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CONDUCĂTOR DE DOCTORAT
DOCTORAL SUPERVISOR
Prof. univ. dr. Mihai Zdrenghea

Student-doctorand
Doctoral student
Liat Ben Horine CLUJ-NAPOCA

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A PRAGMATIC AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCES OF ARABIC SPEAKERS IN EAP PROGRAMS IN MULTI-CULTURAL COLLEGES IN ISRAEL

Long Abstract

CONDUCĂTOR DE DOCTORAT
DOCTORAL SUPERVISOR
Prof. univ. dr. Mihai Zdrenghea

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Liat Ben Horine

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Abstract

This study set out to research the English language experiences of Arabic speaking teacher trainees in Hebrew speaking colleges of education in Israel. In order to graduate, the students are obliged to learn English for Academic purposes (EAP) for the first two years of their four year program. As primary and secondary school education is largely separate for Jewish and Arab pupils, for the majority of students this represents their first multicultural experience of either social or educational nature. With a view to understanding the nature of their experiences in this context, this study documented the cultural and pragmatic features of their learning environment and analyzed the way in which they either hampered or contributed to students' progress in the program.

Mixed research methods were employed, whereby stage one involved qualitative research and collected data from interviews with teachers and students from a wide range of ethnicities in two different teacher training colleges. Stage two focused on issues raised in the interviews and surveyed students about cultural aspects of the program and learning environment using a questionnaire designed by the researcher for this purpose.

Results indicate a duality of experience for the Arab speakers whereby their enjoyment of the multicultural environment, their good relationships with their teachers and their high extrinsic motivation to succeed were qualified by the difficulty they encountered in academic English acquisition. This was found to be the result of a number of factors including the diglossic effects of Arabic on their literacy skills, having come poorly prepared for academic studies in terms of maturity, knowledge and life experience, possession of inadequate Hebrew skills, and a lack of mutual, cultural understanding between themselves and others in the learning environment.

The conclusions of this study suggest a number of practical recommendations which can be implemented by policy makers, managerial administrators, and EAP lecturers. They include measures designed to make the English learning experience more equitable and so enable a greater maximization of the potential of Arabic speaking students. By encouraging their improved achievements in academic English, such innovations will contribute to students' greater personal and professional success and increase their future integration into the workforce thereby not only raising educational standards within their own cultural milieu, but also contributing to the future coexistence and interdependence between ethnicities in Israeli society. Such progress will be of mutual benefit to all .

Introduction

Aims and Focus

This research addresses the experiences of Arab students studying English for Academic Purposes as part of their first degree program in Hebrew speaking colleges of education in Israel with an aim of identifying which factors of this experience contribute either positively or negatively to their progress. This has been done with a view to capitalizing upon this knowledge to maximize those environmental conditions which encourage success. The following questions were central to the research:

> ❖ **Research Question 1**
>
> What is the nature of the EAP experience for Arab students in Hebrew speaking colleges of education?

> ❖ **Research Question 2**
>
> What are the factors involved in the acquisition of Arab students' academic reading skills in English, and which of these factors hinder or promote this process?

> ❖ **Research Question 3**
>
> How can the learning environment be influenced to facilitate improved achievements in academic reading programs for the aforementioned population?

Background and Context of the Research

Israel, along with many countries in the developed world, is a multi-cultural society. This is reflected in very specific and unique ways in almost every aspect of daily life including the educational. The Israeli Arab community is diverse. Making up approximately 20% of the population, (Rass, 2009), this sector is comprised of not only Muslims who are the majority, but also of Christians and Druze. This in itself is an oversimplification, as Bedouins for example share Islam with Muslims, but constitute a separate ethnic group with different cultural outlooks and traditions. Furthermore, political identification and aspirations differ radically amongst the Arab speakers of Israel, some identifying themselves as Palestinians, others are loyal to the Jewish state. They do not even speak the same Arabic; at least three dialects have been identified; Northern, Southern and Central (Khamis-Dakwar, Froud & Gordon, 2012).

The context of this research is that of two teacher training colleges in the north of Israel. Here multi-lingual, multi-cultural educational communities have evolved, which afford an excellent opportunity for research purposes. Studying together for the first time, as compulsory schooling is separate (Glazier, 2003; Wolff & Breit, 2012), all students are obliged to learn academic English (hereafter EAP), in order to graduate with a Bachelor of Education degree. This

research aims to understand the experiences of those minority students in these courses who speak Arabic as a native tongue.

The Significance of this Research

The existence of high cultural heterogeneity in Israeli society begs the question of how we can utilize the unique multicultural environment that exists in higher education for learning purposes. In the exceptional reality of our classrooms, where representatives of all colors of the political rainbow, Jewish and Arab, left wing and right, religious and secular occupy the same space in a joint learning effort for between 4 and 6 hours a week, one might ask how it affects the participants and if this opportunity can be exploited for the better good.

As English in Israel is "*Indispensable for academic advancement*" (Aronin & Spolsky, 2010, p.299), it would be beneficial to discover as much as possible about the way it is taught and the reactions to this from its target audience. For Israeli students, "*English is often the foreign language in which the politics of difference are experienced*" (Kalekin-Fishman 2005, p.53). The quality of Arab students' experiences in higher education is of great significance not only in determining their future success and social mobility but also it indirectly influences the future of coexistence between the ethnic groups in Israeli society. So much so, that Professor Manual Trajtenberg speaking on the challenges and necessity of improving access to higher education for Arab citizens declared: "*The future of Israel depends on tackling the Arab issue*" (Bandler, in Jerusalem Post, 2013). Succeeding in our jobs as teachers in higher education is critical, because of the increased employment opportunities a knowledge of English and a completed degree in education will give this generation of students from ethnic minorities Such success will also incrementally increase the quality of education enjoyed by the next generation given that students in teacher training colleges will generally go back to their 'home' communities to teach.

Needless to say, with the Western world fast becoming a global village, general lessons learned from this research will have relevance in almost any foreign context where English is learned in higher education contexts. Education both reflects and directs reality,(Van de Stoel, 2004), and its critical function would benefit from further analysis with relation to the language learning context.

Part 1: Literature Review

1.1 English as an Additional Language

In order to understand the importance of English language learning in Israel, one must first understand the role of this language in this particular society. English, while not formally defined as an official language, has of late become critically important in professional and academic terms. English in Israel is now recognized as the academic lingua franca. Nowadays English is considered a vital subject of study and a passport to future success in higher education, business and travel, (Ministry of Education: Introduction to National Curriculum, 2001, p.1). National educational policy supports English as the major language of wider communication and the latest national school syllabus acknowledges its increased importance.

Teaching English in Israel is officially the teaching of English as an additional language since Israel has dual official languages thus making either Arabic or Hebrew the compulsory second language for school pupils however de facto, it is second language for Jewish Israelis and an additional language for Arab citizens. Whereas Jewish pupils and schools commonly neglect Arabic language studies, Arab speaking school children are typically exposed to spoken Hebrew in second grade, shortly before oral English is introduced in the third, so that by the time they reach high school level, most Arabic speaking students are as proficient in written Hebrew as they are in Modern Standard Arabic, hereafter MSA (Ibrahaim & Aharon–Peretz, 2005). However the negative implications of this are felt as soon as reading and writing are introduced in English in the fourth grade, when young pupils must grapple with multiple scripts/orthographies of Hebrew, literary Arabic and English simultaneously.

