A TRACER STUDY OF FRENCH BACCALAURÉAT GRADUATES ENROLLED IN THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES OF THE UAE

دراسة متابعة تحصيل خريجي الثانوية الفرنسية في الجامعات الأمريكية بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

By

ROLA S. KARANOUH

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Education in (International Management and Policy)

Supervisor's name

Dr. Clifton Chadwick

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British University in Dubai
Dubai
UAE

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ABSTRACT

The subject of students' academic performance has been undergoing serious debates among numerous scholars, educators and policy makers. Previous studies in that area and their findings suggest a relation between the different types of educational systems and students' achievement. Most of those studies have been conducted in European and American districts as well as certain Arab regions. However, there has not been considerable efforts in the UAE to examine the factors that affect these differences in performance between students coming from diverse school curricula in Higher Education. This study sought to investigate two types of educational systems: The English system and the French system. The aim is to find out if there is a significant difference in performance between students who come from either system and continue their tertiary studies at American Universities, taking into account variables pertaining to culture, nationality, and previous language of instruction. Using a mixed method approach, the results revealed that academic performance is highly affected by the type of system that students come from and their competence in English. The results also show that French educated students score higher GPAs in Higher Education than their counterparts. The study concludes by recommending further research into the available types of school systems in the UAE and their impact on students' achievement.

تمهيد

يُعد تحصيل الطلبة الأكاديمي موضع جدل بين العديد من الباحثين والمربيين وواضعي سياسات التعليم. وقد خلُصت الدراسات السابقة في هذا المجال لإثبات وجود علاقة سببية بين تحصيل الطلبة في الجامعات ونظام تعليمهم في مراحل التعليم الأساسي والثانوي. ولعل معظم هذه الدراسات أُجريت في أوروبا وفي المناطق التعليمية في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية بالإضافة لعدد في العالم العربي. ومن الملاحظ عدم توافر أبحاث لدراسة هذه الظاهرة في الإمارات. تهدف هذه الدراسة لمقارنة تحصيل مجموعتين من الطلاب في الجامعات الأمريكية : المجموعة الأولى وهم خريجو المنهاج البريطاني والمجموعة الثانية يمثلون خريجو المنهاج الفرنسي. ولعل من الأهداف الرئيسة لهذه الدراسة هي معرفة فيما إذا كان هناك تأثير للمنهاج التي تمت (بريطاني أو فرنسي) دراسته في المراحل الدراسية على تحصيل الطلبة في الجامعات الأمريكية في الإمارات وهل هذا الفرق ملحوظ إحصائياً مع الأخذ بعين الإعتبار الثقافة والجنسية ولغة التعليم في المراحل المدرسية. وبإستخدام طريقتي البحث الكمية والوصفية نستنتج بأن تحصيل الطلبة في الجامعات الأمريكية يتأثر بالمنهاج الذي تخرج منه الطالب في المراحل المدرسية وكذلك مهارات الطالب في استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية. كما وبينت النتائج أيضاً بأن خريجي المنهاج الفرنسي حصلوا على معدلات أعلى بشكل إحصائي ملحوظ من زملائهم في المنهاج البريطاني. وخلصت الدراسة لتوصيات بحثية بدراسة تأثير المناهج المختلفة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة على تحصيل الطلبة في الجامعات الأمريكية.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all my family members, especially my dear husband and children, and to my friends who lent me a helping hand and showed a great deal of support in their deep understanding of neglecting them during the period of my study, and the encouragement they gave me to double my efforts and reach my desired goals. This dissertation would not have been possible without you all. I cannot thank you enough.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Context of the Problem

A child's academic path is the result of a comprehensive set of choices made successfully from birth to adulthood (Ortiz & Dehon, 2008). Parents and children make decisions in a given environment defined by the family, religion and the government (taxes, public spending, and regulations), which implies that some educational choices are not made by the individual himself but by the government and his family (Ortiz & Dehon, 2008). Evidence suggests that these choices result in a difference in performance between students coming from various high school programs (Ortiz & Dehon, 2008), and has been a matter of debate among numerous scholars, especially when the subject of academic success and failure is becoming more significant in the Arab countries and mainly the Gulf region.

Over the past few years, many educational experts, teachers and above all parents have been showing an increasing concern about a range of curricula and different types of education systems. The main concern was educating their children in schools that assure academic success in higher education, ensure proper enrollment in universities, and prepare them to face the labor market challenges upon graduation. These parents have subsequently become dependent on English Higher Educational Institutions, mainly the American Universities (Eddy, 1959). This dependence gradually increased when education became the basis of improvement of every country's economical, sociological and financial status. The total reliance on universities which use English as a medium of instruction was the result of the growing influence of globalization in general, and the increased demand on the English language used in Higher Education in particular, which affected the learning of other languages, mainly Arabic and French in the Arab world and most countries, and a shift towards English as the preferred language in schools (Baker, 2006:91).

The attraction towards English became stronger as younger generations were less influenced by the ideologies which their parents and teachers held during their struggle for political and cultural independence (Fishman, 1977b). Until now, many French speaking communities find their students shifting after high school to English / American systems. As a result, French schools face a dilemma; their students are shifting to English / American Higher Educational

establishments, so they are forced to teach the English language in order to help their own graduates to be able to succeed at the university level and in real practical professional life, realizing that the English language is overwhelmingly used in research and medical field, business, banking, aviation, international media, communication and correspondence. This eventually leads to the degradation of the French-Arabic higher educational continuity and offers an essential understanding and analysis of French educated students' academic performances at university.

1.1 Background

The schools' educational systems in many countries, despite their different missions and goals, have one similar objective, teaching English as a second language (Shin, 2000). Society members, particularly parents, encourage their children to acquire English as an additional language to their native one, since parents believe that knowing English is becoming a requirement and not an additional subject taught in schools (Shin, 2000). This focus on education systems and the effect it is having in academia is evident among different cultures and in countries where English is not primarily spoken. It has also become one of high priority in most educational institutions worldwide. In 1950, any notion of English as a true world language was but a dim, shadowy, theoretical possibility, surrounded by the political uncertainties of the Cold War, and lacking any clear definition or sense of direction (Crystal, 2003:xii). Fifty years on, and World English still exists as a political and cultural reality (Crystal, 2003:xii). This language, in the Middle East and the Gulf region, is often described as a second language, because it is seen as complementary to a person's mother tongue or 'first language' (Crystal, 2003:4). In the UAE, an academic interest in English started becoming more compulsory, especially when certain results or test scores such as the CEPA (Common Educational Proficiency Assessment) show that far too many students do not have the necessary competencies in English to undertake college-level work (Davidson & Smith, 2008). Thus, English was made a priority in the country's foreign-language teaching, even though this language had no official status at the time (Crystal, 2003:4). It became the language which children are most likely to be taught when they arrive in school, and the one most available to adults who, for whatever reason, never learned it, or learned it badly in their early educational years (Crystal, 2003:5).

