Meissel, 2011) who view pedagogical and student factors as being more important factors than biological age or predispositions, Sara's beliefs were firmly situated in what she had learnt in the early 2000s at university. She also made important observations about Arabic diglossia and spoke of the way in which it impacted her students during the Grade 1 year. Diglossia is a situation where two varieties of the same language are used in one language community (Al-Sahafi, 2016; Albirini, 2015). In Arabic, this manifests as Modern Standard Arabic (*Fush'a*) and Khaleeji Gulf Arabic (*Amiyya*). Typically, Emirati children would speak *Amiyya* at home until coming to school, where they would in many cases be encountering Modern Standard Arabic (*Fush'a*) for the first time, while also learning English. It is a complex situation, as the majority of these students will also be exposed to English from maids and nannies at home, and may also speak another regional dialect depending on regional origin, for example Persian or Baloosh. Thus, it is not a simple bilingual situation, but a heteroglossic or plurilingual situation (Baker & Wright, 2017) or dynamic bilingual language environment where the communicative practices involve translanguaging (Wright, Boun & García, 2015).

Sara observed this phenomenon in her teaching. She perceived that for the first few months of Grade 1, her students would face issues adapting to Modern Standard Arabic. She observed:

> *But it start a little bit harder in Grade 1, because*
>
> *they have millions of words in Khaleeji [Gulf*

Colloquial Arabic]...but he don't really know

how to say it in...Arabic Arabic [meaning Modern

Standard Arabic - Fus'ha] (Sara: lines 1471-1474).

Sara reflected, however, that this was only challenging for the first few months and

that the students quickly adjusted. Sara also observed a number of issues to do with

directionality of writing, as Arabic is written from right to left, while English from left

to right. She said, *"especially with Grade 1, when they have Arabic class in periods 1,*

2 and 3...when it comes to English class, she may write his name backward" (Sara:

lines 1442-1443). While this was common, she observed, and "almost every day you

find at least a boy who does that" (Sara: lines 1452-1453), it was not always the same

child, so she believed it was not a problem related to a specific boy, but simply a

process the children would go through as they learn to be proficient in each language

[Note: in UAE government schools, Cycle One teachers in segregated boys' schools

can be female]. Sara's views are consistent with García's theory of translanguaging

where language learning is recursive rather than linear (Wright, Boun & García, 2015)

and learners are constantly adjusting to the multi-modal terrain of the communicative

act (García, Ibarra-Johnson & Seltzer, 2016).

Sara saw no problem with students managing to navigate between using English in the

English medium subject of English, Mathematics, and Science; and using Arabic in

subjects taught through the medium of Standard Arabic. Her views are in contrast to

much of the scare-mongering in the UAE media and among parents about language

attrition and loss of identity through losing "mother tongue Arabic". While she is not

aware of the concepts of dynamic bilingualism and translanguaging, her views

represent the path forward for language education in our globalized 21st century

classrooms, classrooms that adopt a more heteroglossic model of bilingualism. In fact, Sara perceived that students should have access to more languages. She observed:

> *Honestly...if I am talking if I am being a little bit*
> *biased, I would be saying Spanish? Because if you*
> *are thinking about it, more than third of the world*
> *speak Spanish. And it sounds...so [laughing]*
>
> (Sara: lines 1536-1539).

Sara believed that it should not be forced, but rather that:

> *Students should have an opportunity to choose*
> *for themselves. Because they are already forced*
> *to talk English, because they need it...and English*
> *and Arabic is universal somehow...* (Sara: lines 1556-1563).

Sara's comments showed that she is aware of the importance of English as a *lingua franca*, a skill her students need to navigate well through our globalized world. She is also unconsciously sharing the plurilinguistic goals of current European education, as stated by Language Policy Council of Europe (Beacco et al., 2016; Common European Framework of References for Languages, 2017) which views plurilingualism as a positive value, and recommends people to have proficiency in varying degrees in several languages and experience several cultures.

Sara concluded her interview in a philosophical light reflecting that *"honestly it was very good while it last...and while we were going somewhere"* (Sara: lines 1767-1768). She sighed pensively and said "*I wish they just give it times...but you know in our country...every person when he comes to power wants to shine and try out new things...even if the old things work"* (Sara: lines 1770-1762). Sara's perception of the project overall was that it had potential, but it needed more time to develop to be able

to see the outcomes. At the time of the interview, she had already left teaching, and seeking a completely different path, had started a small business operating from her home.

4.2 Pen portrait of Maitha

Maitha is Emirati and worked in the bilingual reform program government schools for three years. She left teaching four years ago, and now works in educational management in the tertiary sector. At the time of the interview, Maitha had just completed a Master's in Education, so her perceptions of the way in which the reform unfolded were expressed in a metalanguage more sophisticated than other participants in the study. In addition, during the course of the interview, many of her views on the educational change were conveyed using a more abstract conceptual framework, concerned with quality assurance and educational management, rather than only personalized and emotional reactions.

4.2.1 Script 2: Maitha

Maitha is highly articulate in English and has a straightforward and serious manner. She went straight to the point when asked about her perceptions of the change process in her school. Maitha joined the school as an EFL teacher, teaching English to Arabic speaking students in Grades 4 and 5. She recounted how after being there for only a few months the EFL staff at her school was told that they would soon be teaching not just English, but also Mathematics and Science through the medium of English. Maitha's tone is steady, but conveys her shock at it being "*a sudden change*" (Maitha: line 57). She recounted her experience unemotionally, but her repetition of the words

"*sudden change*" (Maitha: lines 52 and 63) showed that it was an unexpected, and unwelcome change. Maitha's main concern was for the students, as she felt her training had not prepared her for this role of teaching other subjects through the medium of English.

Table 10: Maitha: Subordinate and emergent themes

Maitha: Subordinate themes	Maitha: Emergent themes
• sudden change • top-down change with no processes in place at school level	**Change management**
• no assessment plan in beginning for Science/ Math	**Lack of direction in assessment**
• no mentors at her school • not enough PD • irrelevant PD e.g. filing systems, archiving.	**Not enough support/little PD**
• grammar translation versus communicative approach • translate all to Arabic first/or immerse them in L2	**Old versus new pedagogy**
• "I used to get stress" • discomfort • pressure to deliver • fed- up	**Stress/struggle**
• found creative ways to teach themselves Math/Science strategies (e.g. YouTube)	**Resilience/adaptability**
• no checks and balances • no evaluative processes in place at teacher level	**Lack of evaluative processes/no checks and balances.**
• "I am not trained to be a science/math teacher" • feeling inadequate/unprepared • self-doubt	**Teacher agency/self-efficacy**
• role of English in UAE • need to strengthen "mother tongue" Arabic • school vs. home language	**Emirati identity**
• sense of identity as EFL teacher challenged • as a teacher I have my own philosophy • not in a position to argue	**Concepts of self and identity**
• parents should encourage children to read at home • parents should ensure children speak Arabic at home (not just English)	**Role of parents in child literacy development (link to Emirati identity)**

An analysis of the subordinate themes in Maitha's script showed 11 emergent themes, which are illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: Maitha: Emergent themes

Maitha: Emergent themes
1. Change management
2. Lack of direction in assessment
3. Not enough support/little PD
4. Old versus new pedagogy
5. Stress/struggle
6. Resilience/Adaptability
7. Lack of evaluative processes/no checks and balances.
8. Teacher agency/self-efficacy
9. Emirati identity
10. Concepts of self and identity
11. Role of parents in child literacy development (link to Emirati identity)

4.2.2 "But I am not trained to teach Science"

Maitha stated that at the briefing to the teachers about the reform, she immediately saw the challenges ahead, and spoke assertively saying, *"I am not trained to teach Science and Math...there are techniques and strategies"* (lines 80-81). Maitha

described that in the same way as there are specific pedagogical strategies to teach EFL effectively, there are also key teaching strategies needed in order to teach other content subjects. In addition, Maitha went on to describe how she was not good at Mathematics. In this way, Maitha shows that her sense of self-efficacy as a teacher was challenged by this new role. She felt prepared as a fresh graduate with a Bachelor of Education degree in EFL teaching, and many practicums under her belt, but felt lost and inadequate at having been asked to assume a new role without training. Maitha related:

> *Whenever I went to my English class, I was so*
> *confident, but for Math...it was not successful for*
> *me...I used to get stressed...and felt...what if they*
> *ask me some questions...and I cannot answer*
> *them immediately?* (Maitha: lines 52-56).

Maitha was dismayed by the management's assumption that if you can speak English well, then you must be able to teach any subject in English well. Even as a fresh graduate, Maitha had both the self-awareness and assertiveness to identify the key issues, as evidenced by her statement:

> *It's not like if you are good at English, you*
> *can teach English. The same thing with*
> *Science and Math. Yes, I will be alright*
> *with the language...but how can I deliver*
> *the subject? With what strategies?* (Maitha: lines 87-89).

With these words, Maitha isolated the key issue in the early implementation of the bilingual reform project, which is that many of the teachers involved in the project had no prior training in the strategies for teaching Mathematics and Science in English.

Maitha showed a cynicism beyond her years as she went on to describe how she was told in that meeting that everything would be provided. With wry irony, rather than bitterness, Maitha observed how she was told:

> *It will be very organized for you guys, everything*
> *will be planned, you will have teaching assistants*
> *and mentors and we will prepare you for the*
> *change over the next few months* (Maitha: lines 96-98).

She laughed as she recalled:

> *And then till one month...we didn't hear anything back.*
> *And then suddenly, we received an email saying all the*
> *changes will be incorporated by next week!* (Maitha: lines 100-103).

Maitha's sense of teacher agency was affected by this top-down sudden directive. She described how she did not feel comfortable with the new role, but as a fresh graduate, and a young female employee in a large institution she did not feel empowered to resist. She noted, *"at the time we are not in a position to argue to to...express our opinion"* (Maitha: lines 108-109). Maitha hesitated before talking about *"expressing her opinion"* (Maitha: line 109). The hesitation indicated that she wanted to say something stronger, more challenging to describe the strong feelings of anxiety of being placed in an unfamiliar role. However, like Sara, Maitha lives in a collective society (Hofstede, 1984, 2017) where power distance in society is prevalent. She is also conservative, and accordingly, would never make a public scene of strong dissent, as this would be against the cultural norms of her society.

Maitha went on to describe how the teaching materials and syllabi were delivered to her. They came by email she recalled, and she found that not only had she to teach content subjects such as Mathematics and Science in English, but also in the middle of

semester, she was given an additional grade to teach. Maitha showed her coping skills and resilience to the challenging situation by adjusting quickly on the surface, however she recalled it felt *"really uncomfortable to go to the classroom"* (Maitha: line 122). Her voice rose as she remembered it and she described how intensely difficult she found the whole situation stating succinctly *"you don't know the students, you don't know the subject, and you have to deliver"* (Maitha: lines 123-124).

When asked how the students were assessed, Maitha observed, *"the English was done by the teachers themselves...but the interesting part was for Science and Math there were no assessments at that time"* (Maitha: lines 154-155). She recalled that the teachers were told for those subjects to just give grades based on the involvement of the students in the classroom.

Maitha stated that this made her uncomfortable as she believes in accountability and quality assurance, and observed *"this way, I could give any grades to the students, and if they* [management] *came back asking for the certification or the way how I've calculated it, I would have nothing"* (Maitha: line 164). She noted, *"for English it was prepared, based on skills, the writing, reading and speaking...but for Math and Science no"* saying, *"it was unprepared, it was not organized...they just gave us a textbook for Science and Math, and they were like...this is what you have to deliver by the end of the semester"* (Maitha: lines 165-171).

The annoyance in her voice as she recalled these days, indicated that teaching in these conditions, as a novice teacher without specific training in Mathematics and Science pedagogy was a challenging and stressful experience. With these comments, Maitha showed that her sense of professionalism was challenged. During her teacher training and in her practicums, Maitha recounted how she had been taught to provide

well-prepared, well-organized lessons. She also had been guided to develop
meaningful assessments related to measurable student outcomes. It was a shock for
her to find that in the classrooms she now found herself in charge of, that she would
not be able to plan classes, use the strategies she had learnt, or develop meaningful
assessment. Maitha's sense of her identity as a teacher was thus challenged, along
with her sense of professionalism and pride in doing her job well (Eteläpelto,
Vähäsatanen, Hőkkä, & Paloniemi, 2014; Vähäsantanen, 2015).

4.2.3 No mentor teachers

Though the reform projects in the schools were designed so that qualified and
experienced mentor teachers, typically from Western countries such as the United
Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, would be in each
school as guides, mentors and sources of knowledge, in Maitha's case, there were no
mentor teachers. She was based in a large urban school in one of the larger and more
prosperous emirates, yet there were no bilingual reform mentors placed at her school.

Maitha was self-reflective and identified how she felt lost without this guidance. She
spoke frankly and honestly of how she felt "*we needed someone to grade ourselves"*
(Maitha: line 186) ...*we wanted someone to come and say you are alright, you are
doing fine"* (lines 190-192). She then said, somewhat sadly "*but when you are not
sure, when you doubt yourself, and entering the classroom without that confidence is
very difficult*" (lines 192-194). From these statements, it can be observed that without
a benchmark, a critical friend, a mentor to guide and encourage teachers, teacher
morale is affected, and a teacher's belief in her self-efficacy and ability to implement
the reforms will thus be negatively impacted (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Tschannen-
Moran & Johnson, 2011; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Maitha related wistfully "*they promised us they would bring mentors...but they never brought us one"* (Maitha: lines 197-198). Her disappointment and consequent stress related to this situation is indicated by her use of phrases such as "*it was very difficult for us*" (Maitha: line 198) and "*it was pressure on us"* (Maitha: line 229).

Maitha described that in her school, there were no PD sessions given, observing that they did not provide in-house sessions where trained Mathematics and Science teachers would share techniques. In the reform project, the aim was to have Mathematics and Science taught not just in English, but also using more cooperative interactive pedagogical techniques. It can be assumed that the reason why the school management did not involve the existing Mathematics and Science teachers in developing communities of practice with the bilingual teachers was because these Math and Science teachers taught in Arabic, and typically used more rote learning and memorization techniques with their students. Maitha was aware of this, but during the interview, she stated, *"we never had one to one discussion with Math and Science teachers...and it would* [have been] *good to get the strategies or techniques".* Maitha showed here that she was eager to learn and very receptive to developing new skills, but was not given the opportunity by management to go to professional development sessions.