1.2 English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Arab students in EAP programs in Israel frequently report experiencing difficulty with this aspect of their studies. Al Haj's (2003) survey of the difficulties experienced by Arab students at Haifa University (one of Israel's seven universities), revealed that problems with English language were a high priority issue for them adjusting to their new environment.

1.2.1 The National Curriculum for Teacher Trainees

According to the national curriculum of 1999, the EAP college program, developed to serve the needs of students in teacher training colleges, presents a practically oriented language learning approach to reading comprehension,(Ministry of Education, 1999).In the updated syllabus

(2008), cultural issues are directly addressed for the first time reflecting the heightened awareness of their significance. The national EAP curriculum declares a policy that allows colleges the flexibility to make adaptations to fit the diversity of the various populations they serve, be they national-religious, ultra-religious, Arab, secular or kibbutz members, (ibid, 2009). However experience suggests that by and large, those local variations that have been implemented in practice have been confined to those concerning text content and the flexibility to choose the most appropriate mother tongue as a language of instruction.

1.3 Multicultural Education

Despite evidence that some minority groups do well, without sharing the home language and culture of the dominant group (Levin & Shohamy, 2012); this is not always the case. Due to political upheaval and wars, the indigenous Arab population that remained in Israel after Independence in 1948, became an involuntary minority. This is further complicated by the fact that the majority of the Arab population is commonly regarded as a 'hostile minority' that represents a security risk to their own country (Al Haj, 2003).

This intergroup tension could contribute to the failure of minorities to thrive academically particularly in mixed learning environments. Minorities often regard education as a way to collective advancement. Indeed, many Palestinian citizens have attempted to turn education into a means for social and economic mobility (Mari, 1978). However, data on Palestinians studying in high schools and universities does not indicate that this has been a successful movement overall (Zedan, 2012).Many voices claim that the two education systems functioning in the country are *"separate but not equal"* (Golan-Agnon, 2006, p.45), and that despite opportunities opened up by local colleges (with cheaper tuition, lower entrance requirements and more convenient localities), the inequality has been preserved. This has been interpreted as being a result of deficiencies in the Arab educational system, unfair discriminatory practices caused by interviewing candidates for higher education in Hebrew, the bias of psychometric exams and the culture shock experienced by some Palestinian Arabs.

1.3.1 Culturally Responsible Teaching and Equitable Learning

The conscious, responsible use of cultural information is a competency that can help teachers in the educational system (Taylor, 2010). Taylor lamented the fact that whilst multicultural information is included in teacher training courses it is rarely sufficient to keep pace with the changing public school system. This is not only true for teacher trainees, but is even more

relevant for those highly experienced lecturers teaching in tertiary education who may not have undergone any specific training in this field or who did so at a time too long ago for it to be relevant to the current cultural climate. The fact that Arab identity in Israel is not a single entity but multiple faceted, not static but constantly changing and redefining itself as a response to political and social realities, makes deep cultural knowledge and ease of communication problematic between teachers and pupils in local multicultural environments. Teachers may evade this challenge or be reluctant to admit that they possess prejudices towards social groups and must discover those biases that may have influenced their value system by a process of reflection and self- assessment (ibid). Failure to do this can have a number of implications. Grimes (2010) relating her experiences as an American abroad, named misunderstandings that naturally occur 'culture bump'. This culture bump can result in awkwardness and cause interference in intercultural communication necessary in the classroom. On a deeper more significant level, the creation of a safe and productive learning environment is critically dependent on the ability of teachers to validate, liberate and empower minority students. Teachers who do attempt to take this path must be aware that cultural knowledge involves more than a *"tourist approach"* (Taylor 2010,p.25) If the groundwork is poorly prepared the result is likely to be an exacerbation of the problem as the experience serves to confirm erroneous preconceived notions and beliefs, (Taylor, 2010). *"It is much more than holidays, foods and customs. It reflects our beliefs how we learn, what we value, the ways we interact with others.* (Klinger & Soltero-Gonzalez, 2009, p.5).

Arab teacher trainees, upon arrival in Hebrew speaking institutes of higher education in Israel, meet a very different culture to the one they are used to. *"Cultural transition is one of the main problems for Arab students, in particular the women"* (Al-Haj, 2003, p. 361). They exist in two worlds, going back and forth between them and this adds confusion to their personal and cultural identity. This may explain the dropout rate for Arab university students which is considerably higher for Arabs than for Jewish students at the University of Haifa (in which approximately 30% of Arab university students in Israel study). Al Haj ascribes this to the fact that the curriculum is in no sense multicultural,(ibid).Although many Jewish students in EAP classes have had exposure to different cultural traditions, Arab students come from a more closed and sheltered environment where even the possession of what is normally considered 'general knowledge' amongst Jewish Israelis cannot be taken for granted, (Weiner-Levy 2008).

Descriptions of pedagogical methods in Arab speaking states remark on their heavy reliance on role learning and memorization. This type of instruction encourages surface learning which is not appropriate to deeper thinking processes that are critical to success in academic settings. The same style is to be found in many Arab schools in Israel where teaching at both elementary and secondary levels is still based on frontal banking methods or depositing knowledge, and less on educating pupils to use creative and critical thinking (Al-Haj, 2003). Rote learning is still the rule in towns and villages populated by Arabic speakers (Geiger,2013).This makes it hard for Arab students to adapt to the pedagogical methods and academic skills that are currently expected in EAP learning.

Classroom norms also require a process of acculturation. Questioning and challenging teachers, classmates and ideas themselves are acceptable in western style education and are particularly representative of Jewish Israeli's study behavior (Katriel 1986, Hellerstein-Yehezkel, 2013). However, this behavior was found to be less common in those coming from a culture that requires norms of obedience and interprets questioning as a sign of impoliteness and disobedience, such as in Druze culture for example. Here consent or submission is not interpreted as weakness but rather as tolerance, self-control and maturity (Markus & Kitayamal, 1994). As a consequence, students have reported taking time during the first year of studies to learn to model the more active behavior and self- confidence of other groups (Geiger, 2013).

Mastery of Hebrew as the language of instruction is another hurdle that influences success. The poor command of Hebrew reported by Arabic speakers (Geiger, 2013), further exacerbates their reluctance to participate in class discussion due to the particular weakness of their oral skills. When questioned, respondents reported having rejected Arab speaking colleges in the area due to an understanding that mastering Hebrew speaking environments widened their educational and professional options (ibid).

1.4 Linguistic and Cultural Features of the Arabic Language

Arabic is not related linguistically to English which is disadvantageous to learning. *"Language distance clearly has some effect on the amount of transfer that can take place between languages, and therefore on the extent to which transfer can support or hinder learning"* (Swan, 1997,n.p.).