In the heart of the Arab world, including the Gulf region, the British brought the English language with them (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:744). Unlike the French in North Africa, the British were not interested in imposing their language on the region. They, in fact, showed little interest in the educational affairs of the UAE (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:744). After World War I and as the oil prospects began to loom ahead, the British took steps to isolate the Gulf from the rest of the Arab World, and appointed British educational advisors to supervise the educational affairs in the region (Bin Daiir cited in Abu-Libdeh, 1996:744). It was then, that English as a foreign language was officially introduced in the Gulf and it has expanded to become the language most widely taught as a foreign language in over 100 countries, such as China, Russia, Germany, Spain, Egypt and Brazil (Crystal, 2003:5). It is also emerging, in most of these countries, as the chief foreign language to be encountered in schools, often displacing another language in the process (Crystal, 2003:5). In 1996, for example, English replaced French as the chief foreign language in schools in Algeria "A Former French Colony" (Crystal, 2003:5). According to Constantine (1995), the importance and use of the French language has diminished in comparison with the English language, and in the case of the UAE, it was no exception. Studies, on this basis, estimated that in the year 2000 the English language will be spoken by 1,837,286,53 persons compared to French with only 72,571,000 (Crystal, 2003:76).

Table 1.1: Estimates of the most important languages spoken in the year 2000

Languages Spoken	Estimates
Italian	53,370,000
French	72,571,000
Russian	130,479,800
German	157,480,000
Spanish	505,286,242
English	1,837,286,53

Since then, certain countries like the UAE, where French is reasonably spoken, have shown an interest in studying the severity and influence of the English language on their schools and on students' tertiary educational choices. In Lebanon for example, Hajjar (cited in Samily-Hajjar, 1996) reported that a minority of 30% of the Lebanese people watch French television programs, while around 73% watch English programs. Another major indication is represented in the fact that 63% of the French based schools taught English as a third language, yet a mere 26% of the English based schools taught French as third language (Smaily-Hajjar, 1996). The French language itself could not continue to maintain its status as a homogeneous world language (Salhi,2003:4). Most countries in the Arab world, which were under the European hegemony, had no choice but to adopt the languages of powers which dominated them (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:743). This effort was initially met with limited success, but ultimately failed to transform the language identity of these countries. The French language, however, remained a second language, while Arabic gained more recognition in the curriculum due to growing national consciousness (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:744). Consequently, two of the major world languages, French and English were introduced into the Arab World (Abu- Libdeh, 1996:742). In recent years, these countries have begun to abandon their total reliance on French, and introduce English as a foreign language in high school (Fishman; cited in Abu-Libdeh, 1996:744). In Abu Dhabi for example, Shaikh Nahyan Bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research stated that students in UAE universities will continue to be instructed in both Arabic and English languages (Staff Report, 2009). It was then that UAE schools, particularly the French, integrated different foreign languages into their curriculum, mainly English and Spanish, besides the Arabic language. These schools have noticed that a large number of French educated students shift into the American systems after high school to continue their tertiary education, whereas English educated students join the same system throughout their years of study. These transfers from one system to another might be related to academic, social, cultural, personal and political reasons. A study in Canada shows that parents immerse their children in French schools for one good reason, which is that learning French at an early stage opens doors for your children and their future well-being (CPF, 2008), and graduates of this programme can expect an increased appreciation of other languages and cultures, enhanced career potential, a greater facility for learning other languages as well as more global view of the world (CPF, 2008).

Furthermore, research has shown that throughout Canada, French educated students perform at least as well in many aspects of English-language achievement, math and science as those who are enrolled in English systems (CPF, 2008). In Lebanon, Araman (2000) conducted a study on English and French students' performance and his findings show that French educated students at American universities are better performers than their English educated counterparts. In Belgium's French community, Ortiz and Dehon (2008), carried out a national study on the factors of success at university, and their results revealed that there are high achievement differences between students determined not only by the type of high school attended but also by the options chosen. In the UAE, Kherfi (2008) reported that GCC nationals did not perform as well as other nationals, other things being equal, because they face more competitive job market conditions upon graduation, and the value of education is higher for non-GCC nationals who, as a result, exert greater effort. Allen and Cartwright (2004), in a report entitled *Minority language School Systems: A Profile of Students and Communities,* examined the lower achievement of French minority students in four Canadian provinces. The study used data from Pisa 2000, on which French-language students did not perform as well as English-language students. Allen and Cartwright (2004) found that the French-language schools had fewer resources and that most Francophone students lived in predominantly English-speaking communities, which is very similar to the case in the UAE. However, no differences were reported in socio-economic background between the two linguistic groups (Allen and Cartwright, 2004).

Even though the status of English and its use in most Arab countries, where English is a foreign language, is predictably increasing (Abu- Libdeh, 1996:742), the French are imposing their language in the hope that the French culture would gradually replace other languages dominating the region (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:743). However, studies showed the importance of learning languages and its effect on students' achievements, especially with the fast economic growth of some developed countries, which imposed on schools the teaching of foreign languages, particularly English, starting at the elementary level (Cataldi, 1994). Furthermore, studies showed that bilingual students perform much better than monolingual students in academic tests. Thus, it showed that there is a relation between bilingualism and intelligence (Cataldi, 1994). This may be the cause of students shifting from the French to the English systems in the UAE, since French students acquire the necessary language skills of both the French and English

languages at an early stage in schools, and seem to surpass their counterparts in most countries. As a result, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) which undertakes the planning, provision, and development of knowledge and human resource requirements in cooperation and coordination with the concerned federal entities in the country (KHDA, 2011), particularly Dubai, rated the Lebanese French School's English level on a four-point rating scale as "outstanding". This provides evidence of the quality of education provided in UAE French schools, knowing that English in this part is being taught as a third language.

The increasing number of French students in American universities is becoming widespread, not only in countries where French is the official language, but also in regions where schools are integrating the learning of languages in order to get better student outcome, and which gives a profound base for the research under study.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

Research studies indicate that an increasing number of French educated students are moving to English speaking Higher Educational institutes to continue their tertiary studies. This move to English–medium education is taking place in the Arab world, particularly the UAE (Randall, 2010). More than 54% of Emiratis send their children to private schools, largely so that they can go straight on to English-medium degree programmes (Randall, 2010). Many foreigners, specially the French, send their children after high school, whether public or private, to English speaking Higher Educational institutes regardless of the high school curriculum that students have followed. The parents believe that exposing children to the English language is essential for social and academic success, and adds to their practical and professional life. It is also observed that students coming from different curricula perform differently at the university level (Shami, 2008). The reasons could relate to many variables influencing students' achievement which offers three main objectives for this research study:

1- The first objective was to establish if there are differences in academic performance between French and English educated students from diverse nationalities.

2- The second objective was to determine the reasons behind students shifting into American Universities.