4.2.4 "We were educating ourselves"

Many of the teachers in this school, however, showed resourcefulness. Maitha smiled as she recounted how the teachers would "educate themselves" (line 359). She said "*as teachers we used to sit and look on YouTube and the Internet resources* [to see] *how can we deliver Math and Science to the classes*" (Maitha: lines 360-363). She reemphasized that the *"school did not provide us with any model that we can follow"*

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(Maitha: lines 364-365). Maitha's resilience and sense of professionalism was apparent in the way she tried to compensate for this lack of guidance by seeking out information and guidance from the Internet. With twenty classes to teach and prepare each week, behavior management issues in the classes, and low resourced classrooms, it is testimony to her strength and eagerness to do the best for her students. She shook her head wryly though and observed *"it was purely experimenting...we were experimenting on students...and the management was experimenting on teachers"* (Maitha: lines 378-380). Maitha showed strong self-knowledge, and awareness of the context with this statement, as her words pithily framed in a short sentence the nature of the reform project in her school. Far from being a well-organized program with access to mentors and the best of Western pedagogical methods, as the rhetoric of the mission statement of the program stated, the reality of the reform program in her context was an ad-hoc experimentation with novice teachers placed in challenging conditions.

Maitha also observed that there was no evaluation of the implementation occurring during her time at the school.

She observed:

> *We were not looking at the outcome of the students,*
> *or outcome of the teachers how they are delivering.*
> *One day, the teachers said, "Ok, I'm going to teach*
> *these three subjects"...for them this is accomplishment,*
> *then khalas* [Arabic word for "finish"] (Maitha: lines 383-387).

She made another observation as if to wrap up her perception of the way in which assessment was carried out saying, *"there were no checks at all. Not on teachers, not on students"* (Maitha: line 389). Maitha had a very clear vision of how future bilingual

reform projects could be supported. She observed that *"continuous improvement is needed, as long as it is done properly"* (Maitha: line 410). Maitha perceived that is was vital for the teachers to be given direction:

> *There should be a proper plan...it should be organized...*
> *and they...the management should involve the teachers*
> *in the change because if the teachers are comfortable*
> *and accepting the change, it can reflect*
> *on the student* (Maitha: lines 412-418).

While reflecting on her ideas about how future reform could be supported, Maitha again observed:

> *They informed that some changes will going to happen*
> *and after a few days, they were saying we have to*
> *implement this starting next week. So I think ...*
> *more communication* (Maitha: lines 418-421).

For Maitha then, clear lines of communication and giving the teachers a sense of ownership about the change process is essential for teacher efficacy, and in turn, student academic success. Reflecting further, Maitha also identified that *"benchmarking"* (Maitha: line 422) is needed. She related how she was aware that private schools in the UAE were already using many of these strategies and if they had been given the change to benchmark themselves against these schools and to share knowledge, the teachers and the students would both have benefited.

4.2.5 Maitha: Recommendations to support future reform

Maitha identified that PD sessions which focused on teaching strategies for teaching content subjects in English would be highly effective for future reform programs. In particular, she felt that she would have benefited from being taught scientific and

technical terminology in English, specialized vocabulary that she would need to teach the Science lessons. She observed that while she was fluent in communicative English, her training as an English teacher had not provided her with a broad vocabulary in scientific and technical language. She also felt she needed booster lessons in basic Mathematics and Science stating emphatically that:

> *I don't know how life of the plant happens...*
> *I don't know, I can't remember, I took it in*
> *Grade 5, which is now twenty years... so this*
> *should be refreshed. If they* [management]
> *cannot do it, at least they should give us time*
> *so we can be prepared ourselves* (Maitha: lines 489-493).

When asked about her response to the bilingual education debate that surrounds the education reform project here in the UAE, Maitha observed that she was worried about the loss of mother tongue. Unlike other participants, such as Sara, who felt that it was a dynamic bilingual situation, or at the very least, additive bilingualism, Maitha expressed that she was worried about the *"loss of mother tongue"* (line 603), showing her concern that it could result in a subtractive bilingualism. She observed:

> *This is quite interesting! I watch my nieces and nephews who have*
> *been in English nurseries with English teachers and have English*
> *speaking nannies...who speak to them at home in English. I know*
> *their accent will be good, and their English will be good...but I don't*
> *believe in this approach...I think one should strengthen their own*
> *mother tongue first* (Maitha: lines 593-603).

When asked to elaborate, she used herself as an example and observed that although she was a Band 8 (very high performance) in the writing strand of IELTS English, in

contrast, her knowledge of formal classical written Arabic would be a comparable Band 5. She attributed this to emphasis in the UAE culture on English media saying they watch *"a lot of English movies" (line 677).* The diglossic nature of Arabic, where there is a colloquial every day spoken Arabic (Khaleeji - *Amiyya*) and a formal written variety of Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic - *Fus'ha*) means that an Emirati can be completely fluent in one variety, yet rarely use formal written Classical Arabic, even when working in government departments. This is not to say that they are not educated and literate in their first language, but rather that they use the regional Gulf Khaleeji version of Arabic, instead of Classical Arabic.

Maitha however, did not perceive that the remedy for this subtractive bilingualism lay in the school. She supported the goals of the school bilingual reform saying *"I think what schools are doing is good"* (line 671). Maitha believed that solution lay in the home environment stating that in many Emirati families she knew, it seemed that *"English is a priority even more than our own mother tongue"* (Maitha: line 681).

It is revealing that Maitha chose the phrase *"mother tongue"* (Maitha: line 603) and repeated it often, rather than just saying *"Arabic".* For Maitha, *"mother tongue"* connotes more than just language, it is about identity, culture, the essence of what it is to be Emirati. She repeated the word *"mother tongue"* many times during the interview emphasizing how important it was in her perception of UAE culture. She said *"I love English...I use it every day with my colleagues...even Emirati colleagues...but I also believe mother tongue is very important. Though you want to be good in other languages, I think our mother tongue is our thing...we should strengthen that...if I'm thinking about my own children ... that I will have in the future...I will say, I will make sure that their Arabic is very strong"* (Maitha: lines

641-654). From these observations, Maitha showed that despite her earlier misgivings about the possible loss of Arabic language, she is aware of the heterolinguistic nature of the Emirati context, and that she believes in a dynamic bilingualism model (García et al., 2016). She emphasized that she has great respect and love for her culture, and that for her, language and identity are intrinsically entwined. She also acknowledged however, that the way the model was implemented did not allow for the additive aspect, giving enough time to Arabic, while also "adding" English in meaningful ways.

Maitha used several metaphors to describe how *"mother tongue"* needs to be nurtured. First, she described it in terms of a plant using the phrase *"you have to grow it"* (Maitha: line 886)*,* and then moved to imagery of a stone observing that *"you have to polish it"* (line 886). Finally, she described it as a skill that you will lose if you do not use it. She likened it to being like an artist saying *"it's like you are a painter, but if you don't paint at all you will lose that skill one day...you have to practice*" (Maitha: lines 885-891).

Towards the end of the interview Maitha was asked about what she perceived would be the best way to prepare Emirati students for life chances. She thought carefully and said *"my dream template would be the same thing as is being done in the reform program...Arabic and English intensively but not just from Grade 1...but from Kindergarten. But in Kindergarten...it should be more Arabic than English. At that stage, I think the child needs to know more about his own language".* (Maitha: lines 940-949).

4.2.6 "Involve the teacher"

Maitha then reiterated that any future curriculum reform should involve teachers in both the decision making process and the planning and implementation process. She reflected:

> *I think teachers should be involved in decision-making*
>
> *...and every other step to be aware of what's going on...*
>
> *cause...at the end of the day, they are the ones who*
>
> *deliver it* (Maitha: lines 1018-1022),

Maitha thought deeply and observed that this was important not just for the short-term goals of the reform project, but also for future generations. She expressed that she felt an obligation to the nation, saying that:

> *The focus should be teachers and students...and*
>
> *we want to do the best to our next generation, but*
>
> *who are going to teach this next generation? This*
>
> *generation are going to teach the next. So the*
>
> *priority is both* (Maitha: lines 1022-1027).

4.3 Pen portrait of Noura

Noura is 28 years old, and also a graduate of a four-year Bachelor of Education. She works in a girl's government primary school in one of the more conservative emirates. Unlike the previous two participants discussed, Noura is still working as teacher in the bilingual reform program. Of the three participants, Noura is the only one who wears *niqab*, the thin gauze face covering which covers all of her face, except for her eyes. We met in a women's only private club, a large sprawling sea-front property, full of "ladies only" well-being centers, spas and restaurants, and as she settled in to speak with me, she took this *niqab* off, an indication of the trust she felt in both the segregated environment, and me as her interviewer. It should also be noted, that in her primary school environment Noura would also not wear *niqab*, as in a single gender and protected environment, the norm in Noura's cultural context is not to wear it. Noura is forthright, very enthusiastic about teaching and graduated in her year with the highest possible honors receiving a nation-wide award for excellence. She has been teaching for six years, and is still at the same school where she carried out her practicum during her four-year Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Second Language. While she was doing her practicum, the school taught English as an additional language, with all other instruction in English. However, as a fresh graduate, Noura was among the first teachers to be part of the bilingual reform program, and among the first to have to adjust to teaching content subjects such as Mathematics and Science in English. Like others involved in this study, prior to teaching on the program, Noura had no training in teaching Mathematics and Science.

The subordinate and emergent themes, which emerged from Noura's script, are illustrated in Table 12.

Table 12: Noura: Subordinate and emergent themes

Noura: Subordinate themes	Noura: Emergent themes
• positive sense of agency • skills are transferable (English to teaching Math/Science content in English) • feeling lucky to work in the project and in the school	**Teacher Agency** **Self-efficacy**
• many teachers afraid to join the school reform project/felt unprepared Noura had four years B.Ed in Western model and felt secure in methodology	**Pre-reform traditional schools versus reform program**
• well-organized curriculum • well-organized mentor and *wakila* (school manager)	**Well-organized mentor/curriculum**
• parents want ranked grading • unfamiliar with assessment criteria in reformed curriculum • educating the parents/increased parental involvement	**Gap between parental expectations and assessment criteria after curriculum reform**
• shock at class size (15-17 in first year; 30-35 in second year) • class size too large to do activities • Communicative Approach needs smaller class to do activities • local leadership in emirate established all schools would be Model Schools (with extra activity class).	**Mismatch of class size to pedagogy**
• first four years - bilingual immersion and in fifth year back to teaching content in Arabic • fragmented approach-changing policy mid-program • changing form worksheets to textbooks	**Instability and lack of consistency in implementation of reform**
• some teachers in the system resisted the change (older teachers) • "I am not a Maths teacher"	**Resistance from older teachers**
• never shy to ask anything • embracing change	**Resilience and adaptability**
• well-organized internal and external PD at least once a week from mentors	**Useful and relevant PD**

• parents in favor of bilingual education	**Role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity**
• led to big classes as community backed the project (cost-effective for girls- no fees)	
• backlash occurred when curriculum changed back to Arabic, children withdrew to private schools	
• some mentors did not adjust • some mentors were not flexible	**Cultural adjustment for mentors**
• positive orientation; links self-identity to new worlds while remaining with cultural norms	**Concepts of self and identity**
• not enough time given to evaluate project	**Change needs time**

These themes were reduced to one table of emergent themes as illustrated on the following page. This was done by identifying through abstraction and interpretation, the key guiding principles in Noura's narrative.

Table 13: Noura: Emergent themes

Noura: Emergent themes
1. **Teacher Agency /Self-efficacy**
2. **Pre-reform traditional schools vs. reform program**
3. **Well-organized mentor/curriculum**
3. **Gap between parental expectations and assessment criteria after curriculum Reform**
4. **Mismatch of class size to pedagogy**
5. **Instability/lack of consistency in implementation of reform**
6. **Resistance from older teachers**

7. Resilience/adaptability
8. Useful and relevant PD
9. Role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity
10. Cultural adjustment for mentors
11. Concepts of self and identity
12. Change needs time

4.3.1 Script 3: Noura

At the start of the interview, Noura revealed her optimistic approach to embracing the reform, recounting that *"I have the skill to teach English...so I have the skill to teach other subjects. So I go with it, I start to teach"* (Noura: lines 37-38). This revealed her positive orientation to the reform and her belief in her self-efficacy. The fact that Noura is still teaching, where others in her cohort are not and have "burnt out" or become disillusioned, could be linked to her sense of self-efficacy. Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) has been positively linked to higher levels of jobs satisfaction and lower levels of stress and burnout (Aloe, Amo & Shanahan, 2014; Collie, Shapka & Perry, 2012; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

Noura also spoke positively of the organization of the reform, especially in the first year. She observed that the success of the program in the first year was largely because of the organizational skills of the Canadian Academic Program Coordinator (APC) brought into the school to facilitate the MAG program, who asked the *wakila* (Arabic for administrative manager) to structure the timetable so that the teachers

involved in the bilingual reform could be free on Thursdays from the fourth period. This gave them four consecutive free periods in which to confer with other teachers to plan, organize worksheets and copy any materials needed for the next week, a different system to that encountered by the other participants in the study. She observed *"we were lucky...because the lady who was there* (the mentor Canadian APC) *was very organized...not all schools were like that"* (Noura: lines 71-74).

As the interview continued, it emerged that these academic mentors changed yearly, and consequently, the quality of the implementation of the reform fluctuated depending on how pro-active, engaged and motivated each new APC was. Noura observed:

> *During the first two years, I had one APC, **and then*** > *> **another one, and the fourth year I had another one.*** > *> **So every year one of them will come***...she will come
> *with her ideas, with her beliefs. **So everything will*** > *> **change in the school.*** *The next year she comes with*
> *another idea, and everything in the school changes*
> [Researcher's emphasis] (Noura: lines 473-477).

This observation made by Noura is consistent with a public inspection report made of the Dubai schools' bilingual program in 2010 (DSIB, 2010), which noted that the high turn-over of staff due to policy changes and high turn-over at senior level negatively impacted the goals of the program.

