

Ursidae: The Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado

Volume 5
Number 1 2015 Research Excellence Awards
Winners and Finalists

Article 13

January 2015

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Recommended Citation

Muro, Denise (2015) "Attitudes and Perceptions of the English Language among Bilingual Arabic-English Speaking College Females," *Ursidae: The Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado*: Vol. 5: No. 1, Article 13.

Available at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/urj/vol5/iss1/13>

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Attitudes and Perceptions of the English Language among Bilingual Arabic-English Speaking College Females

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Abstract: In our interconnected world, having a global language makes sense, especially for purposes of international business and politics; however, there are negative aspects to the globalization of English as well. While the effect of a global language on culture remains debated, significant research shows that language, identity, and culture are closely related. Language bears great influence on an individual's culture and identity; therefore, if a society's language setting changes, the culture and concept of identity in that society may change as well. Learning the global language, English, as a second language, may have positive or negative effects, or both. The issue is complicated and multifaceted. The purpose of this research is to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of bilingual, Arabic-English speaking, college-aged females living in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region toward the English language. While learning the English language in addition to one's first language may provide more opportunities and social mobility, it may also aid the process of language death and sever ties to one's culture. Through semi-structured interviews, this phenomenological study examines how learning and knowing the English language may affect perceptions of self, views of culture, and relationships. Emerging themes suggest that the English language is generally positively viewed and seen as necessary for increased opportunities and success. However, preliminary findings also suggest that English should not be seen as superior to the native language, in this case, Arabic. This research is meant to improve understanding of the spectrum of positive and negative effects of the globalization of the English language, specifically for college females in the MENA region.