3- The third objective was to look into prior school curricula to find out if any differences exist between students coming from a specific high school program.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

As previously noted, the total reliance on American Universities is the result of the growing influence of globalization in general and the increased demand for the English language used in Higher Education in particular which affected the learning of other languages, mainly Arabic and French in the Arab world. Students shifting from non-English curriculums to Higher Educational institutes, where the language of instruction is English, have been observed in many Arab countries, particularly Lebanon, where educators perceived that the amplified interest and pursue of the English language is behind the erosion of the previous dominance of the French language in the Lebanese society (Smaily-Hajjar, 1996). According to Randall (2010) the UAE has opted for an English-medium tertiary education system, so it is the responsibility of schools to produce students with the language skills to take degree courses taught in English especially when certain policies rest on a belief that a highly educated bilingual community with good English-language skills is essential for success in the modern globalised economy (Randall, 2010). The academic results of students moving to English-medium instruction were to be seriously researched especially when studies show that non-English educated students prove to be better performers than their English counterparts at a university level (Araman, 2000). This initiated interest in the researcher to investigate the factors of success of French educated students at American Universities in the UAE.

1.4 Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do French and English educated students perform academically at American Universities in the UAE?

Research Question 2: Why do French educated students shift into American universities in the UAE? Are there any observed differences between students coming from a specific high school program?

Recommendations were also made that will strengthen future studies related to the research topic.

1.5 Significance of the Study

There have been considerable studies done in this field around the world, but in Dubai there is no empirical evidence showing how students perform at American universities. These studies are important because they help colleges, universities (tertiary institutions) and career counselors to know more about the background of their student body in terms of what they have learned compared with others, and in order to adjust their courses to meet their needs, especially when the tertiary landscape is becoming more varied like (Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi), and other American and Western colleges in the UAE. For example, French students coming from a French curriculum and whose math is beyond other students should be offered something relevant to their studies and fulfills their requirements at their level. This allows universities to regulate the prerequisites that should be given to each student depending on their level and within the student's milieu, in order to attend to each student's needs. It also benefits schools that prepare their students for higher education, to focus their tests on the essential subjects that will determine each student's capability and placement at the university.

1.6 Methodology

a- Research Design

A mixed method approach was used in this study. The primary design planned for use was a survey design, which is a non-experimental descriptive design (Fink 1998; Babbie, 1990 cited in Rabah, 2006) to examine the differences, if any, in academic performance between French and English educated students in Higher Education, and to look into the importance of language learning. In addition, the Key Informant Approach (Johnson, Meiller, Miller, & Summers, 1987 cited in Rabah 2006) which is often used in institutional research to ascertain the ethos or procedures of institutions from the perspective of senior management personnel, was used to solicit information from parents and French educated students, regarding French / English school standards and their language teaching approach.

b- Sampling Method

The sampling method used was a case-study of one American University in the UAE. The criteria for selection were: being located in Dubai; using English as a medium of instruction, and having students from different nationalities and educational background, among them the French educated. More reliable data were provided to the researcher by the research staffs at the American University in Dubai (AUD), who were personally approached as a source for data collection (See Appendix). Respondents (males and females of different religious identities and nationalities) were randomly selected. Two hundred questionnaires were prepared and distributed among students during the study with the help of university research staffs. Only 129 questionnaires were returned. A total of 20 parents and French educated students were interviewed to help gather qualitative information that can be manually analyzed and gives the researcher richer information and more reliable data that can be reported.

c- Instrumentation

One questionnaire was prepared during the study. The researcher did not confine the questions into one form. The questions were set into sections and items that depict information on how students perceive and relate performance at university with prior school system and language of instruction. The key informant approach (Rabah, 2006) elicited data from parents and French educated students on the following:

- What the first foreign language that children learn at school is?
- Whether they learn other foreign languages?
- How good are students in learning a second foreign language?
- Do students take it as seriously as the first language?
- What are the school's standards when choosing a second foreign language to be taught?
- What universities do they advise their students to enroll in and why?
- Do students believe they are better performers in English or French?
- What are the reasons students shift from a French medium school to an American system?

- Are there any differences in academic performance between English and French educated students?

- Which language do they prefer to learn as a foreign language?

A pilot study was carried out with a number of randomly selected students, at AUD, and in the presence of the researcher, in order for the questionnaire to yield the intended results. The items were checked for any essential changes which in turn did not require serious modifications to the questionnaire.

d- Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study to analyze the data collected using questionnaires. The data obtained from students' responses were subjected to analysis using SPSS. Results obtained were studied in relation to students' grade point averages (GPAs). These data were compared with previous research results. Interviews were conducted with the French educated students and parents as another method to seek clarification on unclear thoughts (Finn et al, 2000).

1.7 Assumptions

It is naturally presumed that the tools used to gather information have validity and precisely measure the purpose of the study. The sample is also assumed to represent the target population where respondents will provide answers truthfully and not those which they believe educators would want to see (Rabah, 2006).

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to one American University in the UAE, the American University in Dubai (AUD). Furthermore, all parents and students who were interviewed live in a geographically confined area of Dubai, although they come from different countries and origins. This limits the generalizability of the findings, since there is no variation within the selected sample in terms of regional area, other universities, and other parents and students. Moreover, the number of French participants in the study is relatively small which limits the comparison with other students suitable for identifying the causes of high performance.

1.9 Overview of the dissertation

This paper is divided into chapters with several sections. The first chapter is an introduction to the study. The second chapter provides an overview of the literature and findings related to the influence of English as a global language, in addition to the reasons behind students' academic achievements and success at American universities. The third chapter describes the various methods used throughout the study. Chapter four demonstrates the results pertaining to each research question. Chapter five provides an analysis of the data obtained followed by the conclusion, future implications and recommendations in chapter 6.

Definitions of Terms Used in this Study

*__Descriptive statistics__: allow the researcher to accurately describe a large volume of data with just a few values using common descriptive measures of central tendency (e.g., mean, median and mode) and measures of dispersion (e.g., range, standard deviation and variance) (Brace N., etal, 2006). These statistics were used to provide the reader with information about the sample, and to describe the data before performing an inferential statistical test (Brace N., etal, 2006).

*__Inferential Statistics__: are used to make inferences from data to more general conditions, or to make judgments of the probability that an observed difference between groups is a dependable one or one that might have happened by chance (Trochin, M.K.W., 2006).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The subject of language literacy and the parental influence on their children's educational choices has been studied and summarized in the following literature review. This review is subdivided into several interrelated sections.

•***Section 1***: The first section introduces a brief history of foreign languages worldwide and in the UAE.

•***Section 2***: The second section explains the necessity of the English language at present times and the influence of English in French schools.

•***Section 3***: This section will carry on considering the factors that influence students' learning of a foreign language.

•***Section 4***: States the reasons behind differences in academic performances between French and English educated students at American universities.