Noura referenced how "*lucky"* (Noura: line 70, line 80, line 238), she was in her school on three separate occasions during the interview. While her characterization of her circumstances as "*luck"* showed her positive orientation to both teaching and the bilingual reform, in the course of the interview, it emerged that her "*luck*" was more to

do with the practical and systematic steps she took to adjusting to the required change of teaching content subjects through the medium of English. She spoke of "*never being shy to ask anything*" (Noura: line 290) concerned with materials and described how she would go to her mentors to find out more about challenging terminology. She described *"I will read and get the information and ...go to them and say...do you say it like this or like this?"* (Noura: lines 294-295). This indicated that Noura felt a sense of teacher agency, that she could acquire, absorb and learn the new material quickly. It also showed that she felt a keen sense of her ability to enact the reform, as she involved herself deeply in practice reform (Priestley et al., 2012; Robinson, 2012) rather than displaying teacher resistance as described by Ball (2012) in the literature on educational change. It can also be surmised that since Noura entered the bilingual program as a first year teacher, she was more likely to be receptive to change as she had not developed routines, strong beliefs or deeply embedded assumptions about teaching developed over years. This is consistent with the change management literature where it has been found that veteran teachers are more likely to resist change (Hargreaves, 2005a; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, Huberman, 1989).

Noura also discussed how she formed small groups with her colleagues, groups which would be somewhat akin to professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond, 2013; Hord & Summers, 2008; Netolicky, 2016) or communities of practice (Wenger & Traynor, 2015). These groups developed organically, and were not set up by the Western teacher mentors placed in the school to help guide the change. As Noura related how the English teachers would gather together and search on the Internet for materials, the calm and relaxed manner in which she conveyed this information indicated that she found this group a source of support and motivation during the fast-paced change process.

4.3.2 "The parents are used to marks"

Noura shared her views on the assessment of the teaching and learning in the bilingual program during her first year. One of the challenges she observed was the way in which reporting was done. In the reform, instead of giving students grades and a ranking in the class, the students were given a holistic mark. Noura referred to it as *"symbols without marks"* (Noura: line 122), but as she explained it to me, it became clear that they were holistic marks related to criteria. Noura conveyed that the parents did not like this marking system. This is an example of how reform principles, and the rationale behind them, need to be conveyed not just to the teachers, but also to other stakeholders, and in particular to the parents. The Emirati parents are products of a school system that gave grades for each subject and also ranked the students according to their achievement in the class. Noura recounted that the parents were so unhappy with the holistic marking that they constantly complained to both her and the school management. She stated "*they said - is my child the first of the class or the second?"* (Noura: lines 128-129).

Even though Noura said she and other teachers made efforts to explain how the ranking was not the focus of their approach, the parents still lobbied to receive marks for the children, and eventually, the school compromised and gave certificates. As she related this, it is notable that Noura mentioned several times *"I don't know how it changed"* and "*we don't know*" (Noura: line 142), both statements indicating that the teachers did not have a cohesive idea of how the curriculum would be assessed and the over-arching goals and learning outcomes for the subjects they taught.

Other challenges mentioned by Noura involved class size. When she joined the school as a teacher, the class sizes were around fifteen students. Noura shared that this size

was ideal for the methodology she used, and allowed her to develop group activities, speaking practice and independent learning plans (ILPs) for her students. Over the next years, Noura found her class size almost doubled and she expressed her extreme discomfort with this repeating several times *"I was shocked, shocked"* (Noura: line 162). She explained that after hearing good reports about the school in the first year, Emirati parents began taking their female children out of the private school system, where they were paying around 25,000 dirhams (about $7000 US) per semester, and placing them in the newly reformed government schools where they paid no fees. Noura recounts how this placed enormous strain on her as a teacher, because she could not plan activities and structure her lessons and teach communicatively as the classes were just too big. This underscores the lack of planning at the school level. In a context where teachers were already struggling to deliver lessons in English in subjects they had no training or experience in teaching, additional pressure was given by increasing the class sizes by almost double.

4.3.3 Positive aspects

Noura's perceptions of the bilingual reform were not all negative. During the interview she described several positive elements related to the transfer of teaching knowledge. In particular, she mentioned the "Drop Everything and Read" program, which she found at first strange, then enthusiastically embraced. She described how the APC prepared baskets of books for each classroom, and asked the teachers to have the children (Grade 1 and 2) just hold the books, look at the pictures, and as Noura described "*develop a relationship with the book*". Noura also spoke highly of the weekly meetings that were held in the second year of her teaching, where she described them discussing articles and sharing their views and opinions of the pedagogical techniques outlined. This would indicate that as the program developed,

in Noura's school, a professional learning community had developed, where teachers were sharing best practice and creatively collaborating. Noura also spoke in glowing terms of the quality of the worksheets that were provided from the central program body. They were well-designed, she said, and integrated the themes across subjects. She gave examples of student tasks such as writing a report after the Science fair, or writing a recount of a class trip to a local book exhibition.

4.3.4 Assessment: "We don't take those marks because they are low"

One discordant note was the way in which Noura described the assessment. She said that at the beginning of the term the students did a diagnostic test sent from the Ministry, and then at the end of them another test, which was also centralized and sent from the Ministry. She then said quite plainly *"but we don't take those marks because the kids will go really low. Because it is not what they are...study"* (Noura: lines 111-112). This would indicate issues with face validity and questions could be raised about the relationship between what is being tested and what is being taught. It is also revealing that Noura did not even comment on this as being mismatched, and instead just accommodated it. Her comments would indicate that in the early years of the bilingual program, despite the best of intentions, from the policy makers, there was no benchmarking or standardization across the school system and between the various districts.

4.3.5 "They need to give change some time"

In Noura's emirate, something highly significant occurred in the third year of teaching, which impacted greatly on the bilingual program. With the change of the education minister, in this emirate it was decided that English would still be taught from Grade 1, but that Mathematics and Science would go back to being taught in

Arabic. This constituted a complete break away in this emirate from the original additive bilingual early immersion goal of the reform program, and meant that English returned to being taught as just an additional language, more aligned to what García et al. (2016) describe as a "double monolingual model" (p. 142). This shift to a double monolingual model had implications for students who had started in the bilingual reform program in Grade 1, as all of a sudden, they had to adjust to the scientific and mathematical terminology changing to Arabic. Noura described how a large number of the students struggled, and as a result, many of the parents took their students out of the government schools and placed them back in the private schools. Noura shook her head at this saying *"if they start something* [the policy makers] ...*they need to wait for it"* (Noura: lines 962-963). Using emotive language, she described how the teachers and the students "*really suffer from changing curriculum every year. Every year they change the curriculum"* (Noura: line 966).

Noura also observed that this impacted negatively on the English instruction. She recalled how many of the foreign mentors left, or did not have their contracts renewed. With the departure of the foreign mentors, the activity-based worksheets vanished as well. Here Noura was at her most despondent as she described how they went from delivering well-structured activities, to using much lower English level ability level textbooks.

4.3.6 Educational borrowing

This return to using textbooks is consistent with trends in education in the United Kingdom at this time. In 2014, as a response to low rankings for British children in the PISA scores, there was a return to more 'traditional' teaching methods. To address the reasons underlying this dip in the league tables, the UK Education Minister, Nick

Gibb, claimed that an "anti-textbook culture" (Paton, 2014) is leaving UK students lagging behind their peers in Europe and the Far East. Gibb made a correlation between the "over-reliance on worksheets" (Paton, 2014) and the poor marks, blaming it on lack of using textbooks in the class. The UAE is a former protectorate of the UK, and Emirati policy makers have often borrowed from UK education policy, as well as from US, Australian, New Zealand, Finnish and Singaporean models (Aydarova, 2013; Lootah, 2011; Uddin, 2014). It is well documented in the literature that there are underlying issues surrounding the suitability of the piecemeal transfer of policies from countries whose geopolitical and societal contexts may be vastly different (García, 2011; Karmani, 2005a; Skutnabb-Kangas, Torres-Guzman, 2006; Pennycook, 2010, 1994; Phillipson, 2003; Tan & Chua, 2015; Whitty, 2016). Borrowing policies means also importing the associated cultural values, which may not be consistent with Emirati norms, and Karmani (2005a) writes extensively of how the privileging of English in the curriculum over Arabic, what he terms "petrolinguistics" (Karmani, 2005a, p.87), is an existential threat to Emirati language and culture. In addition, it is not just enough to import the policy, the processes that are appropriate to the local context also need to be developed to support the policy. The lack of a consistent and sustainable set of processes to support the curriculum reform was a constant theme mentioned in the interviews of the three participants involved in the study.

Literature on the use of using international large-scale assessments as the major driver of educational policy decisions has also been widely documented with some critics observing that it can result in the standardization of curricula and a competitive agenda (Nordin & Sundberg, 2016), a homogenization of systems (Baker & LeTendre, 2005), the spread of isomorphic ideologies (Pettersson, 2008), a decreased

focus on the type of creativity needed for innovation (Zhao, 2012), and at the more post-structuralist end of the spectrum, a neo-liberal landscape of "policy as numbers" (Lingard & Rizvi, 2011, p. 357). In the UAE, only one emirate participated in PISA, and the last results released in 2016, showed that students had decreased in global performance ranking at 47 and 48 in Mathematics and Science, respectively. In reading, the UAE students showed disappointing results, being ranked at 51 points below the OECD average, putting the country on a par with countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Uruguay (PISA, 2017). These scores are likely to be contributing factors to the change in policy in Noura's emirate, as while her emirate did not participate directly, the scores of the neighboring high profile emirate were well publicized in the local media.

For whatever the reasons behind this sudden change, around this time, Noura reported that the mode of delivery changed from centralized prepared worksheets to text-books. Noura was vehement in expressing her distress at this move, as she said "*you have to finish every single page...which I hate*" (Noura: line 553). Literature on best practice for the teaching-learning interface recommends that textbooks should be used flexibly and critically (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2010; Morgan & Mercurio, 2011), but the new directives received by the teachers in this emirate were to follow the textbook strictly page by page. Noura recounted *"you have to correct every single page...so the time will go with correcting, checking...instead of doing activities....the whole lesson is just (presentation)...just give them (the students) the time to speak!"* (Noura: lines 615-619). She rounded off this strong outburst by observing that *"they changed from a very high level English to very low level"* (Noura: lines 623-624).

4.3.7 Motivation, self and identity

Noura's orientation to teaching in the English program overall was positive. While she expressed she is not as happy with the curriculum now as she was when it was an additive bilingual program, she is still actively teaching in the system and plans to remain in the profession. While we are talking, she revealed her primary motivation for becoming a teacher. Noura recounted that when she was around sixteen, and her older sister (a graduate of the same Bachelor of Education program) sat down for a serious talk with their mother about their future. Their older sister had completed a business degree and had worked in the airport, a non-segregated environment. As she came from a deeply conservative family, as soon as she got married, this older sister had to give up working as her new husband's family had strong beliefs about women working in mixed gender environments. Noura reflected:

> *My eldest sister started to work in the airport and her*
> *work was with men and she has like a big problem with*
> *her husband, and my brother saying why, why, why?*
> (Noura: lines 1123-1126).

Noura recounted that she observed this situation closely, and determined that she would never allow herself to be in a position where she could be told that she could not work. She stated:

> *So I was thinking that if I become a doctor...how will*
> *my life be?* (line 1126)*...and my two brothers will not*
> *let their wives work because their qualifications and*
> *certificates are to work with men* (Noura: lines 1152-1153).

Noura self-identifies as someone who exhibits independent qualities but at her core, she is also mindful of cultural norms. In her construction of identity, Noura revealed that she saw herself as a teaching practitioner in her "imagined second language community" (Ushioda, 2011, p. 41), teaching in a protected, segregated place of safety (a girls' school), but empowered by the fact that she has a separate identity outside the home as a professional teacher. Noura felt a sense of community membership in her role as a teacher and felt she belonged to a community of practice (Sachs, 2001; Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Traynor, 2015; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002; Wenger & Snyder, 2000) as evidenced by her eagerness to form groups with her colleagues to develop best practice.

4.3.8 Role of English in UAE society

Noura expressed her identification with English as a *lingua franca* in her efforts to equip her students with the language skills needed for a global economy and stated that she was aware that the students need English to succeed, with great emphasis placed on economic success. She also saw no issues with students being immersed in the bilingual program from Grade 1 and observed that:

> *Some parents worry the children will get confused*
> *but I think they underestimate their children and*
> *you know...they will not forget Arabic...we learn*
> *the child can get three or four languages...because*
> *they are like a sponge, you know* [Noura: lines 676-682]

Here, Noura is referencing the theories she encountered during her four-year Bachelor of Education where some of the readings spoke of the Critical Period Hypothesis (Lenneberg, 1967, 1971), which was then replaced by other theories which described

how early metalinguistic awareness in bilingual children gives cognitive advantages
(Bialystok, 2016; Bialystok, Luk, & Kwan, 2005).

Noura's positive orientation towards teaching and the reform process is strongly
informed by her pragmatic approach. It could be observed that Noura perceives the
primary issue is that she self- identifies as a teacher, and as she said at the beginning
of the interview *"I go with it...I start to teach"* (Noura: line 38). Her willingness to
embrace, absorb, assimilate and adjust to the change is related to her motivation to
continue as part of a community of practice, and to participate in imagined second
language communities as a teacher-practitioner (Ushioda, 2009, 2011). She has
constructed new ways of linking her self- identity to new worlds (van Lier, 2007)
while still remaining within the norms of Emirati traditional roles for women.

4.4 Joint analysis: Prevalence of superordinate themes across participants

From the emergent themes that were revealed in the interviews of the three
participants, I looked for connections, convergence and divergence in the data. I did
this by listing all the emergent themes on post-it notes, color-coded for each
participant. I then placed all the emergent themes on a blank wall, so that I could
develop a holistic picture of all the themes (see Figure 6). Viewing the themes in this
way allowed me to easily identify patterns - similar themes were collapsed to one
overarching theme, polarities were contrasted and repetition across participants was
noted as significant as it indicated common concerns and perceptions. By physically
moving the themes around, I found that some concepts resonated so strongly, that they
acted as a magnet to draw the other subordinate themes and concepts to them, and I
was able to develop a gestalt that made sense of the many facets which emerged in the
data. Through a further process of abstraction, putting like with like and developing a

new name for the cluster, and confirming polarization, I developed three potent

superordinate themes arising from the data. The prevalence of these superordinate

themes across the participants' responses is illustrated in the table below, which is

discussed further in the next chapter.

Table 14: Prevalence of superordinate themes across participants

Superordinate themes	Sara	Maitha	Noura
Teacher Agency	✓	✓	✓
Professional learning support	✓ (lack)	✓ (lack)	✓ (good)
Role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity	✓	✓	✓

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a discussion of the research findings and explores the three superordinate themes that were found to be common among the three participants. Each superordinate theme will be discussed individually along with its subordinate themes. These superordinate (or master) themes and their associated subordinate themes are discussed in relation to the research questions and the relevant literature.