Significant peculiarities of Arabic that are relevant to English language learners are in some cases shared with Hebrew. Other orthographic variations are particular to Arabic for instance the

difficulty Arabic speakers have making the distinction between the **p** and **b** letters when pronouncing them in English. Moreover, sociolinguistic aspects of Arabic differ from those of English. Some of these features may cause discomfort to speakers of different languages such as the manner of personal questioning and the cultural appropriateness of jokes as they transfer from language to language (Santos & Suleiman, 1993).

Furthermore, the written discourse of Arabic speakers is dependent on Arabic logic and cultural thought patterns (ibid). The rhetoric of a tightly organized, logical presentation of ideas is common in English speaking societies but foreign to Arab students who are rather more used to the embellished, somewhat elite style of literary Arabic (Yorkey, 1977) .This may interfere with the negotiation of meaning when dealing with a reading comprehension exercise. Research indicates that there is a significant difference between the strategies used whilst reading in English to those employed by native Arab speakers whilst reading in Arabic (Alsheikh & Mokhari, 2011).

Additionally as a result of the language distance between Arabic and English, learners cannot benefit from a shared cognate vocabulary. In related languages even in those without cognate vocabulary, there tends to be close translation equivalents in L1, which can give learners a significant advantage. Differences in phonological structure also have an effect on vocabulary learning (Swan, 1977); it has been shown that foreign words that conform more or less to the phonetic and orthographic patterns of the mother tongue are the easiest to assimilate (Laufer, 1990; Ellis & Beaton, 1993). Hence it can be seen that knowledge of the cultural and linguistic features of a student's L1 is important to the management of the language learning process.

1.4.1 Diglossia

Diglossia is a situation whereby in addition to various regional dialects of a language, there exists an additional language variety. It is *" learned largely by formal education and is used for most written or formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation",*(Ferguson, 1959, p. 336).

"Fusha"; otherwise known as literary or classic Arabic or Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), to which Arab children are only introduced once formal schooling begins, demonstrates great linguistic difference and distance from the colloquial version (Saiegh-Haddad, 2003; Khamis-Dakwar, Froud & Gordon, 2012). There is widespread agreement that differences between MSA and 'al-Arabiya' (the various spoken dialects of Arabic), are manifest in every linguistic domain

(morphosyntactic, phonological, semantic) and that there are additional differences in sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of the two forms of the language. Indeed, MSA is "no-one's mother tongue" (Saiegh- Haddad, 2012), and the substantial differences within the distinct versions that are used for functionally different purposes mean that children who encounter MSA for the first time in school, do so with an absence of the foundational infrastructure, which would normally exist as a prerequisite to reading acquisition in other circumstances. Thus Arabic speaking children must acquire a linguistic system with which they have almost no knowledge or experience and simultaneously master its orthographic representation in written form. *"Diglossia does not support the acquisition of basic literacy processes in Arabic; it may indeed contribute to the widespread low levels of mother tongue reading comprehension scores"* (Saiegh-Haddad, 2012, p. 50).

As a diglossic language, learning literary Arabic has been compared to learning a second language This has consequences for the development of reading skills and achievements in higher grades particularly for less able pupils. Tri-lingualism or indeed Pluralingualism has, in different circumstances, been shown to be an advantage in language learning (Abu Rabia, 2005). In order to understand why Arabic diglossia does not necessarily inevitably lead to the improved language performance described previously, it is necessary to understand the link that has been discovered between reading proficiency in L1 and the ease of second language learning. The Linguistic Coding Differences Hypothesis proposed by Sparks et al. (2006), which claims that foreign language learning is built on native language skills, is supported by the previous findings of numerous researchers (Cummins, 1984; Dufva & Voeten 1999; Geva, 2000). It has been shown that components of native language learning such as phonological, orthographic, syntactic and semantic knowledge constitute the basis of foreign language learning. Here in Israel this has been confirmed by Kahn-Horwitz, Shimron & Sparks, (2006). By implication, if native literacy has been slowed or complicated by the existence of diglossia this is likely to impede acquisition of subsequent literacy in any second, foreign or additional language learning attempted by students.

1.5 Learning Disabilities (LD) in the EAP Classroom

Very few Arab students in the two colleges participating in this research project have either been diagnosed with LD or have requested to join special LD English courses offered. This is despite the fact that the Edmond J. Safra Brain Center at Haifa University estimates that approximately 50% of Arabic-speaking schoolchildren in Israel are suspected to have learning disabilities. This is echoed by a study of international variation in the treatment procedures for ADHD. This

reveals that in Israel, an overall 3% of the population have been diagnosed with the condition whereby nearly three times more Jews are diagnosed than their Arab counterparts (Hinshaw et al., 2011). Undiagnosed or untreated learning difficulties negatively influence students' confidence and performance learning English as an additional language and so affect academic performance. Accounts of local provisions and services suggest that the shortfall of professionals and resources is severe in the Arab sector. **"*Infrastructure and educational services have been consistently underfunded since Israel was formed, leaving a dearth of highly educated Israeli Arab professionals in the main stream economy*"** (ibid, p. 20).

1.6 Cultural Practices Relating to Home Literacy

It is now accepted that the infrastructure of literacy acquisition is first established in the socio–cultural context of the young (Saiegh–Haddad 2012, p.50). This indicates the significance of parental attitudes towards literacy acquisition and emphasizes the importance of their involvement in those activities that promote it. A study by Iraqi published in 1990 revealed that only 1.8% of the 290 participating families reported reading (in Arabic) to their children from books whilst 58% orally recited stories. The remaining 40% of participants used books in their story telling but did not read from them. Thus, by age three, 98.8 % of middle/lower class Arab children in the study did not have any concept of letters and 84.4% didn't know what letters were for. By contrast, a study in a similar socio-economic grouping of Hebrew preschoolers, who had not been taught about letters at kindergarten, showed that they were able to name 61% of the Hebrew alphabet (Treiman, Levin & Kessler, 2006). Attitudes towards literacy, participation in literacy related home practices together with linguistic sophistication in the home environment have been shown by Cummins' linguistic interdependence theory (1979) to directly impact literacy outcomes at school. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that today's college students are in many cases the first generation of a family to study in higher education. Spolsky and Shohamy (1999) mentioned the difficulties caused by this gap in generational knowledge particularly with reference to the inability of parents to support their children's English learning.

1.7 Motivation and Second Language Acquisition

Motivation is recognized as a crucial factor in any learning process. Language learning, as it is a complex and lengthy process, is particularly susceptible to the vagaries of learners' reasons for learning and determination to succeed, (Ghenghesh 2010). Dörnyei (2001a) equated the importance of motivation to that of language aptitude as a determinant in second language

acquisition. Language status is also a prominent factor in attitudes and motivation to learn a second language. This has been confirmed by the findings of Dörnyei's (2001b) research in Budapest in which he found that negative attitudes towards language and the target community were closely related to motivation or demotivation in the language learning environment.

