

Do You Use English in Dubai as a Foreign Or a second Language?

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the use of English language in Dubai which is considered a cosmopolitan city as it has many varied nationalities from all over the world. The researcher discusses and penetrates the use of English language in Dubai in the educational system, business, and the daily-life situations. She concludes that generally speaking, excluding few situations, English language in Dubai is used as foreign language not as a second language.*

Keywords: *Dubai, foreign language, second language*

1. INTRODUCTION

Dubai is located on the southeast coast of the Persian Gulf and is one of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Arabic is considered the official language in Dubai; and the Gulf dialect of Arabic language is spoken by the Emirati people. As Dubai is a cosmopolitan city which includes many nationalities from all around the world, there are many languages spoken in Dubai such as Urdu, Hindi, Persian, Bengali, Tamil, Chinese, and many others. Definitely, English language is widely spoken in Dubai because it is the international language and the only channel that unifies the whole different nationalities to be able to communicate (The official Portal of Dubai government, 2014); the necessity to communicate in English is obviously noticed in almost all aspects of life in Dubai. And the question that must be tackled: Is English language used in Dubai as a foreign or a second language?

2. ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OR ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

It is commonly known that using English language can be conducted within two different contexts: The context of using English as a foreign language (EFL) and the context of using English as a second language (ESL). And there is a clear cut between the two contexts as in EFL context, one uses English in a country such as Jordan where English is not the formal means of communication while in ESL context, one learns English in a country such as England where English is the mother tongue or in a country such as India where English is used as a means of communication. To clarify the idea, Kachru (1991, 1992) has divided the countries into three circles: (1) The inner circle: In these countries, English is the mother tongue; countries included in the inner circle are Great Britain and Ireland, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, (2) The outer or extended circle: In these countries, English language is adopted in non-native contexts, but it has an essential role in the communication in the different institutions; countries included in the outer or extended circle are India, Singapore, Malawi, and 50 other territories, and (3) The expanding circle: In these countries, English language has no special role in communication, nor does it have administrative status; countries included in the expanding circle are Jordan, China, Japan, and many others. So, it is obvious that if one uses English language in the inner and the outer or extended circle, he will be within the context of English as a second language, and if he is in the expanding circle, he will be within the context of English as a foreign language. But using English in Dubai is hardly to be directly recognized under the umbrella of EFL or ESL. Thus, this paper discusses the use of English language in Dubai in the educational system, business, and the daily-life situations, concluding whether English language, in the city of Dubai, is considered a foreign or a second language.

3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN DUBAI

In Dubai, there are many public and private schools. In the public schools, the primary and the secondary levels are free and compulsory for all Emiratis. The medium of instruction in the public schools is the Arabic language, and English is only taught as a school subject; the English language teachers are non-native speakers of English as they are, in most cases, of Arabic nationality. English is only practiced within the timing of the English language class, and it is not used for any communication purposes outside the class. So, within this context, English language in Dubai is clearly used and practiced as a foreign language not as a second language. Regarding the private schools, in fact, there are a large number of private schools in Dubai that adopt one of the following curricula: American, British, French, German, Indian, International Baccalaureate, Pakistani, Filipino, Russian, and Arabic. As each curriculum adopts its native language, one can classify the private schools into two categories: 1- the schools that adopt English as a medium of instruction; these are the schools that adopt the American, British and International Baccalaureate curricula. Only in these schools English is used as second language as it is the main medium of instruction, and it is used for all the purposes of communication in these schools; besides, the teachers in these schools are mainly native speakers of English. And 2- the schools that adopt their native languages, not the English language, as a medium of instruction; these are the schools that adopt the French, German, Indian, Pakistani, Filipino, Russian and Arabic curricula. In these schools English is used as a foreign language as English is taught as a school subject only, it is not used for communication among the students and teachers, and the English language teachers are, in most cases non- native speakers of English.

4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN BUSINESS IN DUBAI

Business in Dubai is so flourishing and expanding to the extent that it has become internationally recognized. In this domain, English language is remarkably adopted and used; English language is highly demanded for the varied business and commerce activities in Dubai. The good and even excellent command of spoken and written English is highly required in all jobs recruitment. At work, one needs to have good command in English to communicate with his colleagues. At the services centers, one is obliged to talk in English to convey his message and to receive the needed service. At tourism and hospitality sectors, English language is remarkably used at hotels, restaurants, and travel services. The demand of English language in business in Dubai will be more and more demanded especially that Dubai is hosting the world Expo 2020. So, despite the fact that English language has a role in communication in business, it is used as a foreign language not as a second language as the English language that is usually adopted is so simple and does not follow the formal rules of grammar and syntax; besides, one can notice a lot of English language errors and mistakes in this domain.

5. ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN THE DAILY-LIFE SITUATIONS

English language is remarkably used, in the city of Dubai, in the daily-life situations. As mentioned earlier, Dubai is a cosmopolitan city, so English language is used as a channel of communication among the different nationalities. At the shopping malls, one needs the English language in order to be able to communicate with the shop assistants; at the restaurants and coffee shops, one needs the English language to be able to convey the correct order to the waiters and the waitresses; and at home, one needs the English language to communicate with the nannies. In all of these situations, one rarely deals with native speakers of English. Mainly, one deals with Filipinos, Indians, Arabs, and some other nationalities who use simplified English structure, syntax, and vocabulary; their pronunciation of the English vowels and consonants is so affected by their native languages. Thus, it is clearly observed that English language in the daily-life situations in Dubai is used within the context of foreign language not the context of second language.

6. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the English language in Dubai, excluding the English that is used at a certain formal academic level, is used as a foreign language not as a second language. English language in Dubai can be classified under one type of language that is named 'pidgin'; Nichol (2014) defines pidgin as "a simplified language arising from the efforts of people speaking different languages to

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communicate”. Hall (1996) added that such a kind of language is adopted to facilitate business among people without a common language. The researcher believes that English language in Dubai is classified as ‘pidgin’ as there are a lot of nationalities that can communicate only in English, but they are not using the formal and standard English rather they try to simplify it to be understood by many people around.

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Dr. Niveen Mohammad Zayed holds a Ph.D in Curricula and Methods of Teaching English from Yarmouk University (Irbid-Jordan). Besides, she has a master degree in English Language/ Translation from Yarmouk University (Irbid-Jordan). She taught for five years at the Language Centre at Philadelphia University, teaching English language skills for different proficiency levels. And she taught for two years at American University in the Emirates (AUE), teaching English language and participating in many vital committees. Dr. Zayed has a special interest to do researches concerning the pragmatic field of the English language and the role of translation in teaching. Presently, she is Assistant Professor at MENA College of Management, Dubai.