The research questions that guided this IPA study were the following:

1. How do teachers in UAE government schools perceive curriculum change in the bilingual reform program?

2. How can an interpretation of key themes arising from the accounts of these lived experiences inform future projects in curriculum reform in the bilingual program in UAE government schools?

In order to answer the two research questions, the three superordinate themes will be discussed individually in relation to the literature and the participants' perceptions of change in the bilingual reform process in government schools in the UAE.

Table 15: Summary for superordinate theme 1-Teacher agency/Self-efficacy

Summary superordinate theme 1	
Superordinate theme 1: Teacher agency/Self-efficacy	
Positive outcomes: Noura	• belief that she has transferable skills • feeling fortunate to be involved in the reform program
Negative outcomes: Maitha and Sara	• feeling unprepared/untrained • self-doubt • feeling unable to deliver material

5.1 Superordinate theme 1: Teacher agency

Only one of the three participants expressed positive feelings of teacher agency related to the curriculum reform during the interviews. Teacher agency, as discussed above, is an important concept in the academic discussion of curriculum change and education reform. In simple terms, teacher agency refers to a teacher's belief in their ability to actively contribute to shaping their work and its conditions (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015).

Table 16: Superordinate theme 1: Teacher agency

Subordinate Theme	Sara	Maitha	Noura
Positive outcomes			✓
Negative outcomes	✓	✓	
Unrealistic demands	✓	✓	
Feeling overwhelmed	✓	✓	
Transferable skills			✓
Feeling lucky to work in the project			✓
Feeling inadequate/unprepared	✓	✓	
Self-doubt		✓	

Previous studies acknowledge the importance of teacher agency in effecting

sustainable curriculum change (Billett, 2011; Eteläpelto, Vähäsatanen, Hőkkä, &

Paloniemi, 2014; Vähäsantanen, 2015). Lai, Li and Gong (2016) state that the

exercise of teacher agency is shaped by teachers' professional and social positioning

and by their imposed identity and social roles. Consistent with the constructivist

epistemological lens of this research study, teacher agency is a dynamic state, in a

constant process of construction and reconstruction, and can develop over time

through a continual process of engagement and emergence (Archer, 2000; Priestley,

Edwards, Miller, & Priestley, 2012). Biesta & Tedder (2007) suggest an ecological

understanding of agency, and state that teacher agency is something that can be

achieved, rather than possessed, through the "active engagement of individuals with

aspects of their contexts-for-action" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 132).

It is noteworthy that both Sara and Maitha, who are no longer teaching, felt a sense of inadequacy during the curriculum reform and believed themselves unprepared and untrained to instruct their students in Mathematics and Science through the medium of English. All the teachers in the study had trained as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, and upon graduation had expected to be placed in teaching roles where they would teach English as an additional language in the government schools to first language Arabic students. All their prior training, and all the practicums they had undertaken during their four Bachelor of Education course had been focused on EFL. Maitha in particular noted her deep concern over this:

> *I remember the question that I asked them* [management]
> *and I said ...I am not trained to teach Science and Math…*
> *and I was telling them there are strategy to know to teach*
> *Science and Math...how can I deliver the subject?*
>
> (Maitha: lines 82-86).

Maitha expressed her sense of helplessness and her perceived lack of an agency in the curriculum reform project when she said: *"At that time we are not in a position to argue...to express our opinion"* (Maitha: lines 108-109).

In this extract, Maitha uses the second person "we" which suggests that she is voicing the collective response of other teachers at her school, and that this feeling of helplessness and inability to advocate for herself and shape her working conditions also impacted her peer teachers.

Like Maitha, Sara expressed her surprise when she learnt that after graduation from the Bachelor of Education program she would be teaching Mathematics and Science in English and stated:

> *We didn't graduate from school* [university] *knowing that we are*
>
> *teaching many subjects than English. We only assume that we*
>
> *are teaching English* (Sara: lines 278-281).

Sara's experience of teacher agency was slightly more positive as she was placed in a school that in the initial years of the reform had a teacher mentor to guide her through the curriculum change process. In contrast, at Maitha's school, despite promises of mentors and relevant professional development (PD), neither materialized. This highlights the importance of professional learning and mentoring opportunities for teachers, and how they may positively impact the curriculum process (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). This is another superordinate theme that is further developed later in this discussion. Noura, another of the participants, expressed comparatively high levels of teacher agency compared to Sara and Maitha stating:

> *From the beginning they told me that you are going to teach Math,*
>
> *Science and English..., and I believe actually that I have the skill to teach*
>
> *in English, so I have the skills to teach other subjects. So I go with it,*
>
> *I start to teach* (Noura, lines 33-38).

Noura shows a high sense of teacher agency and self-efficacy. Simply put, as discussed above, self- efficacy is the power of belief that you can succeed (Bandura, 2008; Salonova, Martínez, & Llorens, 2012; Zee & Koomen, 2016). In the literature, a high sense of self-efficacy and the belief that you can achieve goals is linked to greater wellbeing, motivation and performance (Aloe, Amo & Shanahan, 2014; Bandura, 2008; Zee & Koomen, 2016). When teachers recognize they have been successful in the past, they feel confident they will succeed at challenging tasks in the future. This is referred to in the literature as mastery experience and this attribute is seen as the most important factor for self-efficacy (Kaniuka, 2012). Noura's belief that she possesses the transferable skills, namely EFL strategies to content teaching in

Mathematics and Science through the medium of English, reveals that she perceives herself to be able to succeed at the challenging task of curriculum reform in the UAE government school context.

Lack of teacher agency and self-efficacy has been recognized as being a barrier to effective and sustainable curriculum reform (Hőkkä, 2012; Fullan, 2015; Priestley, 2011). Without agency, teachers such as Maitha and Sara did not feel able to take part in the shared practices and discourses of their work environment. As the reform had been handed down suddenly in a top-down manner, they had not been given a clear understanding of the processes and strategies needed to enact the curriculum changes required, and, therefore, they were unable to work effectively to realize the goals of the bilingual reform project.

The goals of the bilingual curriculum reform project in the UAE are undoubtedly well intended and designed to equip Emirati students with the language skills they need to compete in a global economy and represent a significant investment towards the improvement in education in the UAE. The Director General of the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), reinforced this important goal in his statement to the press in 2012 saying "English is the international language of business and science and is central to Abu Dhabi achieving its vision of economic growth and diversification" (Olarte, 2012). However, the implementation of the reforms has been both rapid and top-down which has led to feelings of disenfranchisement among some teachers. For example, the comments made by Maitha and Sara, two of the participants in the study, reflect such feelings.

Other studies on education reform in the UAE region have reflected these feelings of disenfranchisement and lack of teacher agency. O'Sullivan (2015) has stressed the

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need for involving all stakeholders in the reform process, particularly teachers on the front-line to garner support and improve the quality of the implementation. Kirk (2015) also speaks of the importance of involving teachers in a more bottom-up process, while Tabari (2014) has also emphasized the need for teachers' active support in reform if large-scale reform is to be sustainably implemented. Senge, in his influential work on learning organizations *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) states that teachers should not be "helpless reactors" but "active participants" in shaping their reality (p. 38).

One of the barriers to engaging the teachers in the planning stages of reform is the centralized nature of the UAE education system. Countries where teacher agency has been shown to be high are Singapore and Finland. In Singapore, only the top 30% of high school graduates are admitted to teacher training programs. Mentoring networks and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) exist, and there is clear career progression, which rewards quality teaching. In addition, a decentralized inspection process based on collaboration and self-assessment has resulted in both high rates of teacher satisfaction and high student success outcomes (Dawood & Hirst, 2014; Mourshed, Chojioke & Barber, 2010). In Finland, where high levels of teacher agency are also reported, teachers have had greater autonomy and decision-making power than other countries since the 1990s, due to a less centralized education system, devolved levels of authority to municipalities and schools and the replacement of the centralized Finnish Inspectorate with external assessment carried out on sampling basis which places a high degree of trust and accountability in teachers (Eltäpelto et al., 2014; Hőkkä, Eteläpelto & Rasku-Puttonen, 2012; Tucker, 2011; Vähäsantanen, 2015). Hőkkä et al.'s (2012) study showed that teachers displayed strong individual agency in the construction of teacher and developer identity. While the situation is

complex, multi-faceted, and context dependent, meaning that each country has a unique set of circumstances, there may be valuable lessons to learn from both the Singaporean and Finnish educational systems which consistently produce student results at the top of the league tables for the international standardized comparisons of student achievement tests such as PISA (2012), TIMSS (2015), and PIRLS (2016). This poses a challenge for the future of education reform in the UAE, as the strong cultural elements of top-down hierarchies and the centralized nature of the education system, allows little scope for teachers to be involved in both practice and policy decisions. A more collegial and participative approach which includes teachers in the reform process with a focus on teacher professional development and the use of collaborative professional systems of peer review and mentoring would allow teachers to be more fully engaged and proactive in the reform process.

Table 17: Summary for superordinate theme 2 - Professional learning

Summary subordinate theme 2: Professional learning	
Positive outcomes: Noura	• Well-organized, relevant, internal and external professional learning opportunities at least once a week from mentors.
Negative outcomes: Maitha and Sara	• Professional learning not targeted to needs • "ticking boxes" • Culturally inappropriate

5.2 Superordinate Theme 2: Professional Learning and Professional Development

A second superordinate, or master theme shared by all the participants in the IPA study into teacher perceptions of curriculum change in the bilingual reform project in UAE government schools was the role of professional learning and professional development.

Table 18: Superordinate theme 2 - Professional learning and PD support: Individual participant responses

Subordinate Theme	Sara	Maitha	Noura
Positive outcomes			✓
Negative outcomes	✓	✓	
Relevant PD support	not targeted to needs. "ticking boxes"	irrelevant - filing, archiving. Needed strategies/pedagogy	well-organized internal and external PD at least once a week from mentors
Lack of qualified help in the school	✓ inconsistent, some years very good, other years none	✓	
Mandatory PD in holidays	✓		
Mixed gender PD	✓ negative (culturally inappropriate)		✓
No mentors at school		✓	

In the literature, one of the most important indicators of student success is teacher quality (Belsito, 2016; Mourshed et. al, 2010; Quintero, 2017), and improvement in teaching quality is of vital importance (Jensen, 2012; Wang, 2015). Researchers who view teaching as a professional occupation with a core set of attributes and skills, strongly believe that management should continuously support teachers by providing professional learning opportunities (Cochran-Smith & Stern, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2006, 2013; Desimone, 2009; Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006; Guskey, 2002, 2009; Lynch et al., 2013; Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis, 2005; Reid & Kleinhenz, 2015). Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) term this an investment in teachers' professional capital, and view it as the cornerstone of effective and sustainable education reform.

In the intended curriculum in UAE government schools, in-service professional development (PD) is viewed as the vehicle to provide this support in the reform. While all of the participants in this IPA study received varying degrees of professional development, for two of the participants, the perception of the activities experienced was neither motivating nor helpful for their teaching. This is not an uncommon phenomenon worldwide in teacher in-service professional development (PD). For example, an Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study on professional development carried out as part of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2013), reported that a significant number of teachers think that professional development does not meet their needs, with over half reporting that they needed more frequent and more relevant PD. A study carried out in public schools in the Abu Dhabi emirate with 987 participants found that a majority of teachers said that the topics covered in PD sessions were too generalized, often repetitive and had irrelevant materials or were delivered by unqualified instructors

(Buckner, Chedda & Kindreich, 2016). A qualitative study in Abu Dhabi carried out in 2014 with seven teacher participants showed similar results. In this study it was observed the teachers found the topics too general and that internal trainers, who are familiar with the teaching conditions and cultural context, are preferable (Al Taneiji, 2014).

My research in this study revealed similar perceptions of PD from two of the participants. Sara viewed many of the PD sessions as *"boring"* stating that:

> *Some of them were really silly. For example, why*
> *do I get a PD session about something I already told*
> *last semester?...Things that we already know. Things*
> *we needed, on the other hand, we didn't get* (Noura: lines 694-697).

Maitha echoed the same sentiments:

> *I wanted more PDs...more training sessions*
> [but received] *nothing tangible...but we got*
> *got irrelevant PD...how we do our filing, how*
> *to archive the worksheets* (Noura: lines 445-449)

Maitha believed the PD focus was on the wrong skills, and stated that the topics should be *"more about the knowledge you are delivering...not archiving everything"* (Maitha: lines 450-451). She wanted PD opportunities in using scientific terminology in English and specific strategies for teaching Science and Mathematics content.

Noura, the other participant in the study, had a much more positive experience with the PD delivered in her school. She spoke enthusiastically in glowing terms about the quality of the sessions she attended. While describing a session about reading circles she observed:

> *Sometimes the mentor would even come to the class*
>
> *and help us...and we had a PD meeting every week*
>
> *where we learnt strategies like "Drop Everything*
>
> *and Read"...with a basket of books* (Noura: lines 320-334)

Noura viewed her PD sessions as not only positive, but also relevant to the material she was covering in her classes. The OECD TALIS (2009, 2013) report which surveyed teachers in participating countries worldwide about their professional learning practices, concluded that the most successful professional development programs are those that involve teachers in learning activities similar to ones the teachers will actually use with their students. Noura's comments about the reading circles are an example of how relevant PD can both motivate and help teachers. This highlights the importance of involving the teachers in the planning stages when developing PD, and decentralizing the process to school level so that teachers may receive the type of PD that will be most pertinent to the needs of their classes in each individual school setting.

Another important element that came up in this study was the issue of mixed gender in some of the PD sessions where teachers were sent out to external sites to do PD. This phenomenon of mixed gender may not be something that occurs in all schools, however, in two of the emirates, there were reports of it happening. In both cases, it was in smaller emirates, and where the schools were based away from the main city center.

Both Sara and Noura commented on this factor, observing that it was very confronting for them to be off-site in unfamiliar surroundings in a room with many expatriate Arab male teachers. There are few studies evaluating PD support to date in the reform project in the UAE government schools, however, in the limited studies I found, there

was no mention of this cultural and gender issue. While it could be that this was genuinely not an issue for the participants in other studies, I believe that the rapport I developed with the participants in this study, who accepted me as a visible figure who had been strongly involved in the UAE education context for many years, allowed them to divulge thoughts and feelings that may not emerge in other research contexts with more structured survey questions for example, or where interviews were held in more confronting conditions, such as in schools where they would not feel at liberty to express themselves freely. I believe this to be a strength of an IPA analysis approach, as it is more likely to capture the authentic lived experience of participants, and thus contribute valuable insights into a phenomenon which otherwise may go undetected and unrecorded.