1.7.1 Teachers as Motivators

One of the major issues in determining motivation is the leader or manager of the language learning experience, the teacher. Clearly teachers are major factors in motivating learning. Research into the learning of Arabic by Israeli Jewish pupils, showed that negative attitudes and a lack of motivation could be positively influenced by a successful learning environment established by a particularly good teacher. In this situation, documented by Abu Rabia, a group of thirteen year olds overcame their reluctance to learn (which had been created by the negative emotional barriers of the intergroup hostility and conflict that characterize the area), and become seriously engaged in learning. *"A good teacher, therefore, is one …..who is eager to make the learning situation very enjoyable in spite of any socio political conflicts that may exist"* (Abu Rabia, 1998a, p.170).

1.8 Learning Styles and Cultural Identity

Different learning styles in different pupils may make certain teacher characteristics more or less desirable. Serious mismatches may occur between the learning styles of students in a class and the teaching style of the instructor, with unfortunate consequences that may influence learning. Preferences may even differ culturally as suggested by Eilam & Vidergor (2011).When Jewish and Arab school pupils in enrichment programs were questioned in Israel, results showed a difference between their perceptions regarding the various dimensions of teachers' desirable characteristics. Arab culture, stated Eliam & Vidergor (2011), tends to be collectivist. It emphasizes adult authority and prioritizes norms of respect and obedience, which is more compatible with the traditional instructional practices of teacher centered instruction. This is in opposition to Jewish Israeli cultural orientations that are more western and therefore more individualistically oriented. These are expressed in the more modern teaching methods commonly found in Jewish educational settings in Israel, which prioritize student centered practices and promote active learning and creativity such as group work and problem solving activities. This emphasizes the need for a cultural awareness of differing perspectives and orientations amongst teachers working with mixed backgrounds as they may influence students' experiences of learning and affect their preferences and expectations.

1.8.1 Cultural Identity and its Relation to Motivation

One of the greatest predictors of language learning success is the level at which a learner identifies with, and approves of the native culture of the target language. This factor is highly relevant to understanding the relative success or failure of second language learning. Guira et al. (1972), cited in Moyer, (2004) stated that *"To learn a second language is to take on a new identity"* (p. 41).Whilst in the Jewish sector, knowledge of English is associated with social prestige and the language has pervaded every aspect of social, political and cultural life (Spolsky & Shohamy 1999), this is less so in the Arab sector, (ibid). There is certainly less exposure within the Arab sector to native models of language. Over 100,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in the two decades preceding the end of the century and this has led to a situation whereby 40% of English teachers in Israeli schools were (as of the turn of the 21st century) English speakers, as opposed to 0% in the Arab sector (Spolsky & Shohamy, 1999). This, combined with the fact that there are a high number of Jewish children with English immigrant parents (or more distant family members in English speaking countries), and the continued tourism of English speakers or tourists principally using English as a lingua franca to attractions in Hebrew speaking areas of the country, has led to a close connection between the cultures and languages. Thus for the above mentioned reasons, it is likely that Arab students have less identification with English and English culture than Jewish students do and certainly less opportunity to develop such identification. Research conducted into a ninth grade class in an Arab school in East Jerusalem revealed that children there were reluctant to learn English as they associated it with Zionism due to the close links between the U.S. and the Israeli government (Schlam-Salman, 2013).Thus it can be seen that there is link between cultural identity and motivation, which should be taken into account in the learning environment.

1.9 Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic knowledge is, as has been previously suggested, central, indeed essential, to the development of learner's communicative competence. Therefore it is crucial that both foreign language teachers and their students focus on gaining an intercultural pragmatic competence. Failure to do so will result in pragmatic failure with its concomitant results of misunderstanding, miscommunication, embarrassment, frustration (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989a ,1989b).Reading comprehension at an academic level is the ability to correctly interpret texts. The comprehension of any particular article required by the course syllabus also requires sensitivity to the grey areas of inference, standpoint and author opinion. The understanding of these is often dependent on a correct perception of the pragmatic intent of the author. The fields of pragmatics and rhetoric are

closely related. If Arabic and English value and support differing writing practices, it is clear that it is these very differences, when they appear in a reading passage, may confuse appropriate understanding of pragmatic meaning. Descriptions of Arab rhetoric and studies of contrastive analysis show that its nature can be seen to differ markedly from Western writing traditions with relation to a large number of stylistic features at both semantic and syntactic levels and in terms of general organization (Al Qahtani, 1997; Abdul–Raof, 2006).Without explicit teaching, cultural differences may lead to misinterpretation as a result of pragmatic failure.

Language students are not always ready to accept the ways of a foreign culture. This is because language, at some level, reflects thought and therefore cultural perceptions. When these differences are expressed in language, it may be difficult for learners to accept or adopt them. When faced with different values, attitudes and behavior it has been known for learners to withdraw into an inner world in an attempt to defend their own cultural identity (Prodomou, 1998). Therefore at some conscious or unconscious level, learners may seek to promote or retain their L1 cultural identity even at the expense of pragmatic competence (LoCastro, 2012).

1.10 Gap in Knowledge

Despite the plentitude of research in disciplines related to the field of foreign language learning, the particularly unique learning environment described in this research contains a fusion of elements whose combined impact on the learner has not previously been studied in formal terms.

This research project, by including a minority within a minority(Druze of Syrian citizenship and Circassians), widened the minority population that is usually the focus of research in studies of this kind in Israel. Additionally, whilst the Arab population in Israel has been studied in the higher education context, very little information exists on the way in which Arabic speaking students interact with their learning environment in cultural terms particularly with relation to the unique experience of additional language learning. More specifically, previous studies have indicated that academic English represents an obstacle to Arab students' academic integration into higher education environments in Israel, without investigating in any depth the social, cultural and linguistic elements of this difficulty or alternately by identifying those factors in a student's past or present language experiences that facilitate progress.

Theories discussed in the literature review have been examined in relation to the current context of multicultural teacher training in Israel. Additionally, information about such highly individualized features of the experience such as the influence of using L2 as a language of instruction in a context where the majority of the class are using their L1, the influence of home

environment on the adult learner and the impact of motivational factors such as the reasons and implications of students having chosen a multicultural learning environment, have not been thoroughly investigated to date, neither has the ways in which such multicultural environments can help or hinder interethnic interdependence and co-existence in the workplace and the nation as a whole.

1.11 The Conceptual Framework of this Research

The conceptual framework of this research is based on four interrelated areas pertaining to the EAP learner; their language background, their cultural and pragmatic competencies, their motivation and the multicultural nature of the learning environment. A visual representation of the conceptual framework is introduced below.
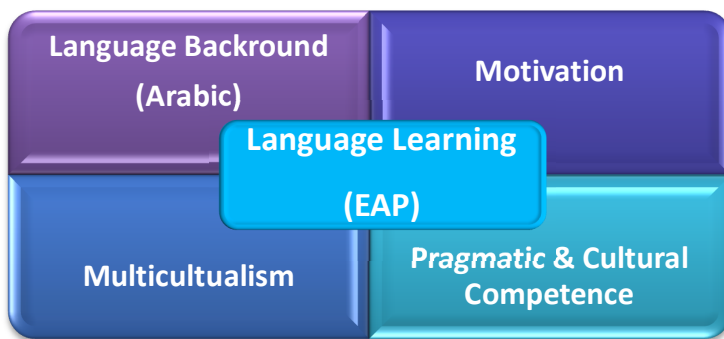

Figure 1: Components of the EAP Experience for Arabic speakers in Hebrew Colleges.