2.1 Foreign Languages in the UAE (Language populations)

Regarding the exposure to foreign languages, the Arab countries have had similar experiences, in that all of them fell under the European colonial rule during the first half of the 20th century (Abu- Libdeh, 1996:742). Some in North Africa were dominated by France, while the rest, including those in the Gulf region, were dominated by Britain (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:742). Over the past 50 years, the UAE experienced drastic changes and developments in many aspects, mainly in the field of education and technology. The increase in cultural interactions was taking place as a result of the emergence of multinationals (Al Humoud cited in Davidson and Smith, 2008:93) and the increase in the number of immigrants. This stimulated serious innovations in education at all levels to provide a more knowledge-based economy with a highly educated workforce (Al Humoud cited in Davidson and Smith, 2008:93), which also relied on the number of private primary and secondary schools throughout the country that offer language and curriculum-specific education from other countries (Rhys cited in Davidson and Smith, 2008:100). Currently, GCC higher education systems are being synchronized with their US counterparts in terms of accreditation and curricula (Mazawi cited in Davidson and Smith, 2008:61). This fact forces certain schools, particularly those that teach English as a foreign, a second or a third

language, to teach the proper linguistic skills which students are expected to learn, especially when immigrants or other monolinguals noted cases were jobs were only awarded based on linguistic reasons rather than abilities and experience (Crystal, 2003:138). Since English is one of the required subjects on university entrance examinations, school principals choose it among the 'electives' and guide their students to study it (US Department of Education, cited in Abu-Libdeh, 1996:743). In the Gulf, there are fears that the dominance of English in the educational system from as early as kindergarten all the way through university stands to be one of the most important agents of this disembedding from local cultures (Badry, 2008), and the reason for the decline of other languages, particularly Arabic for native Arabic speakers and the French language in the UAE French schools.

Despite these concerns, the UAE's vision of the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) in all schools is mainly to equalize opportunities between students attending those schools and to give them better choices when pursuing tertiary education. According to Randall (2010), this policy rests on a belief that a highly educated bilingual community with good English- language skills is essential for the success in the modern globalised economy. It also reflects a belief that the cutting edge of knowledge is published in English and only students who have studied in English will have access to such knowledge (Randall, 2010). This is why French schools integrated different foreign languages in their curriculum and changed many aspects of it over the years, particularly when applied to the teaching of English for specific purposes (Hall & Hewings, 2001).

With respect to the UAE public schools, the attitudes towards English language acquisition and the level of students' performance was unexpectedly low (Ministry of Education, English Language needs Assessment, cited in Abu-Libdeh, 1996). According to Abu-Libdeh (1996), this might be related to student's low sense of motivation for learning a foreign language, or because of the multi-services provided by the UAE government, from financial aid, to housing and business incentives, students become less interested in hard work and competitive educational opportunities. This however gives way for the French educated, being native or second language speakers, to gain a broader knowledge of the language in use and the likelihood to excel in different areas of learning, above all in higher education. This mind-set of educators on the

subject of school curricula might be related to the problems facing graduates or undergraduates, mainly when they face a bilingual society. According to Abu-Libdeh (1996:752) when the UAE is compared with the rest of the Arab countries in terms of percentage of students who study in English-speaking countries, it is found to have the highest percentage (83%), followed by Saudi Arabia (82%), Kuwait (61%), Qatar (60%), Oman (51%) and Bahrain (41%). However, in North African countries where French is the first foreign language, students tend to pursue their higher education in France or Canada when they decide to go abroad (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:753).

Table 2.1 Arab students studying abroad, as compared to those studying in English speaking countries

Country	Total number of students abroad	Number of students in English-speaking countries	Percentage
Bahrain	1538	638	41
Egypt	6303	3103	33
Iraq	3403	857	25
Jordan	19158	5446	28
Kuwait	3779	2293	61
Libya	1493	640	42
Oman	1631	836	51
Qatar	940	571	60
Saudi Arabia	5344	4317	82
Sudan	12574	2625	20
UAE	2117	1760	83
Yemen	9306	733	7
Morocco	36168	1709	4
Tunisia	11410	910	8
Lebanon	15171	3528	23
Syria	13013	1310	10

Source: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1993

This approximates to 83% of students studying in English speaking countries, especially the French educated, who seem to be attracted to the United States and Britain for several reasons (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:751). Among these reasons are the quality of schools and the relative ease of studying in English rather than in any other language (Abu-Libdeh, 1996:751). Another motive is that American universities provide the credit system which does not entitle students to repeat

the whole year if they failed a course. In French systems, students who fail a course are obliged to repeat the whole academic year (Araman, 2000). The fact that there are large differences between the English and the French systems might be one of the reasons why students in the UAE tend to shift from a system in which they are continuously exposed to the French language, whether in school or outside, to another where their personal and social development depends on their level of English proficiency and the effect it has on their future academic and professional life.

2.2 English a Necessity at the Present Time

These days, not only education has become an essential and crucial part of every human being's life, but languages literacy is becoming a requirement for people's survival and existence (Shami, 2008). Studies showed that in ten years, people will need a higher level of education and more specialized university degrees in order to get employed in any field, and therefore people who have good skills and know more than two languages will have the priority of getting the job (Vang, 2006). This growing influence of globalization in general and the international communication specifically, increased the demand on language learning and on the English language profession tremendously (Shami, 2008). In the UAE, Sheikh Nahyan al Mubarak stated that *"Proficient ability in English will ensure that our students have access to rich opportunities in employment, in education and in expanding relationships" (*Bielenberg, 1998). In addition, Bowman (2010) stated that more than 3.8 million people are living in the UAE and Arabic is the official language, whereas English is the country's business language. The UAE government believes that a poor grasp of English is one of the main employment barriers for UAE nationals (Bowman, 2010). At present, because the standard of English achieved by students in public schools is inadequate for university study, the Ministry of Higher Education spends roughly 25 per cent of its budget on university foundation programmes in English (Randall, 2010). This has brought pressure on schools to improve the level of English teaching, and is one of the principal motivations for such programmes as Madares Al Gaad (Schools of Tomorrow) and the Public-Private Partnership project in Abu Dhabi, which aimed at doubling exposure to English by teaching maths and science in that language (Randall, 2010). The Abu Dhabi Education Council is also developing an elementary school pilot program with Zayed University, which it hopes to extend to all schools in the emirate, to enhance student English language skills (Bowman, 2010).

This move to English-medium education in the UAE resulted in more than 40% of Emiratis sending their children to private schools, largely so that they can go on to English-medium programmes (Randall, 2010). This has also forced French schools in the UAE to raise their standards in teaching English as a second language (KHDA, 2010).

Although the emergence of English as a global language is having considerable impact on policies and practices in all countries surveyed, it also reveals significant problems, including confusion and inconsistency, at the level of policy, particularly regarding the issue of age of initial instruction, inequity regarding access to effective language instruction, inadequately trained and skilled teachers, and a disjunction between curriculum rhetoric and pedagogical reality (Nunan, 2003). For instance, weakness in listening and speaking skills in UAE secondary schools are clearly noticed because teachers are “forced” to educate students in a manner which is directed to meet the requirements of the exams (extensive vocabulary and grammatical rules), and because the General Secondary Exam is not directed toward the speaking and listening skills of students, the teachers of English find themselves uninterested in preparing students for something which will not be examined (Oashoa, 2006).

This spread of English is not only clear at the school levels. It is also more apparent in the field of higher education in some Gulf Arab countries that witnessed, under Western pressure in the post September 11 events, a return of the “imperialist” “neo-colonialist” English medium education (Zughoul, 2003), particularly the Higher Colleges of Technology, Zayed University, and the Institute of Petroleum Studies in addition to the two American Universities in the United Arab Emirates. This spread has given English the following seven main privileges:

1. English is the most taught foreign language all over the world, and it is the most preferred lingua franca in international circles. It is also in more contact with more languages than any other language in the world.