This issue of mixed gender in some of the PDs, particularly outside the metropolitan areas, should be addressed and modified in order to encourage and motivate the female teachers to actively engage in the PD sessions. In the UAE, all teachers in Cycle 1 are female. While it may not seem to Western consultants and managers to be an issue to provide mixed gender PD sessions, and for the organizers it may be a convenient time-tabling or logistic issue to avoid doubling up or repeating sessions for separate groups; for the conservative women who typically join the teaching profession, or in some cases, are only *allowed* to join the teaching profession because of its segregated nature, mixed gender PD may be counter-productive, as the Emirati women will feel constrained and unable to interact freely and create the types of learning communities these sessions aim to foster.

Firstly, they are already challenged by the sudden nature of the reform coming down from a top-down mandate. Secondly, there is little intrinsic motivation to attend, as the goals and objectives of the reform are not clear to them. Thirdly, being in an

unknown environment is already disruptive, and to put them in a mixed gender environment and ask them to be interactive in such an environment goes completely against their cultural norms. It is important in these sensitive contexts to provide PD in the most accessible manner possible, so that the female teachers feel motivated and enthusiastic to improve on their skills and teaching strategies, and may freely form the types of professional learning communities it is hoped that the PD sessions would engender.

The structure of the PD programs also needs to be addressed. All of the participants reported that the PD sessions they attended were typically short-term one-session topics or workshop. More effective PD programs would be based on a Professional Learning Community model, or Community of Practice model, and this is defined and discussed in the following section.

5.2.1 Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CsoP)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Communities of Practice (CoPs) are collaboration resources for learning. Over the last two decades, many education systems in the United Kingdom, the United States, Asia Pacific, Australia and the Gulf region have developed PLCs as a means of unifying teachers within school organizations toward common goals and collaborative efforts (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Mourshed et al., 2010; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Watson, 2014). A major goal of PLCs is staff learning together and then directing that learning towards student needs and learning.

The term Communities of Practice (CoP) is widely associated with the work of Wenger (1998) and, in languages education with Kumaravadivelu (2012) and describes a network formed by individuals with a shared interest. The group members

share information, learn from each other's skills and experiences and collectively solve problems. Over the last two decades, the concept of CsoP has been further developed by many researchers and teacher educators, for example, Goos & Bennison (2007), Hew & Hara, (2007), Pyrko, Dőrfler & Eden (2016), Wells & Feun (2007), Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), Wenger and Snyder (2000) and Kumaravadivelu (2012), who refer specifically to such communities in languages education, providing a framework for developing such communities to advance teacher agency. The terms CoP and PLC share a commonality of enhancing teacher learning and professional knowledge and practice within a collaborative group.

With the development of the reform models in government schools, both ADEC and MAG developed PLCs. However, according to research carried out by Al Taneiji (2014) not all the characteristics of a professional learning community were in existence in the schools involved in the reform project. These characteristics could be summarized as the following: shared leadership, shared vision, collective creativity and learning, peer review or shared personal practice, and supportive conditions/capacities (Hord & Sommers, 2008). The lived experience shared by two of the participants in this IPA study is testimony to the fact that more focus needs to be placed on developing teacher collaborative learning. Therefore, in order to enhance the implementation of the bilingual reform curriculum in the UAE, continued emphasis should be placed on the development of PLCs and CsOP in schools throughout the emirates.

5.3. Superordinate theme 3: The role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity

Another superordinate, or master theme that emerged during the study was concern over the role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati culture and identity.

Table 19: Summary for superordinate theme 3 -The role of Arabic in relation to Emirati identity

Summary superordinate theme 3	
Superordinate theme 3: The role of Arabic in relation to Emirati identity	
Positive outcomes	• English no threat to Arabic language skills in community • beliefs about Arabic/English and Emirati identity • need to strengthen mother tongue (especially reading skills) • family plays important role in maintenance of Emirati language and culture

Table 20 shows the individual participant responses expressed during the interviews regarding the role of Arabic language in relation to Emirati identity.

Table 20: Superordinate Theme 3: The role of Arabic in relation to Emirati identity- Individual participant responses

Subordinate Theme	Sara	Maitha	Noura
Positive outcomes	✓	✓	✓
Negative outcomes			
Need to strengthen mother tongue (especially reading skills)	✓	✓	✓

English no threat to Arabic language skills	✓	✓	✓
Strong sense of Emirati identity	✓	✓	✓

An unexpected finding was that despite the many articles in recent years in the local media, and outcries in the public discourse about the "danger" and "threat" of English overtaking Arabic as a result of the bilingual reform, all three teachers fully supported the objectives of the bilingual reform and agreed that in order to prepare UAE children for the global economy, they needed to have strong mastery of English. None of the participants perceived that bilingual education was a threat to either their first language, or their cultural identity. Noura, for example, when discussing where she put herself on a continuum from 1- 10 about the benefits of bilingual education (1 being low, 10 being high), declared "*I put 9, and... most of my colleagues at the school the same*" (Noura: lines 858-859).

Similarly, Sara scoffed when asked about the public debates about the "threat posed to Arabic" by global English stating:

> *You have to know other languages...if it is not important*
> *then why Allah gives us the ability to learn more than one*
> *language? You have to know other languages...if you are*
> *not adaptable...and mixable with other situations. How*
> *would you survive in this world?* (Sara: lines 1138-1141).

From these comments, it can be seen that for these young women, cultural fragility was not an issue. Their powerful sense of themselves as Emiratis, who speak Khaleeji Arabic as well as *fush'a,* standard Arabic, was strongly apparent during the

discussions. Maitha in particular, referred to her Emirati dialect as *"mother tongue"* several times during the interview, saying *"I think one should strengthen their own **mother tongue** first"* (Maitha: lines 602-603), and *"I think our **mother tongue** is our thing"* (Maitha: line 651), and " *[some parents]...are giving English as a priority even more than their **mother tongue***"(Maitha: lines 680-681) and *"I think it's better to be bilingual, English Math and Science we can learn English there* [at school] *, but when they come back home everything should be Arabic at home, which is **mother tongue**"* (Maitha: lines 840 - 843), and later, *"it's their first language, it's their **mother tongue*** (Maitha: lines 789-790), indicating the strong emotional bond that the connects Emiratis to their Khaleeji dialect. Emirati identity is intrinsically bound by the use of the dialect, which is a powerful signifier of their sense of self and their place in the community. So powerful is the use of this dialect that is often used in official ceremonies and addresses by the leadership of the country in preference to the more formal Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). At a recent university graduation ceremony at Emirates Palace, for example, one of the country's leaders directly addressed the graduates and their families using the Emirati dialect in the formal part of the proceedings. This had the powerful effect of creating community, creating bonds and weaving a sense of authenticity and love of country. It also reinforced the concept of a distinct and definable Emirati culture, allowing those who understood to align themselves with a particular, discrete and unique community (Kramsch, 1998, 2014). Speaking in Khaleeji dialect, then, acts as a signifier, or marker of inclusion in Emirati culture and the Emirati community.

In the globalized context of today's world, "culture" is a complex and multifaceted concept to define. Traditional and essentialist views of culture derived from the anthropological discipline define it as "the ways of a people" (Lado,1986, p. 52). This

definition has been problematized in later literature by Holliday (2013) who states that culture is not a geographical place that can be visited, but rather "a social force which is evident wherever it emerges as being significant" (p. 23). When discussing "Emirati culture" and Western culture (and indeed all cultures), we need to be aware that these concepts are not set in stone, but are constantly shifting and changing. Culture is seen as fluid and dynamic and individuals have access to multiple cultural realities based on their experience (Block, 2007; Kramch, 1998, 2014; Suleiman, 2003).

In this thesis, I have used a constructivist epistemological approach, and therefore, the lens through which culture and identity are viewed interprets these concepts as fluid, dynamic and constantly changing and evolving. Said (2003) argued that identities are complex constructions that are historically mediated and ambiguous. Atay and Ece (2009) define identity as "the construction of the ways people interpret the world and interact with their surroundings". Norton (2000) describes identity as "how a person understands his/her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future (p.5).

Culture and identity are also intrinsically linked to language and language use and are important tools which people use to create their sense of self. This has been well documented in the literature in recent years (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2017; Holes, 2011; Hopkyns, 2014; Raddawi & Meslem, 2015). If, as Kramsch (2014) states, language is a symbol of cultural reality, that is, if people identify themselves by their use of language, then this has implications for the role of English in a first language Arabic country where the K-12 curriculum has shifted to a bilingual model. Ideally, this linguistic dualism would be balanced and represent improved access to

opportunity for young Emiratis, a perception shared by the three participants in the IPA study. However, in recent years in the UAE, particularly after the so-called Arab Spring, there has been considerable public discourse on the role of English as a *lingua franca* in the UAE, and its effect on Emirati language and culture. Issues of power relationship have arisen (Foucault, 1980) along with concerns about linguistic imperialism (Hunt, 2012; Karmani, 2005a; Moore-Jones, 2015; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017a).

Several studies have noted that the Arab Spring, which started in 2011, marked an increase in hostility in public discourse towards the prevalence of ELT in the UAE (Al Dabbagh, 2005; Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2017; Anwaruddin, 2011; Hopkyns, 2014; Dahan, 2013). This coincided with the post-Arab Spring reassertion of Arab identity which swept through the entire region (Gallagher, 2016; McBeath, 2013). Local scholars began writing editorials critical of the cultural hegemony of ELT practice. Examples of this include Al Shehhi, who, in an article in the *Gulf News* "UAE's identity is a growing concern" (*Gulf News*, 2011) argued that Arabic was in danger of becoming a second language. Khamis (2013) wrote an article titled "Cultural identity in danger in the GCC" and blamed the spread of English "TV shows and books...which pollute the environment" and threaten UAE cultural values. Using visual media, Abu Wardeh promoted a similar theme in a TED Talk that warned about the weakening status of Arabic in Emirati homes (TED, 2010).

Other emotive headlines which appeared in the local media during this period included "English language threatens Arabic" (Al Lawati, *Gulf News*, 2011); "Lessons in English in UAE schools "violation of constitution", FNC told," (Issa, *The National*, 2013); "English language 'seducing' UAE pupils" (Pennington, 2015).

The discourse in the local media is framed by a binary East versus West opposition, a

post-colonial combative style paradigm which reflects the view that language and

culture form identity through power relations (Canagarajah, 1999; Holliday, 1994,

2013; Hopkyns, 2014; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Pennycook, 2010; Phillipson &

Skutnabb-Kangas, 2017b; Said, 2011). In the literature, the Arabic language and the

English language are often depicted as in competition with each other, with English

described as "seductive" (Pennington, 2014, para.3) or as a "predator", while the

Arabic language is portrayed as "losing its power and prestige" (Al-Issa & Dahan,

2011, p.14). In recent times the discourse has shifted to a more welcoming view of

bilingual education, which echoes some to the perceptions expressed by the

participants in this study. Al Mazrouri (2014) wrote an article *"The debate over*

national identity is clearly mistaken", positing a much more inclusive view that young

Emiratis do not need to choose either their culture or another, as "they can incorporate

them all" acknowledging the multicultural and heterogeneous nature of UAE

demographics where Emiratis comprise around 11.5% of a total population of 9.3

million people from diverse cultures (World Bank, 2017). Al Mazrouri stated:

> *The public discourse should be shifted from focusing*
> *on "threat on the Emirati identity" and the "loss of the*
> *the Arabic language", to promoting bilingualism in*
> *the UAE and embracing the positive impacts of multi-*
> *culturalism on the society and the value of individuals*
> *having integrated identities in today's interconnected*
> *world* (Al Mazrouri, 2014, *The National,* para.17*).*

Al Mazrouri went on to state that the real issue lies in ensuring that Arabic is

taught well in the schools. The participants in this IPA study also recognized

that the key to successful balance in the bilingual reform program is to improve

pedagogy in not just ELT, but also in the transmission of Arabic language.

Sara, one of the teachers interviewed, emphatically observed:

> *We have exactly the same amount of time spent to be*
> *teaching English and to be teaching Arabic...when*
> *you think about it...English all they have is worksheets*
> *and book clips and Arabic has 17 books. So who is losing the*
> *language? Nobody!* (Sara: lines 1064-1073).

However, evidence from regional studies would indicate that it is the quality, not

the quantity of Arabic instruction, that is the key factor to be addressed (Al Baik,

2008; Al Issa & Dahan, 2011; Clarke, Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007; Dawood &

Hirst, 2014; Gallagher, 2016; Randall & Samimi, 2010; Taha-Thomure, 2008).

These studies observed that the Arabic language curriculum was in strong need

of revision and development, as it was characterized by a rote learning approach

that is more teacher centered than learning centered, and relied on a text-book

based approach rather than one based on application and standards based

curriculum. Macpherson, Kachelhoffer and El Nemr (2007) described the

curriculum as being "traditional, repetitive [with] fragmented content ", and

noted that "rote learning was preventing the interaction needed to develop... the

analysis and communication skills required for higher learning" (p. 65).

Other regional researchers commented on the prevalence of "memorization and

regurgitation" (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005, p11). Al Nabi, Head of Education at

Al Hosn University observed that the Arabic curriculum "lacks systematization

and progression. It does not match students' ability to learn, nor take into

consideration the interests of each phase of age in choosing literature" (Sherif,

2012, para. 4). This research would suggest that a more interactive and student-

centered pedagogical style is pivotal to improving learning and encouraging student motivation for learning Arabic (Sherif, p.4).

It has also been observed that teacher education programs for Arabic language teachers are inadequate and teacher colleges that offer quality pedagogical training in Arabic language teaching need to be established (Taha-Thomure, 2008). One researcher noting alarmingly that "programs for training Arabic teachers rate among the most undeveloped in the contemporary world" (Al Rajhi, 2012). An article in the Gulf News noted that Arabic language training was still in need of immediate overhaul in a dramatic headline "*Poor Arabic Curriculum, Teaching Plague Education System"* advocating for improved training and curriculum reform (Sherif, 2012). More recently, a 2016 article in *The National* newspaper observed that "schools lack good teachers of Arabic and teaching styles must change with today's needs", (Bell, 2016, para.1), showing that there continues to be a deficit in the way in which the Arabic curriculum is implemented.