This model indicates that the components involved in the EAP environment from the Arab speakers' perspective are related to one another within this context. The partial overlap between concepts is represented in the model by the way in which the four adjacent outer fields are touching and meet in a Venn type combination at the center. This illustrates the connection that exists between the concepts and intimates their shared influence on the EAP learner.

Part II Methodology

II.I Research Paradigm Mixed Methods Research

The paradigm chosen to define the research methodology in this study was that of Mixed Method research. In the context of this study it was felt that a mixed method approach would be more appropriate than either approach in isolation. This combination was intended to strengthen the soundness of the study's findings by exploiting the multiple perspectives available through use of multiple methods. Additional considerations in the choice related to the sensitivity of an investigation of this type concerning itself as it does with the impact of multicultural education

amongst minority groups in a very highly charged political reality. Consequently, while qualitative investigation allowed the time and intimacy to pursue themes and topics to a depth not permitted by a survey, the quantitative stages were advantageous in harvesting large numbers of responses in a short time under the cover of anonymity, which was particularly important to validity as the study was conducted by an insider researcher.

Research Paradigm	Mixed methods
Research Approach	Case Study
Research Population	Approximately 300 Jewish and Arab students in college English programs
Research Tools	1. Interviews 2. Survey
Research Design	Stage one: Qualitative Stage two: Quantitative
Hypotheses	1. The background and motivation of Arab students is different to that of their peers, which affects their success in EAP programs. 2. Arab students learning of English is negatively affected by linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the Hebrew speaking college environment. 3. The multicultural nature of the classroom is disadvantageous to the EAP learning of Arabic speakers.
Data Analysis	1. Qualitative content analysis 2. Statistical content analysis

Table 1: Research Design

II.2.Case Studies

This research project is a case study of EAP courses in college education in Israel. Case studies can provide detailed accounts of a particular situation and facilitate its analysis This collective study, in which two colleges of education in the same general geographical location (one rural and one urban) were examined, had an instrumental aim; to better understand the functioning of Arabic students in Israeli college EAP programs of a multicultural nature.

II.3 Research Population

The two locations (in which students were following an almost identical program) were chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Arabs constitute a minority of college students in both these institutions, more than one college was needed in order to reach a significant number of participants in the survey stage which constituted the quantitative part of the research project. Secondly, one of the colleges had a relatively unique minority population component (Circassians and Druze of Syrian ethnicity and nationality), which were of interest. As non-minority student participants can provide additional viewpoints and perspectives and thus help gain a desirable holistic view of the case (Stake, 2000), Jewish students, both those native born to Israel, and immigrants were included in the study. Not only students, but teachers of a variety of ethnic backgrounds were also observed and interviewed.

II. 4 Sampling

In accordance with accepted practice in mixed method research, a sample was attained with the intention that it be both representative and also provide meaningful information. Sequential timing was employed in the study; the purposive sampling considered appropriate to the initial qualitative stages of the project yielded data which was then followed by the quantitative stage characterized by random sampling. In both the former and latter stages, the sample frame for this research was drawn from the local population of the teacher training colleges in which this study was based, whereby all those teachers and students involved in the EAP program in the two colleges of education were potential participants.

II. 5 Research Tools

II. 5. I Stage One: Interviews

In this research, initial classroom observations guided the building of a focused interview agenda, which although containing a basic list of predetermined questions of both a general and more specific nature, avoided closed ended items. Interviews were requested and given in both formal and more spontaneous settings inside the college environment. Questions were first asked of EAP teachers, including Christians, Druze, immigrant Jews and native born Jewish Israelis alike. Following this, the students themselves were interviewed using similar questions tailored to their perspectives. The information gleaned was analyzed and this background was used as a guide in building the survey for the second stage of the study.

II.5.2 Stage Two: Self-Completion Questionnaires

On the basis of initial experiences which had already revealed a certain reticence or difficulty in self-expression a decision was made that a more structured survey format with mainly closed ended questions might have a greater chance at success in eliciting more accurate and revealing responses from students and so this strategy was adopted. As many of the aspects of the multicultural learning environment in question were unique, no existing research survey tool was found to be appropriate for the purposes of this study. Thus an original survey, intended to examine the experiences and attitudes of Arab speaking students of varied ethnicities towards their college English studies, was designed and executed.

II.6. Validity, Reliability, Generalizability

Validity

Mixed method validity is clearly different in nature to accepted notions of validity in quantitative or qualitative research. Validity in the context of qualitative research is more amorphous as results are more influenced by subjective reality. Thus in this case, multiple interviews obtained with varied types of participants proved useful in improving generalizability. Hence the juxtaposition of teachers' viewpoints and that of their Arab students on the same topics together with an examination of opinions non-minority (Jewish) students helped illuminate differing realities and opened up alternative possibilities of interpreting them. The inclusion of negative cases, which counter majority perspectives, can also be used to effect in this respect. In this specific instance, many negative case opinions were obtained by interviewing Arab students who were relatively strong or exceptionally weak in their English studies, or who were in some other way representative of standpoints outside those normally heard in the mainstream.

Triangulation

One of the advantages of the mixed method approach is the opportunity for 'triangulation', which can be achieved by the use of two or more methods of data collection in one study. *"Triangulation is the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously"*, (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 6). It helps us overcome the boundedness of a particular approach (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000), and assists in establishing concurrent validity, which is vulnerable in qualitative research. The 'between methods' triangulation of this study was achieved by a two tiered investigation of qualitative and quantitative research, the former of which also included elements of 'within methods' triangulation in that EAP teachers were interviewed in addition to students who were the focus of this study. Additionally, the time lapse of over six months

between the sequential stages of the methods was designed to help balance the inevitable swings of national mood that occur due to the inherent instability of the local situation (time triangulation).

Reliability

A non-experimental research project such as this case study is characterized by a weaker research method (it did not include the manipulation of independent variables) especially as it was a multidimensional study, measuring more than one construct and thus stringent standards for checking reliability were applied

II.7 Researcher Position

In the case of this research, the interviewer role was impacted by the researcher's insider status. Exploiting the knowledge gained through teaching experience in a research situation requires an objectivism and impartiality that involves a shift in cultural orientation. Teachers making this switch must renegotiate their role in a way that requires a rebalancing of values and priorities that is not necessarily easily or immediately undertaken, (Kennedy- Lewis, 2012). On the other hand the three key advantages of being an insider researcher as outlined by Bonner &Tolhurst (2002) were at least partially evidenced during the experience of this research project; time was indeed saved and I was able to both ask questions and clarify the significance of respondents' answers relatively easily, as a result of the considerable knowledge of the culture being studied. Additionally as an insider I was able to research more unobtrusively without altering the natural social interaction in the college. The third key advantage identified; established intimacy, led to both advantages as disadvantages as participants may have been hesitant to fully express their opinions on sensitive issues to someone in a managerial position within their educational or occupational environment.