2. The contact of English with other languages has produced more pidgins than any other contact of any other foreign language with other languages of the world.

3. Over the last 50 years, English has become the best known source of borrowing and loanwords for other languages in the world. English has been shown as the most important loaning language.

4. In Third World countries, English is the language of “higher communication” in the fields of science and technology, government and the law. In industrialized countries, English is reserved for special and specialized patterns of communication in science and technology on one hand and in finance and tourism on the other. English has become an integral part of the communicative functions in Swedish corporations, lecture halls in Dutch universities, stock markets in Zurich and research laboratories in France.

5. English is the target of linguistic change and transformation in language communities all over the world.

6. It is the language of Internet communication.

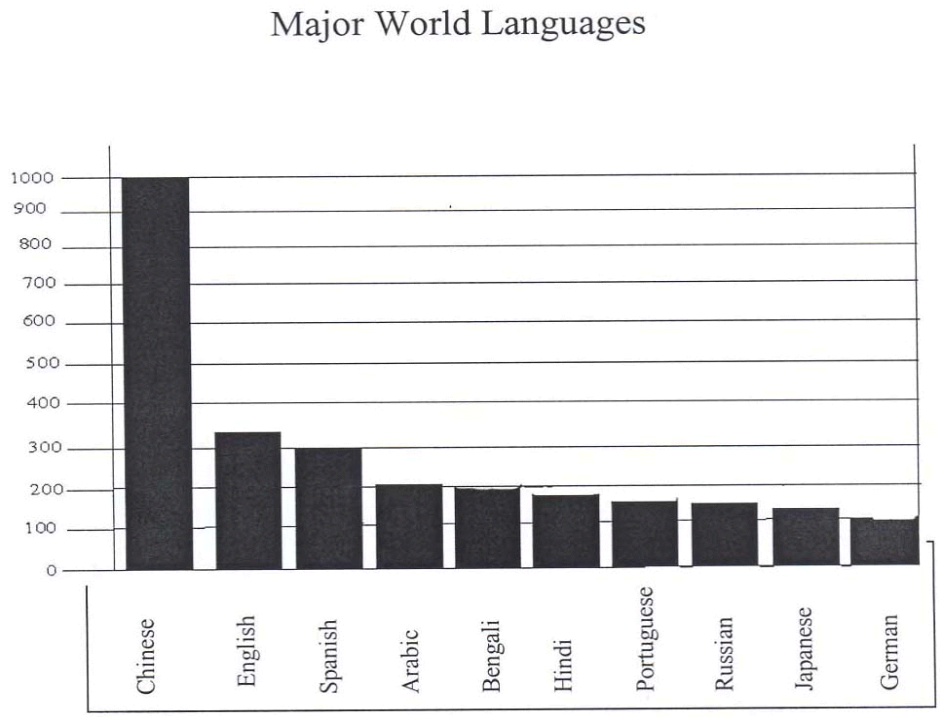
7. It is the language of tertiary education.

(Source: Zughoul, 2003)

The numbers below show the place of English in relation to world languages.

Figure 2.2.1: Major World Languages

Table 1: Major World Languages



(Source: Zughoul, 2003)

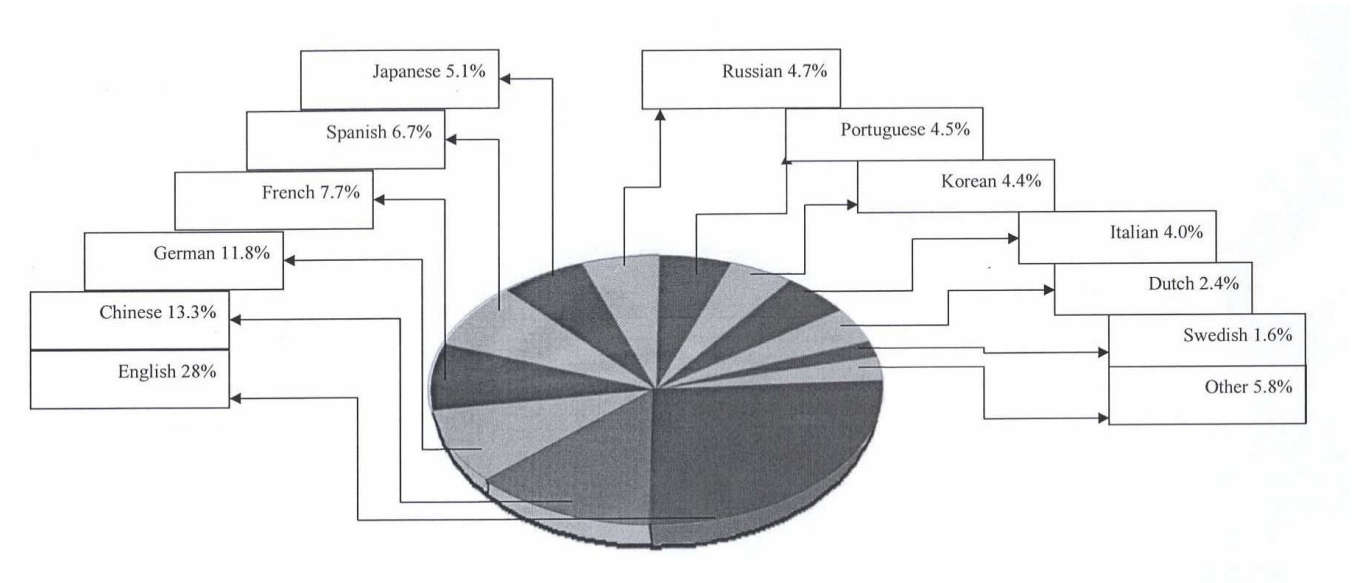
The above table shows that English ranks the second among other world languages and it comes after Chinese which has the greatest number of native speakers. Interestingly, if the number of all the native English speakers is combined with those who regularly use it as a second language (i.e., India and other countries) the total number of speakers is more than the Chinese.

Zughoul (2003) stated that foreign nationals (Non-Arab, Non-Muslim) live their lifetime in Arab countries working as business men, clerks, accountants, skilled laborers, government employees, company employees and investors without feeling the need to utter a single word in Arabic, the supposed language of the land; even French, which is spoken in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, has been losing a lot of ground to English, and the tendency to shift from French to English in

these countries cannot be concealed. In the European Union, Witt (2000) states that the situation of English is unusual in the sense that no other language has been essential for global communication and at the same time received without outright hostility. For example, the hostile reactions of the speakers of French to the use of English and the intrusion of English terms into Everyday French are well known and well documented (Zughoul, 2003).This need for global language is particularly appreciated by the international academic and business communities, where people have become more mobile, both physically and electronically (Crystal, 2003). This eventually affects the use of other languages, especially Arabic and French, when English is prioritized at the expense of these languages.

