

Dissertation Title:

English in Lebanon:
Implications for national identity and language policy

Researcher:

Fatima Esseili
Purdue University
fesseili@gmail.com



Fatima Esseili

Research Supervisor:

Dr. Margie Berns

Summary:

This study provides a sociolinguistic profile of English in Lebanon. It focuses on the uses of English (and French and Arabic to a lesser extent) in different venues in the Lebanese society, primarily in the capital Beirut. The study also examines the Lebanese attitudes toward mixing languages in daily speech, and attempts to provide reasons for such a trend. The project used mixed methods (observational accounts, field notes, interviews, and questionnaire) to describe the presence of foreign languages in both the social and educational contexts in Lebanon. Primary data includes results from a questionnaire (276 participants), interviews with 51 participants, and three years' worth of observational accounts and field notes.

Findings from this study suggest that the Lebanese society is steadily transitioning to using English as the first foreign language. Findings also reveal that contrary to other Expanding Circle contexts where the mix of English and local languages is looked down upon, mixing Arabic, English, and French in Lebanon is highly regarded by more than half of the participants. Moreover, the Lebanese attitudes toward using foreign languages in general and English in particular are highly favorable. Finally, this study reveals that English language teaching (ELT) in public schools needs a thorough reevaluation from the Lebanese government, and that private schools should consider adapting ELT textbooks to the needs of the local students.

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