II.8 Ethical Considerations

The treatment of research participants is of direct relevance to any study. Qualitative research tools with their emphasis on the interview are by nature highly sensitive ethically. Informed consent, a must for all research, was obtained in accordance with accepted practice. None of the researchers' current students were participants in the study. Care was taken to give guarantees to participants about the safeguarding of their privacy and anonymity. Students were also assured

of freedom from potential harm as a result of their participation. Further it was made clear that the conclusions reached as a result of the research would be of future benefit to themselves or their peers as the aim of the study was to improve the efficacy of teaching practices in the future. Students and colleagues were clearly informed that they were at liberty to withdraw from the process at any point. In light of potential political sensitivities involved, not only were the identities of interviewees kept confidential and their contributions listed anonymously but revealing content, which could shed light on their identities, was edited from the transcript. All procedures were carried out with the permission of Israel's Chief Scientist's Office, and in accordance with the approved research plan.

11.9 Analysis of Findings

In this study, an analysis of the findings necessitated applying analytic techniques to both quantitative and the qualitative data separately as well as to a subsequent integration of the two forms of data. This research analyzed the data at three distinct points. The first analysis was performed after the initial qualitative data collection. Key data analysis decisions were made whereby the initial findings were used to direct the data collection for the follow up quantitative phase. As a new instrument was developed and used, procedures including piloting were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the questionnaire for the population in this study. Following this, quantitative data was collected and the second data analysis stage took place. Thirdly the two data bases were compared and connected at the interpretation phase to allow the drawing of inferences and meta inferences,(Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Part III : Findings

The following is a compilation of selected integrative findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative strands of the research stages with relation to the three research questions considered.

Findings: Research Question 1: What is the nature of the EAP experience for Arab students in Hebrew speaking colleges of education?

- **Enjoyment and Interest in Lessons**

According to the quantitative findings, Arab students rate their level of interest and enjoyment in learning English as significantly higher when compared to Jewish students. Qualitative results indicate that Arab students enjoy a high level of satisfaction with the college experience in general terms.

- **Perception of Difficulty**

In general, Arab students rated their degree of difficulty and discomfort in learning English as higher than that of their Jewish peers. Qualitative evidence supported these findings. The difficulties related to negotiating Hebrew as a language of instruction and to the high pressure and demands of college learning in general.

- **The Affective Impact of the Multi-Cultural Learning Environment as a Factor in Success in the ELC**

Both qualitative and quantitative evidence confirm that the affective environment of the multicultural learning environment is welcomed by students in the college and is not a negative factor in Arab students' learning.

Findings: Research question 2: What are the factors involved in the acquisition of Academic English and which of these factors hinder or promote the acquisition of Arab students' academic reading skills in English?

- **Reasons for Choosing a Hebrew Speaking College of Education**

According to qualitative findings Arab students are influenced in their choice of college by practical concerns such as its social appropriateness and professional advantages with relation to their future career development. This was supported by quantitative findings.

- **The Motivation for Arab Students to Become Teachers**

Qualitative evidence indicates that the decision of what to study is guided by social or practical considerations amongst the Arabic speaking students to a greater extent than by a sense of a calling to the profession or a decision regarding their personal suitability to this career, all of which were more dominant themes amongst the Jewish teacher trainees in their choice. This was supported by quantitative findings.

- **Motivation to Learn English**

Qualitative findings on motivation reflect a clear understanding by Arab students of the importance of studying English on a theoretical level. However, students reported little direct need for English in their day to day lives. There was little evidence of any intrinsic motivation to learn and English courses were regarded as a means to an end. This was supported by quantitative findings. However quantitative evidence indicates a strong link between those Arab students who rated their use of the language in daily life as high and their greater feeling of investment and progress, interest and enjoyment in learning English.

- **Occupational and Educational Background of Respondents' Parents**

Qualitative findings indicated that most Arab fathers were employed in blue collar professions and most mothers were not employed outside of the home. This was confirmed by quantitative findings. Parents were largely reported to have a lower level of education than their children. This was partially corroborated by quantitative findings, which while confirming that a larger number of Arab parents than Jewish ones had been limited in their educational experience to elementary school only, showed that more Arab than Jewish students had academically educated parents.

- **Parental Involvement in Education**

Qualitative reports that Arab parents had been less involved in, or actively supportive of their children's past and current English language learning were supported by the quantitative findings. Considerably fewer Arab students were given private lessons in English as school pupils.

- **L1 Competency**

Qualitative evidence testifies to a deficiency of L1 literacy skills in students whose mother tongue is Arabic. The low functioning of Arab students in Arabic language classes and their preference for Hebrew over Arabic in the academic setting suggests that full Arab literacy has not always been well established in early life experiences. Quantitative evidence shows that Arab speakers believe themselves to be at a disadvantage in college English lessons when compared to Hebrew speakers.

- **School Experiences**

Qualitative and quantitative findings differ markedly with relation to school experiences**.** Whilst qualitative evidence points to a negative memory of English learning at school the quantitative evidence differs indicating that Arab students felt themselves to have had a good experience of English and to have built a firm foundation of learning there. Qualitative evidence revealed that the gap between the difficulty of the college course demands in reality, as opposed to those that had been expected, was significantly greater for Arab than for Jewish students.

- **Culturally Influenced Life Experience and Personal Characteristics**

Although Arab students were indeed found to be of a lower age than their Jewish peers additional findings that relate to their work experience were not entirely corroborated quantitatively. It was found that although Jewish students were employed to a significantly greater extent than their Arab peers, the total number of Arabs in employment was higher than expected. Furthermore, no difference was found between the types of prior work experience of the ethnicities. Qualitative findings relating to Arab students' lower use of English in professional situations or for recreational use were confirmed as was the lower tendency of Arab

students to have travelled to English speaking countries. However qualitative findings showing that Arab students are less determined to learn and take less initiative in their studies than their Jewish peers were not supported by quantitative evidence.

- **Hebrew as the Language of Instruction in the ELC**

Qualitative research shows that Hebrew has a dominant role in the English Language Classroom. Arab students' interview comments reflect a contradiction between their strong desire to become more proficient at Hebrew, and an understanding that the use of Hebrew as a language of instruction to some degree interferes with or inhibits their progress**.** This was confirmed by quantitative data.

- **Participation & Seating**

In the qualitative strand of the research, both teachers and students tended to rate the active participation of Arabic speakers in English language classes as being comparatively low. This was supported by data collected about their seating patterns, which indicate a lower level of direct involvement and interaction with teachers and intimate a low level of social mixing between the different populations. This was refuted by quantitative findings, which showed that Arab students' perception of their own participation rates was higher than that of the Jewish students' self-assessment. In addition significant differences were found in the students' evaluation of their participation in on-line lessons as compared with traditional frontal teaching sessions. In this regard, Arab students rated significantly higher rates of participation in this format of learning than Jewish ones.