Student results in Arabic language studies in government schools in the UAE have also been disappointing. One study conducted in 2010 by Edarabia in Dubai and the Northern emirates, which surveyed 285 public schools, revealed that 40,000 students "were not learning either English or Arabic to acceptable standards" (Gallagher, 2016, p.253). In PIRLS (2011), a major international test of first language reading skills for Grade 4 students, students in the UAE scored significantly lower than the global average, however, the UAE scored the highest of the Arabic speaking participating countries in the region (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Morocco) (PIRLS, 2011). The government and education authorities have taken steps to improve the standard of Arabic teaching in recent

years. *The National* newspaper reported that in 2012, ADEC in conjunction with Cambridge Education and Aldar Academies held a teachers' conference to improve the use of Arabic language in schools (Ahmad, 2013). In December, 2015, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, declared 2015 the Year of Reading, to encourage a culture of reading and prepare young people for a knowledge based economy (Gulf News, 2015). Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum launched the Arab Reading Challenge competition for children in September 2015. In 2016, the Ministry of Education revamped the entire Arabic curriculum basing it on more modern pedagogical approaches related to interactive student learning (Hanif & Pennington, 2016), while in Abu Dhabi, ADEC states on its current 2017 website that the Arabic language curriculum is transitioning from textbook-based learning to application and standard-based instruction for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, with a focus on developing resources and professional development support for teachers of Arabic.

During the interviews, Maitha, Noura and Sara all recognized the importance of strengthening students' skills in Arabic in the wake of this sweeping bilingual reform. However, they each had slightly different perceptions about the role of Arabic teaching in schools, with varying opinions on how the teaching of the two languages should occur. Sara believed that Science and Mathematics would be better taught in Arabic stating that:

> *Science and Math should be taught in native...*
> *uh...in mother tongue. Because there are some*
> *words very difficult to translate and they should*
> *have these in their own language...and when you*
> *translate it...it just doesn't work* (Sara: lines 1020-1024)

Sara's views are consistent with the views of some educators and researchers in the community. Despite the existence of the bilingual reforms in the government for over 10 years, MAG, which has recently finished, and ADEC, which has been running since 2010, some parents in the community continue to advocate for Science and Mathematics to be taught in Arabic in government schools. A 2011 survey carried out in Dubai found that 82% of parents would prefer to have their children learn Mathematics and Science in Arabic (Ahmed, 2012); whereas in Abu Dhabi, there has been renewed affirmation by the authorities of a commitment to early immersion bilingual education, and English medium instruction is compulsory in all government schools resulting in what Troudi (2007) has termed *"the choiceless choice"*.

Maitha had different views on the way in which Science and Mathematics should be taught, believing that the bilingual system of early immersion from Grade 1 (Baker & Wright, 2017) was the most effective model. What Maitha strongly advocated for during the interview was for parents to take responsibility for encouraging the use of Arabic (both Khaleeji dialect and Standard Arabic) at home. Maitha observed:

> *I think it is not about the school...what they are doing*
> *is good...it's more of the home...families are focused on*
> *English...they watch English movies...and with nannies...*
> *they ask them to speak English with their child...but if*
> *I am talking about my own children...I will make sure*
> *their Arabic is very strong* (Maitha: lines 645-652).

She went on to talk about her nephew, and how she insisted that he reads in both English and Arabic. She stated:

> *So I think we are there...reading is increasing...*
>
> *but at the same time…what are they reading?*
>
> *I think it should be more flexible in terms of*
>
> *not only educational academic things to read,*
>
> *they can read anything...they can read novels,*
>
> *then can read stories, they can read crime*
>
> *stories...depends on the age of the child...even*
>
> *if they read magazines...why not?* (Maitha: lines 694-794).

Noura, the third participant, also promoted the role of parental involvement saying:

> *If they keep speaking in English to them at home,*
>
> *oh, they are going to forget the Arabic...so there is*
>
> *some part [of responsibility] for the parents, it is*
>
> *not only the schools...but they need, they really need*
>
> *need English...and they won't lose Arabic...we learn*
>
> *that the child can get...three, four languages...*
>
> *because they are like a sponge you know*
>
> (Noura, lines 668-676).

It is encouraging to note the role of parental involvement is high on the agenda for reform in the ADEC program. On their website, ADEC has explicitly identified specific guidelines for building productive home-school relationships stating: "Parents play an essential role in their children's education. School staff and parents share responsibility for ensuring that parents are actively involved in their children's education" (ADEC, 2015, p. 35).

The aims of the reform are to produce biliterate students, and based on the views of the participants involved, the acquisition of English does not come at the cost of the loss of Arabic, or of Emirati identity. All participants, though they may have slightly

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different views of the implementation of the reform as identified in the discussion points in this chapter, agreed that bilingual reform would improve their students' life chances and give them access to greater opportunities in the UAE's globalized economy.

As Noura got up to leave the interview, her sister arrived and the conversation that ensued highlighted for me the way in which this generation of Emirati youth are dealing with bilingualism.

> Huda: *Yalla! Are you ready to go? Wallah…I've been waiting.*
> *Agoolich... How was it, yan'i?*
> Noura: *Kashkhah!! It went great.... sah?*

Which translated means:

> Huda: *Come on! Are you ready go? Seriously, honestly I've been*
> *waiting. Hey! how was it [I mean....].*
> Noura: *Fantastic!! It went great...right?*

In this small slice of authentic dialogue, Noura and her sister Huda seamlessly shifted from one language to the other, from Khaleeji dialect to English, in a perfect example of translanguaging (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2016). This exchange represents to me the real future of oral language use in the UAE, where the multicultural and heterogeneous community will use whatever language tools they have at their disposal to effectively negotiate meaning, and where English and Arabic are not positioned in opposition to each other, but collectively result in an enhanced mode of oral communication for daily life.

5.4 Recommendations to support teachers in UAE bilingual education reform

An interpretation of the key themes arising the perceptions and experiences of teachers involved in the bilingual reform project in UAE government schools has the potential to inform future practice in current and future projects. Arising from the discussion of this question in the last chapter, the following recommendations are made.

These recommendations for teacher educators and policy makers related to the subordinate themes identified in this study might include:

1. Involve teachers in the planning and consultative process for curriculum change. Teachers need to own the process of change and feel engaged. International research indicates that implementing sustainable change depends on the actions and motivations of teachers (Fullan, 2011, 2017; Hőkkä, 2012). Curriculum reform in this region is mandated from the top-down and often does not take into account the practicalities of implementation at school level. During the study, all the participants expressed they felt some degree of stress, anger and disenfranchisement during the change process. Future reform should invite perspectives and contributions from to teachers, who have intimate knowledge of local context and the possible barriers to implementation. Working groups could be formed to learn about the reform features and get involved in determining how to best implement the reform within their local context. If teachers feel they are the targets of the change, rather than stakeholders in the change, a push-pull situation will emerge, and they will resist the change.

2. An evidenced review should be made of the working conditions of the teachers - both Emirati and expatriate, Western and expatriate Arab. Such a study might also evaluate the conditions for tenure (there is none for non-Emiratis), career ladder and incentives.

3. Initiate avenues for teachers to share and communicate their views with the Education Zone. This should be a safe space for teachers to opening share their valid concerns without fear of consequences. There should be ongoing two-way communication between the teachers and management, so that the educational authorities and policy makers can learn more about teachers' difficulties relating to the curriculum change.

4. Provide high quality professional development opportunities for all teachers. Workshops should be given that specifically focus on the goals of the reform and what it is hoped can be achieved. This will promote a sense of shared vision and ownership and give teacher clarity on the intention and outcome of the curriculum change. A needs analysis should be done at school level on an annual basis to ensure that the professional development is relevant to the individual needs of the teachers in each school context, as well as relevant to student needs. Teachers should be involved in planning and designing professional development, and the presenters should be qualified and competent.

5. Encourage the development of professional learning communities and communities of practice in the schools to foster a collaborative learning culture among teachers. These professional will develop communities of learners and school leaders who can work together to implement the reforms

and improve the learning conditions commit to continuous improvement and focus on results.

6. Continue to ensure that first language Arabic students receive sound instruction in Arabic from Kindergarten and Cycle 1. Cummin's Threshold Competence Theory (1979) states that children must meet a threshold level of proficiency in their first language. That is, a certain degree of academic language or cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is needed before academic achievement can occur in the second language (Abu Rabia, 2002; Burt, Peyton, & Adams, 2003; Cummins, 1979, 2013; Gallagher, 2016; Khatib & Taie, 2016; McSwan, 2000). The results of the PIRLS test showed the reading scores in Arabic of UAE students in Grade 4 as being below global averages have particular resonance when considered in the context of Cummin's Threshold Theory. If students have not reached sufficient competence in their first language, particularly in reading, it may be a barrier to them achieving competence in their second, or additional language, English, in the bilingual reform program.

7. Ensure that the Arabic instruction pedagogy is engaging and based on current best practice language teaching models, rather than traditional rote-learning models. In 2017, a revised Arabic curriculum was piloted, and continued emphasis should be placed on providing professional development opportunities for Arabic teachers to improve their teaching and learning strategies.

8. Continue to promote a sense of national Emirati identity. The 2016 pilot of a new curriculum initiative, Haweyati (*My Identity)* in 50 government and private schools in Abu Dhabi to strengthen and maintain national identity and

increase appreciation and respect for Emirati culture for expatriate students is a positive step in this direction (Al Kuttab, 2016).

9. Monitor and evaluate the progress of students in the bilingual reform program and assess whether the goals of biliteracy are being achieved. Evaluation of the program needs to be systematic, continuous, and culturally appropriate, and nuanced decisions should be made only after a full educational cycle has been completed. Standardized tests may be helpful benchmarks, but the regional variables should be considered in the interpretation of the league table rankings.

10. Allow time for the reforms to develop. Sustainable change takes time and it may take a decade for the results of the change to be visibly apparent. The shelf-life of many curriculum reforms is brief, with not enough time given for monitoring and evaluation. It needs to be continually reinforced that change is a multifaceted process and patience and commitment is needed.

Sara, one of the participants echoed this sentiment during the interviews declaring that *"sabura"* (patience) is the key in education, a reminder that systemic curriculum reform takes time to be lasting and sustainable.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion, recommendations for future work

6.0 Introduction

The focus of this final chapter is to draw conclusions from the research and make recommendations for future research.

6.1 Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to explore teacher perceptions of change in the bilingual reform project in UAE government schools. The aim was to uncover themes in the teacher experience of those directly implementing the bilingual program in government schools in the UAE, in order to inform practice and ultimately improve the support for teachers within the reform process, so that they may be more effective in their teaching and learning objectives. With a constructivist, phenomenological approach, the study employed a qualitative interpretative analysis of the interview data from the three participants to investigate their lived experiences in relation to rapid, top-down curriculum change. The following key points emerged that relate to the research questions:

1. How do teachers in UAE government schools perceive curriculum change in the bilingual reform program?

Three master or superordinate themes arose related to how the participants' experience of curriculum change:

6.1.1 Teacher agency/ Self-efficacy

Without clear guidelines and continuing professional support, teachers may experience a loss of agency and feel powerless and overwhelmed during the changes.

In addition, their feelings of self-efficacy may be reduced and they may feel as if they do not have the mastery skills to effectively implement reform.

6.1.2 Professional Learning and Professional Development

Continuing relevant and appropriate professional learning opportunities should be provided by those managing the change in order to provide the necessary support for teachers. The participants' stated that plans for support should not only be determined at Ministry level, but also be decentralized to school level. Another shared perception was that PD support should be developed which targets the specific needs of the teachers in varying contexts throughout the school system. All participants believed that these plans should be developed in consultation with the teachers receiving the support so that it would be both relevant and timely.

6.1.3 The role of Arabic language in relation to Arabic identity

Despite the lively public discourse which suggests that Emirati identity and Arabic language will be marginalized by early bilingual immersion in the schools, the three participants did not perceive bilingualism as a cultural threat and felt very secure in their sense of Emirati identity. They also did not perceive that the Emirati students they were under "cultural invasion". All the participants believed that Emirati students were capable of absorbing the English language, viewing it as a necessary tool for global participation, while still preserving and developing their own Khaleeji dialect, and maintaining Modern Standard Arabic. From the interviews it emerged that the participants perceived that it was an organic progression from a monofaceted traditional identity of their grandparents' generation, to a more multifaceted identity which at its core, is essentially Gulf Arab.

Two of the teacher participants perceived that side early immersion in the bilingual program is desirable to produce biliterate students who are well-prepared for the globalized economy. One of the participants believed in early immersion for learning Arabic and English, but advocated that Mathematics and Science would be better taught in English. This is an ongoing debate in the region, and requires further investigation and research, and evaluation of the current reform program at regular intervals will provide empirical evidence to decide future policy.

6.2 Recommendations for future work

Based on the literature review and findings of the current study, and in view of the themes developed in the discussion a number of recommendations are made for future research:

Future studies could look at male teachers' perceptions of curriculum change. Due to cultural restraints, this research would be best carried out by a male researcher. The demographics for male teachers are completely different as few Emirati males join the teaching profession. Most male teachers are expatriate Arabs, and currently, in the ADEC system, increasingly from Western countries. Such a study would give insight into the lived experience of male teachers in the boys' government schools.

Other valuable research could be carried out on the professional development provided to teachers in the curriculum project and ascertain how to best provide effective professional learning opportunities. Studies conducted on the impact of the reforms and the extent to which the reforms have been implemented in the schools would also be useful. Large-scale longitudinal research would provide the opportunity to assess whether the changes that have been implemented have been sustained and become part of the school eco-system.

It is too early to evaluate the results of the bilingual reform programs, but in future years, as the early immersion students pass through the full cycle from Cycle One to Cycle Three and graduate from high school, the outcome of this bold, well-intentioned and ambitious reform project will be able to be more carefully assessed.

With its emphasis on the development of tailored national policies rather than policies taken off-the-peg, the New School approach currently employed by ADEC, shows promise as an effective example of "policy learning" rather than just "policy borrowing" (Mourshed et al., 2010). As the findings of this study indicated, in order for the current future reforms to be sustainable, there needs to be a focus on developing alignment between the professional development needs of the teachers and the professional development offered. In addition, the reforms need to be supplemented with a more participative approach which involves inclusion of the teacher stakeholders' voices. The challenge for the future is find avenues for the teachers to be able to exercise their creativity so that they may feel fully invested and committed to the education reform project. It would be wise for policy makers and curriculum developers in the UAE to take note of the perceptions of the participants who took part in this study, and consider the role of all stakeholders in the bilingual education reform project in UAE government schools**.** As long as the specific contextual circumstances are considered, the findings in this study might also be useful in other contexts. Similar studies conducted in other locations may contribute to the body of knowledge by amplifying concerns and context-specific issues in bilingual programs more widely.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview questions

The semi-structured interview questions used in the data collection are listed below:

1. Since joining the school, what changes from earlier practice, behaviors, and attitudes have you perceived in your school, colleagues, self, classroom, students, or community, which have taken place as part of the bilingual reform project?