The pie chart below (Graddol, 1997) demonstrates the percentages of the world's books published every year in each language (based on the Unesco statistics, cited in Zughoul, 2003). The results show that 28% of the world's books are published in English compared to 7.7% in French. Other languages ratios are also shown in the chart. According to these figures, Graddol (1997) also found out that English is the most widely used foreign language for book publication: over sixty countries published titles in English.

Figure 2.2.2 The proportion of the world's books published annually in each language



(Source: Zughoul, 2003)

This analysis predicted that this spread will continue in the 21st century. The difference is that

the speakers of English as a second/foreign/additional language will outnumber those speaking English as a first language (Graddol 2001 cited in Zughoul, 2003). In short, in the 20th century, English rose to claim dominance over the title of the international language and replace French and Arabic, thus English became the language of business, money and world interests (Vang,2006).

2.3 The Influence of English in French Schools (The UAE case)

Generally in the Arab World, French has been the leading language, from Lebanon to Algeria and Tunisia to Morocco, where the language had a big influence on this region for many years. This expanded the study of French among different communities in the Middle East which eventually spread to the Gulf due to an increase in the number of French speaking immigrants (Chilton, 2007). The UAE was among the countries that witnessed this leap and as a result observed the establishment of many French schools.

Concurrently, the rise and spread of the English language in academia was dominating the use of other languages, particularly French, which has been trying for the past years to protect itself against what is widely perceived to be the malign influence of English (Crystal, 2003:23). Recently, the UAE has opted for an English-medium tertiary education system, so surely it is the responsibility of schools to produce students with the language skills to take degree courses taught in English (Randall, 2010). This has brought pressure on schools to improve the level of English teaching especially when more than 40% of Emiratis send their children to private schools, largely so that they can go on straight to English-medium degree programmes (Randall, 2010). This mostly affects other school programmes and students' attainment of other languages, to begin with 'their mother tongue'.

Even with the existing differences between English and French schools systems, the latter system stresses the input of knowledge that facilitates the learning of other languages, like English and Spanish, with an emphasis on Arabic in the UAE. However, successful language learning at schools also results from understanding and participating in social interaction with classmates and teachers about topics that matter (Schmidt, 1995:3). The decline of French as an international language led to a shift to English as the first foreign language in several European countries after World War 1 (Gorlach & Schroder, cited in Greenbaum, 1985:228). Also, the

congruence of individual motivation and educational facilities in Europe has favored English to such a degree that there is already a serious shortage of learners of French, Spanish, and Italian needed by industries and the administration (Gorlach & Schroder, cited in Greenbaum, 1985:229).

This universe of academia is shifting and the world's top business schools and universities have been pushing to make English the teaching tongue to raise revenues, overcome declining birthrates and respond to globalization (Carvajal, 2007). Business universities are driving the trend, but English is spreading to the undergraduate level, with some South Korean universities offering up to 30% of their courses in the language (Carvajal, 2007). In Madrid, business students can take their admissions test for the elite Instituto de Empressa in English and enroll in core courses for a master's degree in business administration in the same language (Carvajal, 2007). At the Lille School of Management in France, English stopped being considered a foreign language in 1999, and now half of the post-graduate programs are taught in English to accommodate a rising number of international students (Carvajal, 2007). Over the last three years, the number of master's programs offered in English in schools with another host language has more than doubled to 3,300 programs in 1,700 universities (Carvajal, 2007). This influences students who attend French schools or universities to shift into American systems at the intermediate level or after high school. Essec, a French business school in the suburbs of Paris, is shifting the medium of instruction to English, since English is becoming the language for international teaching and allows students to be able to come from anywhere in the world, and for French ones to go everywhere (Carvajal, 2007). For those reasons, many countries have stepped-up English language requirements at lower levels, which are improving the language ability of students entering the university system (Carvajal, 2007). This obliged UAE schools, particularly those where English is taught as a second or foreign language to improve their students English language skills in all aspects, above all were the French schools (KHDA, 2010). Not only has this change in the language approach raised the schools' standards regarding foreign language learning, but surveys of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) showed that Europeans outperformed other areas of the world (Carvajal, 2007). This effect has spread to the UAE with a large number of students transferring to American Universities to continue their tertiary studies. In contrast, French is clearly a foreign language, taught as a school

subject, and not used in the community (Bouffard, 2006). One study at the UAE University investigates the motives underlying students' learning of French. The results indicated that UAEU French learners have a strong cultural interest in French products, and a fairly high perception of the pragmatic benefits of proficiency in French (Boufarrd, 2006). The fact that French does not benefit from more institutional support at the level of the university and where the educational system of the UAE favors English, might indirectly interfere with students' motivation towards studying in non-French Universities, especially when French is not represented in the country where it is being taught and, therefore, does not benefit from a strong reinforcement in the social and cultural milieu of the learner (Bouffard, 2006). This resulted in French schools modifying their systems to fit its use outside France, where some areas were asked to improve or change to comply with the UAE's Ministry of Education standards and to help reduce the number of students shifting from French to English systems.

2.4 The demand for English that draws students to English medium schools

It is well-known that English holds an essential place in the Arab world. Acquisition of English is viewed as a desirable end since it is seen as the language of wider international communication and of business and technology (O'Sullivan, N.D.).Yet, the need for learning English varies from one Arab state to another particularly in the UAE (O'Sullivan, N.D.). In one study, high school students were asked to indicate which of twelve reasons for studying English were among the three most important to them. Three types of reasons were listed: instrumental reasons (for example, to read textbooks assigned in universities or other institutions of higher learning), integrative reasons (for example, to gain friends among English-speaking people), and reasons for personal satisfaction (for example, to read English language books for pleasure) (Cooper, R.L., cited in Greenbaum, 1985:238). Instrumental reasons were the overwhelming favorites, on the average chosen eight times as frequently as integrative reasons and twice as frequently as reasons of personal satisfaction (Cooper, R.L., cited in Greenbaum, 1985:238). Second language learners feel that by learning a language, something new to their knowledge and experience is added, without taking anything away from what they already know (Lambert, 1990 cited in Qashoa, 2006), although there are perceptions that English is being pitted against Arabic or in competition with Arabic, which may have an effect on the acquisition of English in the Arab

world (Qashoa, 2006). In the UAE, English has recently become a heated topic due to the following:

1- First the school graduates cannot join the institutions of higher education without passing the Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA).