- **Involvement & Investment**

According to the qualitative evidence, the majority view of involvement and investment levels(homework, determination to succeed, resourcefulness in problem solving) was that they were generally speaking, perceived to be lower amongst the Arabic speakers. This was not confirmed by the quantitative evidence.

- **Behavior and attitudes to the teacher**

Qualitative reports of the relationship of Arab students to their teachers shows them to be somewhat ambivalent and reflect the belief that the relations between Arab students and staff were different in nature and somewhat less free than those between teachers and Jewish students. In contrast, quantitative evidence indicates that Arab students feel comfortable with their teachers and free to turn to them to the same degree as their Jewish peers do. However, Jewish students were found to be more likely to approach their teacher for help with homework difficulties than their Arab peers.

- **Learning Styles**

Qualitative evidence points to the fact that culturally oriented learning styles have generated a certain gap between the learning habits and expectations of the different ethnicities in the classroom.

- **Learning Disabilities**

Qualitative evidence shows that Arab college students were not always fully aware of the provisions for learning disabled students and were likely to be underutilizing the accommodations and provisions provided even after they had been made aware of them.

Findings: Research Question 3: How can the learning environment be influenced to improve the achievements of academic reading programs for the aforementioned population?

- **Teachers as Cultural & Pedagogical Mediators**

Qualitative evidence revealed that teachers saw themselves as having a role that was over and above that of imparting language skills and functioned willingly as cultural/social and pedagogical mediators. Research evidence indicates that both populations of students like and feel comfortable with their teachers.

- **Teachers' Recommendations**

Qualitative evidence indicated that the majority of teaching staff were in favor of special provisions for Arab speaking students and recommended extra coaching for them in addition to linguistically homogeneous classes for language learners, an increase of Arabic speaking staff and the replacement of Hebrew with English as the language of instruction.

- **Students' Recommendations**

Both qualitative and quantitative evidence showed only limited support for Arabs studying in homogenous language classrooms and learning with teachers who are native Arabic speakers. Whilst most Arab students supported the idea of extra help from the college, the proposal that English rather than Hebrew be used as a language of instruction in the ELC (that was assessed qualitatively) was met by consternation from the majority of students from both sectors. No preference was indicated for a native speaker as an English teacher.

Part IV Conclusions

IV: I Factual Conclusions

The conclusion that emerges from this discussion is that Arab students enjoy English lessons and find an interest in them. However, Arab students' EAP learning experiences involve difficulties related to their insufficient knowledge of Hebrew and although the EAP learning environment is

pleasant, it is not intercultural enough in an educational sense to be fully inclusive of Arab students.

 The Arab students' EAP learning experiences involve the existence of several facets of extrinsic motivation, which point to their learning of English as a means to an end rather than wanting to study English per se. Nevertheless, Arab students using English on a daily basis are much more involved and invested in the EAP process and enjoy it more. Indications are that Arab students are less active participants in EAP lessons on the other hand; Arabic students feel less inhibition to participate in online EAP lessons.

Additionally, it can be understood that Arab students' EAP experiences include the negative effect of their diglossic L1 when studying with students whose mother tongue is not highly diglossic, such as Hebrew. Some Arab students' EAP learning experiences are accompanied by a feeling of failure due to the fact that they have been under-diagnosed for learning disabilities. Furthermore, it can be understood that cultural differences in learning styles, behaviors and general knowledge of Arabic speaking students hinder their progress in the multicultural EAP learning environment.

This research also indicates that prior educational experiences leave Arab students less prepared for EAP courses than their Jewish peers. Likewise, the culturally influenced personal characteristics and life experiences of students from the Arab sector negatively impact on their academic integration into the majority Jewish culture of EAP classroom although there is evidence that coping skills, which have been developed by the students, are being utilized as an aid in their new learning environments. Many of the Arab students in EAP programs do not have home backgrounds that encouraged their English skills in the past or provide appropriate support networks during academic processes involved in EAP programs.

Overall the relationship between Arab students and their teachers is a very positive one but lacks mutual cultural knowledge about customs and expectations. English teachers were found to function as cultural mediators in the classroom and to be very concerned about the success of minority students. Finally, Arab students are aware of their difficulties but are unwilling to be differentiated from the other EAP students by receiving special tuition or placement in homogenous learning conditions.

Thus it can be seen that the initial hypotheses of this research project were only partially substantiated. Although there are indeed differences in the background of Arab students negatively influencing their success, and some of the linguistic and cultural elements of the multicultural experience have been shown to work to their disadvantage, this was not found to be across the board in all elements examined and indeed the affective and cultural aspects of this educational experience appears to have been positive.

IV:2 Conceptual Conclusions

On the conceptual level, the findings of this research facilitated the emergence of a new theory based on cultural experiences of Arab students as well as suggestions for new practices with regard to dealing with academic English skills among Arab students learning within a multicultural college environment. As a result, the conclusions emerging from this research guided the design of a model to promote these skills in such environments

A New Construct for Understanding the Multi-cultural English Learning of Arab Students in Colleges in Israel,(IMELAC)

- •Insufficient prior life experience and maturity
- • Less home support
- •Different learning styles
- •Good coping skills
- •External motivation

- •Provision of line lessons vs frontal lessons
- •Low multicultural composition of teaching staff
- •No guidance in multicultural teaching practices
- •No clear policy statements about interculturalism

Cultural /personal domain

Administrative domain

EAP

Learning Environment

Instructional Domain

- •The learning environmment is not intercultural enough to be fully inclusive of Arab students.
- •Insufficient mutual cultural knowledge
- •Pleasant affective atmosphere
- • Teachers as cultural
- •mediators
- •High enjoyment and Interest

- •Insufficient student proficiency to allow the use Hebrew or Englis as a language of instuction
- •Low intrinsic motivation inspiredby courses
- •Undiagnosed learning difficulties
- •Effects of diglossia➲undeveloped literacy.
- •Committed and experienced teachers

Figure 2: Israeli Multicultural English Learning Model (IMELAC)

The IMELAC (**I**sraeli **M**ulticultural **E**nglish **L**earning for **A**rabs in **C**olleges) model represents those features of the Arab students' experience, both positive and negative, which characterize their EAP experience in a multicultural setting. They are depicted as various interconnecting domains; cultural/personal, administrative, learning environment and instructional practices. Many of the features of these domains can be manipulated, strengthened, adapted or reversed in order to better suit the needs of minority students' learning within this setting. Naturally certain features are common to more than one domain in terms of their sphere of influence. Therefore the domains are partially interactive so that whilst policy makers and college managers have their principal influence over the administrative domain, EAP course coordinators, who are not only administrators but also teachers, represent an overlap of influence affecting both the instructional practices domain and the learning environment and so on. Even characteristics of domains that are outside the direct power of influence of the college environment, for example in the cultural domain, are open to compensatory practices in the classroom by administrative decisions or instructional practices. Thus for example, a student without English language support resources in his/her home environment can be offered institutional support in the form of tutoring-support programs (administrative domain), or peer support from a working environment that is designed around intercultural cooperative work practices (learning environment) or more individualized teaching time (instructional practices).