2. What changes resulting from the implementation of the bilingual reform project have proved to be successful?

3. What changes resulting from the implementation of the bilingual project have been difficult? Why?

4. What professional development opportunities have you been provided to support the implementation of these changes?

5. What support have you found the most useful? What support have you found least useful?

6. What type of support would you like for future reforms?

7. What is your understanding of the current debate about bilingual education in the UAE? What is your response to this debate in relation to the aims and goals of the bilingual reform project?

8. What are your colleagues" responses to this debate in relation to the aims and goals of the bilingual reform program?

9. Where do you locate yourself in this climate of change?

10. Teachers in the bilingual reform program teach Mathematics and Science through the medium of English: i) what have you noticed about the students'

proficiency in writing in Arabic? ii) What have you noticed about the students' proficiency in writing in English?

11. Tell me what you think is the best way to prepare Emirati students for life chances in: the UAE? Abroad?

12. You have shared your views on the successes, the difficulties, and the changes you have noticed in you, your colleagues, your students, your school, and community in relation to the bilingual reform program. Is there other comment you would like to make about curriculum change in the bilingual reform program about issues you have encountered, or support you have received?

Background questions:

1. What is your age? Choose from this range: 19-25, 26-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-60.

2. What is your language background? (home language)

3. Which language do you prefer to use at home?

4. What type of teacher training did you have?

Where was this training?

How long ago did you train?

5.What type of practicum did you do?

6. What was your major discipline area during your training?

7. How many years have you been teaching?

How many years have you been working in the UAE government school system?

Have you worked in other school systems? Where?

8. Where is your school? Is it urban or rural? Other distinguishing features?

9. What do you think about the school? In relation to support of staff? In relation to

resources? In relation to vision and values? In other ways?

8. Where did you learn English? What level?

9. What were your attitudes to learning English when you learnt it at school?

10. Is there any other information you would like to provide?

Appendix B: Interview schedule

The interview schedule can be found in the schedule below:

Table 5- Interview schedule

Interview #	Date of interview	Location
1. Sara	September, 2015	Shakespeare. & Co. Ajman Coffee shop
2. Noura	October, 2015	Sharjah Ladies' Club, Sharjah Coffee shop
3. Maitha	March, 2016	Coffee shop Abu Dhabi

Appendix C: Participant demographics

Name	Nationality	Age range	Training	No. of years training	No. years teaching	Home language L1	Grade level taught
Sara	Emirati	26-34	B. Ed (UAE)	4	4	Gulf Arabic	Gr 5 Gr 1
Noura	Emirati	26-34	B. Ed (UAE)	4	7	Gulf Arabic	Gr 3
Maitha	Emirati	26-34	B. Ed (UAE)	4	5	Gulf Arabic	Gr 3

Appendix D: Ethics approval form

University of
New England

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr Susan Feez, Dr Zuocheng Zhang, Mrs Ruth Nicholls &
Mrs Glenda El Gamal

School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Teacher Perceptions of Change in the Bilingual Program at Madares Al Ghad Schools in the United Arab Emirates

APPROVAL No.:   HE15-216

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01 September, 2015

APPROVAL VALID TO: 01 September, 2016

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address:
http://www.une.edu.au/research/research-services/rdi/ethics/hre/hrec-forms

The NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.

Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

21/08/2015   A15/14

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Appendix E: Excerpts from participant transcripts

Script 1: Sara

Sara (00:30): Uhm, honestly, I have been lucky enough just part with MAG. So I didn't see uh the before picture, but from what I uh from what I have seen when I was in college and went to…went to schools. Uh, the classroom was very traditional, uh, the resources was very limited and (raise tone) it was like rehearsal. The students just recite words and recite information. So, uh

Glenda (01:08): Such an interesting word, rehearsal. So is that the way you were taught? Sara (01:16): (definite tone) That was the way I was, uh, that was the way (hesitation) I been told. Yes. And from my experience when I was in school, the thing is, we don't have something that is like writing. For example, if we had like a writing exam. Is just a memorize paragraph written by the teacher on the board. Like a couple of days before, and then we just memorize the way it is and just to write in the exam. That was the writing exam we have. (Smooth and confident tone) But, because, uh, I think I was like outgoing, uh, not outgoing, what's the word? I wasn't, people cannot control me from that age. So, uh, I remember me / Glenda: free-spirit./ yeah, I am free-spirit. I remember, uh, me create, uh, do some creative writing and always end up with a B. I think if I wrote the memorize, I would get an A. But uh, but at least I think I am more proud of my work this way and I understand them. But when we went to college, everything changed, the education program changed us. And then we start to going to schools. We saw the same thing, uh, it was like going from a world, uh, a world that is everything is right. (Upset tone) I mean exactly the way it should be. Going to a place that what you learned is never the thing that you apply at school. For example, we learned in college that we have like theories and things like that and ways where (Blurred words) of behavior management. And when we go to school, we just never do that. (definite tone) And is never done, is never apply by the teachers in the classroom.

Sara (13:47): Unfortunately, when I entered. And imagine I was given grade three, and when I enter MAG. You know the science, oh my god. When I just remember, I feel embarrassed about it. Because the worse of it and they were, it was about the penguins? The penguins and you know the life cycle of the penguins and who is taking care of the the eggs and stuff like that. And it was like it has the very scientific words that honestly I have to teach taught myself before I teach them. I have, yeah. OK, and there wasn't any honestly the only support I had was the (pause), what do you call it, is like the coordinator? /Glenda: uhm. / but it is she also a teacher.

Glenda (14:47): ok, like a lead teacher? Maybe? Or?

Sara (14:50): I think; I don't remember the name. You know every school have three people from the ministry. One is that head of MAG in the school. I am not sure about the name the name of them. And there is two with her. So for example, the school has grade from one to five. So one of them will handle one, two, three, she will handle teachers, she will give out exams, you know she is like a coordinator. And the other one will handle four and five. But when I started it was only grade one, two and three, only, those only have MAG. So those two, one of them was a teacher until there is a teacher assign to that. And another one was a helper. I think she was a British lady, but the thing is (pause), nobody respect her in the classroom. She is just, you know she don't have, she is not a strong teacher. And honestly she is an English first language speaker, but honestly if you really think about it, she is not actually a teacher or she used to be a kindergarten teacher. You know uh where you the student hear you or you don't need to be heard that much. Uhh and uhm so she wasn't that much help for me. / Glenda: Were the others have helped or they trained and qualified the others? / They were, the other ones are very good, but unfortunately, she was too busy. And the head of English was too busy with paper and stuff like that.

Glenda(16:40): How many students in your school? How many students in your classes?

Sara (16:44): My classroom used to have 18, and I think the school was around 500 something like that, for 2015. Uh and consider uh comparing to other school our school was a small one. Because uh generally normal school student there are 22 ,23, 25 students per class, but because we are the model of MAG, uh, it was uh, haha, this will clarify my identity because we are the only school. Hahaha.

Sara (17:22): It is fine, it is fine, is fine. I don't work now. OK, so uh, we are the only one.

Glenda (17:29): What kind of equipment and resources did you have …..?

Sara (17:34): Yeah, we had a lot of them to the point that we don't know what we have. Especially, for example we had a resource room. We have so~~ (Emphasis) many stationary available for each teacher each term. Uh, /Glenda: excellent. / Yeah. You know uhm laminating sheets, sticker paper, books clips, note books, everything. We didn't, we almost, even color pencils. We almost didn't need to buy anything for the classroom. But with MAG growing, uh budget being less and less and the next year we only get four white board pen and box of pencil. Hahahaha (Laughing together)

Sara (18:26): Yeah, yeah. Imagine the beginning of the uh the first year. I got box of color pencils, why, because I have two terms. Come on, I only have 20 students. Ok,

and I don't need that much color pencil, the next year they only gave me one box of laminating sheet, four white board pens and an eraser and a box of pencils. And they didn't supply with the notebooks the next year. So some of us we just used the stash we have from last year, and some of us we just bought new notebooks and the year after that the the school printed a special notebooks for us.

Glenda (19:15): What about computers and technology?

Sara (19:17): uh, in the beginning of MAG, every classroom has two computers uh to be used by the students. Uh every classroom has library, every classroom has a reading corner, every classroom has uh you know some kind of uhm displays about and the display change every month, and uh behavior chart and things like that. It was ideal. (Firm tone with small pause) But unfortunately didn't last. Even that.

Glenda(19:51): so 2009 you had this, and in 2012?

Sara (19:57): But 2012, no no, but 2012 was a little bit better. 2010 and 11 was bad honestly. (Disappointed tone) The resource and resources and you know the waiting for the books and the changing of the, it was many many thing that was changed. Yeah, so uh, seems like, I don't know I wasn't there, but seems like 2007 2008 2009 was perfect then 10 11 was bad then 12 was going back to good and then they stop it.

Script 2: Maitha

Maitha (05:40): At that time, we are not in a position to argue or to… (hesitate) express our opinion. It was done. They just emailed us all the materials, the curriculum, and umm I was teaching only grade 5, but then they gave me in the middle of the semester, they gave me grade 4 as well. So you have to teach 4 and 5. Ok, I don't know my students, they've already been with another stu.. teacher and now that teacher is not ready to teach science and math, so they removed her…(extending) for some reason, maybe she quit or resignation I'm not sure (fast speed) but… they. She… they removed her from school and halas, all her load was just distributed to different teachers and I was one of them. It was… really uncomfortable to go to the classroom (raised tone, annoyed), you don't know the students, you don't know the subject, and you have to deliver

Glenda (06:32): Tell me about the curriculum before, was it English for the Emirates or what text were you using?

Maitha (06:39): We were using a ummm (thinking) a British curriculum, and there were no…there were no textbook, so anything. They…what we've do…ehh..it's…it's like curriculum and then syllabus I will just…we deliver the things as for the topics that this month we should do healthy and unhealthy. So the teacher is up to her what vocab she wants to teach. So it was nothing like… fixed that… so there were six sections from grade 5, I was handling 3 and…another teacher three others and… we used to teach differently it… with same concept of healthy and unhealthy but I might be teaching countable and uncountable foods and she might be teaching something adjectives or anything else. So it's not like something fixed, it depends on the teacher, and it's all work sheets, whatever you prepared activities, nothing fixed, not textbooks and

Glenda (07:43): Now after the change, what sort of an assessment were you ask to do? Was it a central assessment? Was it a..a…a locally developed assessment individually done by teachers? Do you remember?

Maitha (07:59): I…It was done by teachers itself and umm…the… (thinking) interesting part was for science and math there were no assessment at that time. After this change, I've been only for one semester and I left the school. So if I…I'm only talking about that six months. After that semester, I'm not sure about how they developed. But at that time, for math and science, they were doing an average and teacher should give the grades based on the involvement of the students in the classroom so I can give any grades to the students, and if they came back asking for the certification or the way how I've calculated it, I would have nothing. There was no assessment for science and math. For English there were, based on skills, the writing, reading and…(thinking) speaking, but for Math and Science no. It was not prepared, it was not organized, they just gave us textbook for science and math, and they were on us seriously (laugh), and there were not training. This is…the main issue I will say

like… this is what you have to deliver by the end of the semester (raised tone, annoyed).

Glenda (09:05): Do you remember the textbook? Was it American or British for Math and Science?

Maitha (09:12): um...(thinking) I'm not very sure but I think it was British (09:15): What did you notice about the children? Because…if you are going through this change, the children are also going through change. So having Science and Math, these will be all first language Arabic children? (Maitha: yea) yea?! So when… they are changing over, what did you notice about them? Did some embrace it? Did some…um… not embrace it with the behavioral issues?

Maitha (09:37): The thing is, we as a teacher, we needed someone to grade ourselves cause normally in the classroom, students are behind or below average, the teacher is the only one who can motivate this child. But in our scenario, it was like…(laugh), we as a teacher we are not prepared. So we wanted someone to come and say you are alright, you are doing fine. So when you are not sure, when you doubt yourself, and entering the classroom without that confident is very difficult. And…

Glenda (10:09): Have you ever had a mentor teacher there…for you?

Maitha (10:11): No they promised us but they never bring us one. It was very difficult for us, there were no PDs, there were no sessions where they can aware us on the things to do. We never had one to one discussion with math and science teachers, who were used to teach in Arabic, at least to get the strategies or techniques (raised tone).

Glenda (10:33): How many teachers were in the school? How many teachers involved in the change? How many students in the school?

Maitha (10:40): How many students in the school? This is… I can't give you the statistics…I'm sorry, but I would've prepared it if I know that you…

Glenda (10:48): No problem, but you think like less than five hundred, more than five hundred… (Maitha: there were more than five hundred for sure), so it was a big school

Maitha (10:53): it was a big school, it was from grade 1 till grade 5 (Glenda: oh it was a big school), and every classroom around 23 to 25 students (Glenda: ok) Big classrooms (Glenda: ok), and… teachers were not many, especially after this change, lots of these teachers were removed from school, science, math teachers, and even English teachers. We…we have…had some English teachers from different nationalities, Jordan, Egyptian, and so on. They…their English was not that good, on…(Arabic) they were very…experienced teacher but at the same time, they had diploma in English and they were not really qualified teachers When these changes came in, they removed those teachers, they want bachelor level teachers who are…who have be a degrees and everything. So we were short number it was pressure

that there were not training (raised tone) it was difficult for us to deliver the subject, and…consequently, it was difficult for students to grab the knowledge, I think…

Glenda (12:06): Ok, hold that thought, I'm going to stop....

M3

Glenda (00:00): umm, I will have to name that again, I will just put M3. (pause) (00:07) alright. So, your decision, you left teaching after around three years, can you tell me what were the factors that contributed towards that decision?