2- Second, the Ministry of Education has obliged the school administrations to learn English and pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

(Source: Qashoa, 2006)

In the case of the Arab world, Al-Shalabi (cited in Qashoa, 2006) investigated Kuwaiti university students' motivation for studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and found that the majority of students reported themselves as having instrumental motivation for language learning (to be "educated person, to get a higher degree" …). Another study in Saudi indicated that students learn English since it is now considered the language of business and higher education (Alam cited in Qashoa, 2006). Musa (cited in Qashoa, 2006), conducted a study on 357 secondary school students in the UAE to determine their attitudes towards learning English. The results revealed that seventy-five percent of the students liked studying English because of its importance as an international means of communication and because it will enable them to pursue their post graduate studies and keep them in contact with a high status foreign culture. In a study about ESL/EFL learners, Zughoul (2003) argues that the English language in Turkey is perceived to be the only hope to arrive to the realm of Globalization, especially when English is seen to be integral and fundamental for any student looking forward to a prosperous career and a happy life; this eventually, would make the student to start thinking of his own language at a "lesser" degree of importance, since the student starts facing a dilemma: learning a foreign language and still depending on his own native language for his own cultural and ego development. Zaki (2003) contends that the aim for teaching English in Morocco is to "empower students to talk about their own culture and to open unto other cultures." According to Mitchell (2003) *"Through the study of a foreign language, pupils understand and appreciate different countries, cultures, people and communities."* Mitchell (2003) adds that it is through exploring the similarities and differences between the foreign language they are learning and English, their listening, reading and memory skills improve, and their speaking and writing become more

accurate. The importance of the above is for learners to integrate into society and for academic purposes specifically amongst Arabs. It is now clear that the Arab world needs English to communicate with the world and for development in its widest sense (Zughoul, 2003). Teaching this language for these purposes and in these circumstances necessitates some changes in approach, perception, methodology and curriculum at large; they stress the consolidation of the mother tongue teaching, stressing localizing the content and making it relevant to the learner, keeping the status of English in the Arab countries as a foreign language and making the best of what other countries proposed in their foreign language teaching policies (Zughoul, 2003).

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2.5 Difference in Academic Performance between French and English Educated Students.

Each national curriculum has different standards compared to other national curricula. For example the French curriculum compared to the English curriculum is known to be difficult, stricter and more disciplined (Araman, 2000). Schools that use French as a medium of instruction have a stronger and a more systematic educational program all over the school years and especially at the secondary level than other schools (Araman, 2000). The French believe that early admittance to schools exposes the child to different learning environments, and prepares them both socially and academically. The system is also very selective which could be harsh and unfair to students. The examination is entirely subjective, stresses academic knowledge and does not focus on the development of the "whole person" (Hall, 1931). Conversely, the English system stresses the child and aspires to meet the student's wants and needs (Hall, 1931). The grading system in French schools also differs from that in English schools. In the former and in a scale to 20 rarely anyone gets 18 (Baudry, 2004). These grades are not given as a means of providing students with feedback on their work; rather it is more about punishing them where they went wrong. For this reason, American universities are surprised when the best French students apply, with math grades around 7 or 9, equivalent to a C- in France, students get an A+ in the USA when admitted (Baudry, 2004). French push for a much more extensive learning experience given their high degree of difficulty in their grading (Dedeyne, 2007). Since the standards of the French curriculum are set higher than the English curriculum, the results are that the academic performance between students is different.

2.5.1 The French Curriculum (Language Learning)

The French curriculum in the UAE emphasizes the learning of multiple languages for all students. At the pre-primary and primary level, students are able to speak, read and write in French and Arabic, in addition to language spoken at home, students come to school with the necessities from either language. In that case, schools emphasize the language part where students are less literate. These students perceive many benefits from being multilingual. Most are immigrants who must learn English in order to increase their future working opportunities. This means acquiring the necessary vocabulary and linguistic skills is inadequate by itself. Students must become proficient in English, as in French and Arabic. They should learn how to construct proper phrases in order to better communicate in an English dominating society. These students grow up to be better analyzers, know the sophisticated English, acquire a large array of vocabulary and are more disciplined (Araman, 2000).

The French Curriculum intends to provide opportunities for stimulating activities that will:

- Develop the ability to use language effectively in communication
- Nurture the awareness of language and links between languages
- Develop oral skills and the awareness of sounds and rhythms
- Build up self confidence through the ability to communicate
- Encourage positive attitudes towards language learning

  (St. Winifred's School, 2003)

2.5.1.1 Educational Policy

Language learning in French systems is essential and gives students the choice of acquiring a 2nd, 3rd and 4th language. In addition to French and Arabic, French schools emphasize the teaching of English and Spanish as foreign languages. Most teachers are bilingual and able to communicate with students other than native French speakers. This allows students to communicate naturally in all sorts of activities. One of the educational policies applied in French schools is reinforcing

the study of oral English. According to educators, English is indispensable for students' competences at university and college. The reinforcement of oral English is implemented within the curriculum and studied by 97% of students (French National Ministry of Education, 2006). The objective is to help students express themselves using other languages which facilitate their work later on.

Stressing this kind of learning allows children to:

- To develop communication skills in English
- pronounce properly
- Interact in different situations
- speak in English individually

The Stages involve

- Teachers volunteering in teaching oral English
- English teacher assistants
- Native English speakers