IV:3 Practical Implications and Recommendations

The practical implications of this model are widespread and have direct relevance for educational policy makers, college management and administration, teaching staff and students themselves. As a first stage, educational and administrative managers would be well advised to take more active steps in preparing and supporting academic staff in the processes of equitable learning. Both academic and administrative staff should be provided with an ongoing series of seminars or workshops to acquaint them with the culturally governed norms and behaviors of the various minority groups represented in their educational institution. Such information should not be presented in a superficial way as is common in the 'tourism approach' to multiculturalism but needs to provide accessible, digestible information about topics directly relevant to culturally responsible integration of such groups within the wider multicultural setting. This cultural learning should be based on narratives of first hand experiences as well as relating to emotional

aspects of the minority experience. A parallel learning experience should be offered to students of all ethnicities in order to create a common culture of intercultural understanding and tolerance within college walls.

A concerted effort should be made to recruit more native Arab speakers to the teaching staff in general and specifically to the EAP department. Additionally an increase in Arab staff would be particularly pertinent to those appointments which overlap between pedagogical and social such as the Dean of Students, academic or psychological counselors or LD advisers, all of whom are found in every accredited academic institution in the country. Such efforts to widen the cultural make up of college employees should include every level of personnel with direct student contact including the secretarial to ensure an intercultural setting that will encourage all students' feeling of ease and comfort in the college.

The first stages of the two year program of English studies should provide, wherever possible, the opportunity to self- register for English classes whereby students are able to elect to study with others of their own ethnic group or with a teacher of their language background. Thereafter, at intermediary levels the placement can be arbitrary but stable. The final stage, or advanced level, sometimes called the exemption class, can then be taught by any suitably experienced staff member, preferably a native or near native English speaker who can model the target language in the most authentic way possible.

Last but not least, online courses should be expanded and offered as a course component at all stages of the learning process (currently they feature in only a few of the levels).Students' participation and feedback should be monitored carefully in order to better design and deliver these potentially equalizing elements of the courses .

Course teachers and coordinators comprise the most important link in the process of improving the students' learning experiences. The ways in which this can be accomplished are multiple and can be initiated simultaneously. They can be divided into three broad areas of action: Firstly, teachers must do their part in convincing their students of the importance and relevance of English studies at an academic level in order to raise their motivation.

Likewise, teachers should be guided by policy statements and practical advice given by their coordinators as to how to make classroom practices intercultural. Considerations of this kind may lead to employing more varied teaching methodologies that combine modern pedagogies with traditional practices and having lessons organized in such a way that they boost intergroup interchange.

Students, who are both the beneficiaries and partners in this process, must be encouraged to understand the potential of these efforts to not only upgrade their EAP success rate but also to improve the functioning of the highly divided society in which they live. Succeeding in this aim is of benefit to all, not just Arab students as every student is a minority student in one way or another and will, in time, need to deal with the complications and joys of multiculturalism in their own classrooms as future teachers.

IV:4 Research Limitations

Language

The research tools in this case (principally interviews and questionnaires in addition to initial observations) may have been compromised to some extent by not having being conducted in the students' native language thus increasing the possibility of misinterpretation or inaccurate representation either by students or interviewer/recorder. However, as Hebrew has been shown to be easier and quicker for Arab students to process than written Arabic (Eviatar and Ibrahim, 2012) and as ethnic tensions between Arab minority groups are sometimes greater than those between Jewish and Arab Israelis, using a Hebrew speaking Jewish interviewer appears to have been no worse than other imperfect alternatives. The procedure of translating transcripts from Hebrew into English was monitored carefully. Wherever possible, participants were shown summaries of their contributions for verification.

Number of participants

The qualitative enquiry was completed with the attainment of approximately thirty interviews, which was considered to represent a saturation of information in this case. Doubtless, more interviews with students outside the geographically limitations of this study could have widened the frame of reference that was created and thus boost the generalizability of the data gained. Notwithstanding, care was taken to ensure that interviewees represented all the major ethnicities of relevance and included both teachers and students to obtain a triangulation of data. The inclusion of Jewish students and coordinators from other colleges also widens the perspective of these research findings and increases their relevance to the population at large. Additionally the three hundred or so participants in the quantitative survey represented approximately 80 percent of students studying in the programs researched; a fact that strengthens the generalizability, indeed the transferability, of the research for the reader.

Researcher Role

Finally the nature of testimony obtained in this study was doubtless influenced by the researcher's insider status. Given that the researcher, who was the principal research tool in the qualitative stage, was of a different age and status to respondents in addition to belonging to the majority Jewish culture, these may well have been inhibitory factors for participants. However every effort was made to assure students that their contributions would not harm them in any way and as a precautionary measure, only those students not currently being taught by the researcher were interviewed. Great care and sensitivity was practiced in both the collection and interpretation stages to allow for possible effects of the researcher's insider status on responses. Ultimately a balance was generated by anonymity of the questionnaire in the subsequent quantitative stages of the research.

IV: 5 Contribution to Knowledge

This research sought to fill a gap in knowledge regarding the experiences of adult learners of EAP within a multicultural learning environment. Political, social and technological revolutions in recent years have caused an enormous increase in multiculturalism on a global level and insights gained from a study of this kind can have international application in educational settings with similar characteristics.

At a local level this study provides information that can guide policy makers, college administrators and teachers themselves to manage multicultural learning environments more successfully, indeed many of the insights gained could be usefully applied to multicultural teaching in tertiary education of academic subjects other than English.

A contribution to theoretical knowledge was made in this domain by the new factual conclusions generated as a result of this study. An innovative theoretical model of understanding, IMELEC (shown in the graphic representation presented previously), which reflects a new, conceptual understanding of the cultural and pragmatic elements involved in learning English within multiculturalism broadens the bank of knowledge than can be accessed and exploited for the benefit of EAP students.

A contribution to practical knowledge was made by those recommendations for action that were detailed previously including those directed at administrative and pedagogical managers of learning environments and learners themselves. Such innovations as proposed, if implemented successfully, will contribute directly to the success of minority students studying EAP in a

majority culture learning environment and so improve their opportunities for personal advancement within their own communities and their chances of integrating professionally within the wider society.

The synthesis that can result from increased cultural reciprocity can be undoubtedly of mutual benefit to all and should be our hope and aspiration for the future. With financial restraints and local tensions often running high, it will not necessarily be easy, but change should be possible if those concerned are motivated with enough determination to succeed.

Inspiration is certainly readily available to fuel such endeavors. In the words commonly ascribed to a man who worked so ceaselessly for successful multiculturalism: "*It always seems impossible until it is done*" (Nelson Mandela).

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