Maitha (00:18): Ok, as I…as I've mentioned that, I've been into circumstances where things were just getting find of, there are just giving as their decisions the management. And when we asked for resources to support our…role, it's never happened (raised tone, annoyed). They never gave us timeline; they never gave us their plans. The changes were happening. People were…teachers were leaving the school, so our teaching load increasing without any development I was fresh graduate at that time and I wanted more skills to begin, I wanted more PDs…more training sessions. I didn't want to stop at that time (angry) cause I had a plan that after two years of my graduation, I'm going to continue my Masters (raised tone). I…I always want to be a faculty, a PhD faculty member so I thought I'm not contributing anything to my own career. I'm just going through the classroom… (pause) without any confident I'm not sure whether I'm doing is in a good effort that I'm…at one time I felt like I'm not giving these students what they should get so…

Glenda (01:31): Can I ask you if you stay, was there like a career path? Like after two years you can be like lead teacher or…or just are the options like teacher or management (Maitha: Yes) …can we go… yes

Maitha (01:45): this is the only thing it was but I was more focused on the experience as a teacher itself I wanted to gain experience as a teacher, I thought I will continue teaching while I'm getting my Masters, so it will help with my Masters as well. It's two ways always, but when I saw that it's only… one time, it was like for six months, I was fed up with searching myself for…about subjects on science and math, delivering the course. There was no assessment, how can I assess my students (raised tone, helpless)? I'm just giving them random grades. So no one is, when I want to do an assessment, **no don't do that, this is not in the curriculum, why are you giving them assessment** (speaking more quickly), the students started complaining this teacher's giving me an assessment. However, my friend in that session is not been given that. So whatever I was attempting to do, it was like getting…no this is not the way we wanted to, but I've been taught differently, I've been trained differently, so it was totally different than my philosophy as a teacher. And I… at the same time, I cannot see the clear path of myself, so…

Glenda (02:56): Was it a difficult decision? How did you feel about making the decision? Did you take a long time to decide?

Maitha (03:04): I took a long time yeah, but…(hesitate) it was very difficult decision, till now, when things happens, I think that I am more of a person to be in the class from rather than anything else. But…I don't know how it happened… but… they took us for granted, they wanted us to just to deliver course just as is (raised tone, angry), without any improvement, without asking questions. So, when you get that feeling that you are only here to deliver things without you believing in those things…it's very difficult (raised tone, emphasize). (Arabic) As a teacher, I have my own orientation, I have my own philosophy (raised tone, emphasize) in teaching, so for that don't do it. When I do differentiation, **why are you doing differentiation, the students can get hurt**. No they won't (raised tone, angry), this is for their own benefit. **No don't do that** (describing the situation, two characters here). So everything was stopping at one point. So…I don't know all the signs were like Maitha, leave now, , so that's why I left. When I left, I was searching for another schools. To be honest, I never thought to be in management or anything else at administration work. But it just that I got to this job and...,

Glenda (04:20): What do you think when you go back to your cohort, your group of people you went through 4 years in the B. Ed with? And what percentage of them might be still active for classroom teachers now? Say if there were 20 or 14…

Script 3: Noura

Noura (03:56): yes, uh some we will. And uh we will create them, and the others they will send us. But in the first year, I was lucky. Because the lady who was there she was really organized. And uh Thursday, she asked the the Wakila, the person who is in the admin to let us free on Thursday from the first, uh, the fourth period. So we are fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh. We should photocopy everything for the week, prepare all the materials that you need for the week. So when we leave the school, it was gone.

Glenda: Sensible, so when you came back on Sunday.

Noura (04:33): On Sunday, everything was ready for the whole week (raise tone). Even /Glenda: but that's not every school, that's you, you/ Yes yes that's why I said that we were lucky, because she uh was there for one year.

Noura (04:48): So uh we were lucky you know she was really helpful. I can't forget, she was you know, and because I was the first year there. And uh they have like uh, you know like a special routine that you need to start your lesson with a circle time to gives you go to the carpet and then you go. You know it is like steps. You cannot go here and there with your lesson. And even though the the worksheets you know you need to first you need to use this one and then you need to use this one. But this was good at the beginning, when we didn't have all these celebrations, national celebrations, the Eid. All of these, it was good, and you know when these things come and with the fixed lesson of plans, you cannot go with it. And then we we start to discuss with her, and then she say try your best, try to finish it. We said we cannot, we cannot hurry the kids, let's finish, let's finish. So then she was you know, uh she said this ok ok, you can see what you can cancel from the lessons so the kids will get.

Glenda (05:56): What sort of assessment did you have in grade three level? Uh, Is it like every week you test them? Every month you test them? Are they centralized test?

Noura (06:04): uh every weeks. When we finish the unit or the amount of grammar that we need to teach, then we will have the test. And uh and in Madares Al Ghad there is one diagnosis test at the beginning, it comes from the ministry. And then uh and then uh the last term, at the end of the term we have the test from the ministry they send these tests. But usually we don't takes that marks because the kids will go really low. Because is is not what they are only study, you know they measure the skills like reading. You know they they took this this word, they know only this word. When you put other words, they don't know. You can't…

Glenda (06:45): So you have certain target language.

Noura: Yes

Glenda: But then they have like diagnostics which uh…

Noura (06:53): Yes, so yes. And uh we we don't use that and the first year we did not have uh marks for our girls. It was only you know like excellent, good, uh need… you know it was only like symbols without marks. And the parents did not like this.

Glenda (07:15): Why do you think the parents did not like it?

Noura: because they used to, because they know, they used to marks.

Glenda: They want to be able to rank it.

Noura: And they said what what is the you know is my child is the first of the class is the second? They want to know this (with emphasis). No that is not important, you need to know. Because some kids are really good in reading, but they are not in you know in in writing. Or they are good in speaking but they are not good in reading you know these kind of things. So I said you need to know what your kid is good about. They said no no no we need to know how are they.

Glenda (07:50): So then what happened?

Noura: And then they changed.

Glenda: Oh, so how did they changed? Was it because your...

Noura (07:59): Yes, yes, because our our IC was uh she had another position in the Ministry. And maybe she talked to somebody there. We don't know. The next year they said no, now you can't put mark and we can print certificates for the parents. so it was only one year with. But they said in the grade one and two the kids they have this kind of certificates you know, yes.

Glenda (08:22): So you were talking about some of the interesting changes. What would you say were the successful changes as the results to MAG, and which were the ones which were challenge for you. Like for you as a teacher and also for the students. So there is two parts of the question. So what were your personal challenges, than transitioning to teach different contents? And …

Noura (08:48): At the beginning it was, it was really difficult, because uh uh the language the words is really difficult for for the kids.

Glenda: Did they all speak Khaleeji?

Noura: Yes, and there are some like uh from different countries like Egypt, Syria. They all spoke Arabic.

Glenda: And were the girls separated up to grade three or......?

Noura (09:16): No no, we have only girls. It was a girls' school. And uh the number of uh the students it was really changing for me to another. This is something that we really, you know, we were we were shocked. Because they said. Yes, it was increasing. They said when this girl are in grade one, when the parents started to know

they are going to study English and Math and Math and Science in English. They they started to put their children. Because they are not good in English, so they don't want their kid, because they will not be able to teach them. So in grade one there are like 15 17 in each class. In grade 2 there were nearly 20, I took them like 21 22, but after two years, they were fighting at the end. And we were saying please not more than 30, we cannot, you know we cannot take 30 or 35 girls. And the MAG course want you to to do all these activities. You know, you need to go with each child with the specific lesson plan they put. So it was really difficult. And the number of girls show that uh the parents started to understand that the they need to teach them math and science in English.

Glenda (10:42): So you have the community acceptance from the sound of it.. in some emirates there was discussion that ... we are going to lose our Arabic, we are going to lose our culture, if we, if we uh teach them in English, and then some newspaper reports etc.

Noura (11:05): that's happened in Sharjah too.

Glenda: That happened too?

Noura: uh when uh they decided to remove all the all the schools, to model schools. Then uh Sharjah zone said you cannot be…

Glenda: When was the when what year do you remember?

Noura: Uh… 2011 I think.

Glenda: Ok, so all the school became model schools. What did that mean when they became "Model Schools"?

Noura: uh they, uh that's mean they need to take an extra lesson. Which called an activity lesson, where the girls will do something different totally from teaching and you know there are curriculum. Like some some of them were like cooking (laughing), and uh some of them how to cook, some of them how to you know uh write like stories and…

Glenda: Which seems good

Noura (12:03): Yes, kids love this this class, they love this. And you know some of them like in uh in our school we have teacher who is specialize in swimming. Teaching swimming, so but you cannot take the whole school, so in this class, she can take other. You know girls that they they are not not in the in the pool.

Glenda: The kids liked it, but did the parents like it as well?

Noura: yes, but we didn't

Glenda: Tell me why, tell me why. (laughing) So uhm…

Noura: because it was an extra work

Glenda: And you only had a limited amount of teaching time, and you had to achieve certain outcomes. I appreciate that

Noura: And the time we used to finish at 2:15, and then it it moved to a lot like quarter to 3

Glenda: Yeah, that makes a big difference with the traffic in Sharjah. Ha, I can understand *morsiba*. (Arabic) /Noura: *morsiba*, exactly. (laughing)/ what about uh so you were saying there was a little bit of uhm resistance perhaps about the uhm worried about the integrity of the language staying. But then uh, it seems like you are getting some more students so there was a gradual acceptance of the…

Noura (13:23): yes yes but you know uh they change it uhm I think in 2011, they they cannot change the whole school to Arabic, because these kids are in grade five, the first group they are in grade five. And they you know they grade 1 2 3 4 all in English, you cannot just (pause) look like listen I am going to teach them everything in Arabic, so they said no. The first year I think it was 2011, uh only grade 1 and 2 they are gonna take everything in Arabic, 3 4 and 5 they are going to take uh English, but we need to teach them the terminology in Arabic also. So that when they move to the normal school, they have the terminology.

Glenda (14:12): Yes, they have the basis.

Noura (14:15): the basis, yes.

Glenda (14:16): What about the other teachers in your group - you were trained at UAE university (pseudonym), were there others from other UAE universities?

Noura (14:27): Yes, we have one from Sharjah, Sharjah University. And you know I felt I felt lucky because I was from college really.

Appendix F: Examples of marked-up script

"science should be taught in mother tongue"

"the system was amazing"

"loop of time"

taught in native, uh in mother tongue. Because sometimes for example uh…. you have some words that Is very very different when you translate it, it just doesn't work, you don't understand it the way you want to understand it. So science is one thing, but in general, students were having when I start MAG, every MAG teacher uh taught 24 uh (unclear words). So it was 24, I teach two classes, and the ….(pause) the system was amazing, you know. You started in the morning, you go to the class, you have period 1 2 3 with one classroom, with one set of boys or girls. You have breakfast to them, you teach them. You know you have this big uh loop of time that is almost three classes so it is almost two and half hours. So you have for example two hours to revised, and do the work, and uh focus on what's needs focusing and you have for example the last 10 minutes to 15 minutes uh to do a quick uh conclusion. And you have book 15 minutes to mark and collect book (book sum?) and collecting homework and give out homework samples so you manage to do many things you want to go for example if I am doing very well in English with this class. But I am very late in science, so today's classes between only be science. I have the control over that. /Glenda: yes, yes./ But at the end of the week, I need to be to give four class of science, six of English, and five of, no five of English, six of math and four of science. So it always work best on doing that. So that was very very good, because it was flexible and it was up to the teacher. So uh the teacher is uh can be fast with the boys. Then she can have more time to practice, more time to play, more time to make activities. Even the activities, because some of the activities take more than one hour.

SCIENCE SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN MOTHER TONGUE

CONTROL

"I have control over that"

more teacher agency

(in good MAG times) MORE TEACHER AGENCY

FLEXIBLE

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Glenda(06:16): how did you, would that debate about the Arabic and English. Did you notice anything about the Arabic of the studens?

Zala(06:23): uh, the story have a, uh, the rest of the story. So you have period 1 2 3 with the boys for example. The door next to you is the Arabic teacher has a homeroom, and you have a homeroom. So you teach period 1 2 3. The Arabic teacher teaches girls period 1 2 3 Arabic and Islamic, Islamic study. After the break, we swap. So the boys have, the girls have 5 6 and 7 in English and the boys will have 5 6 and 7 in Arabic. So it is exactly the same amount of time spend to be teaching English and to be teaching Arabic. But you have three classes to teach two subjects in Arabic so you are focusing more. And three subjects in English so you are focusing less. So this is one of the uh… one of the thing uh….uh.. when you think about it English all they have was work sheets and book clips and Arabic has 17 books. So who is losing the language? Nobody. (Emphasize tone) It is they are managing one they are managing one the books are good and the fact that teacher had homeroom. It is less stressful, we have all the things in the classroom we don't need to move anything and because we are teaching two two sets of students. We have half of the classroom cabinet for the boys, half of the classroom cabinet for the girls or two classes of the boys. So they only carry home the things that need revising, needs signing, need studying or homework. So you know uhm I remember the first year you know the uh backpack was like folder. It was like a folder, it fits only like two files and a couple of notebooks that's it. So it was like lighter for the boys, lighter for the parents. And uh our brain are as ease as teachers that all of the books are

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"exactly same, amt of time for Eng / Arabic
"3 class 2 sub A" RABIC
"3 sub. 2 class. Eng.

"so who is losing the language. Nobody"
paralinguistic = emphatic tone
strong feeling

"so who is losing the language?"

No loss of Arabic language instruction) time

here, nothing will get destroy. And for the ministry, for example, the reading book doesn't need to be assigned to each student. Every teacher have to get a set. And ok, the notebooks, workbooks, they need to have be here. So it is a win-win situation for everybody. You just make a face with your face. Make a expression with your face when you hear a good word, ha ha. (laughing)

Glenda: Oh, because I am so pleased to hear the other side of the debate. Because there was so much in the paper about we are missing our culture, this will be the death of Arabic. And all this like musiba musiba. I am so pleased to hear a teacher say that.

Zala(09:36): You know because, yeah, but, because they started with all of the uh uh foreigner uh teachers uh that some of them weren't respect for all the culture. So they are wearing short uh clothes.

Glenda(09:56): Tell me some examples of that, that's interesting.

Zala(09:57): Honestly, I didn't see any. Because when I came in, they wear English but they were Muslim. So they wear cover at. But my friend told me that the year before that she was like, you know and I couldn't wear of cloth and old people and you know uh some religious people they don't accept that. For example you can teach in a college like wearing mini skirt. But you cannot do that in school, because in a school it is just wider. In the college, it is just students who are honestly teenagers who are Ok to everything. But when when it comes to school, you are teaching the first grader who is the first child a spoiled brat in the house, and with the first grader who is the last

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