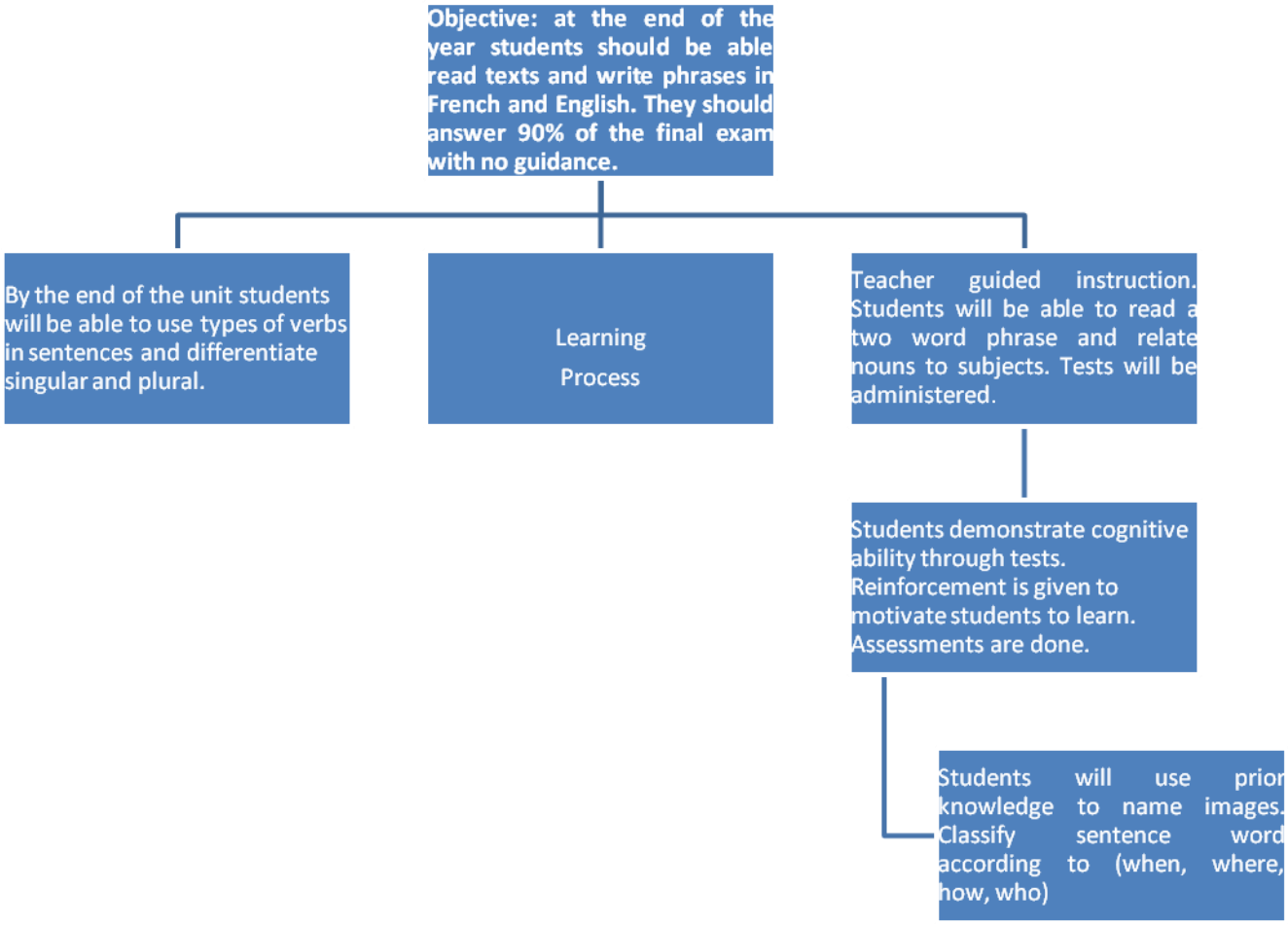
2.5.1.2 General Approach and Context

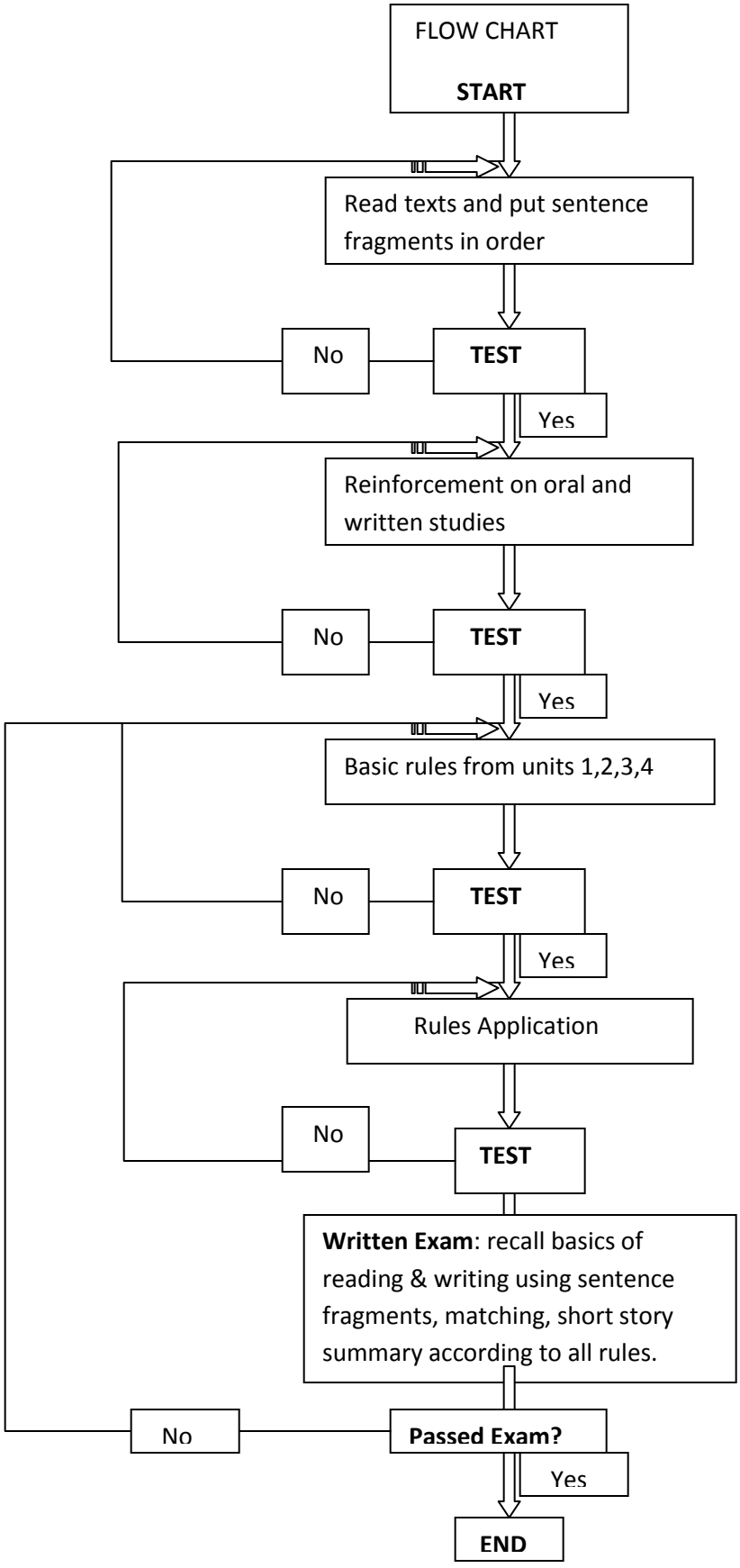
Instruction is based on oral communication in French and English and it relies on students' prior experiences. In learning how to speak, children envision themselves in the framework of learning how to read and write. This implies following methods that allow students to be in contact with the more possible kinds of manuscripts (written literacy, written communications). While students master the reading, the teacher can begin to approach the L2 (Second Language) passages to help students progress in writing and thus master the 2 languages. The student must be able to translate a written suggestion, an expression or an adapted word at that level, despite of spelling, conjugation or syntax errors.

There is however a limited number of both first and second language French speakers in the world and given the limitations that have restricted the capacity of French to develop further as a world language through its appeal as a vehicle of communication and culture for elites, the expansion of the influence and effectiveness of Francophonie has now become dependent on its

capacity to attract a new clientele of supporters. Indeed, many of the new members incorporated into the Francophone movement in recent years could only nominally or partially be described as French-speaking (Salhi, 2003:7).

Figure 2.5a, 2.5b Framework of Learning




FLOW CHART
START
Read texts and put sentence fragments in order
TEST
No
Yes
Reinforcement on oral and written studies
TEST
No
Yes
Basic rules from units 1,2,3,4
TEST
No
Yes
Rules Application
TEST
No
Written Exam: recall basics of reading & writing using sentence fragments, matching, short story summary according to all rules.
Passed Exam?
No
Yes
END

Fi 2.5

2.5.2 The English Curriculum

The English curriculum in the UAE, particularly in schools that follow the American education system, fall short of what would be required in the US (Ahmed, 2010). In some British curriculum schools as well, the teaching and learning methods are not fully based on the concepts and processed prescribed in the English National Curriculum (Ahmed, 2010). Most schools fall in the 'Acceptable' and 'Unsatisfactory' category in the second cycle of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) inspections that were concluded this year (Ahmed, 2010).

As a result, the Ministry has made significant strides towards improving the education in the UAE and has set the basic standards for the English curriculum that were initiated primary as the principles and goals of the Ministry of Education vision towards future generation of the nations. The standards are:

- Building a personality that adheres to the Islamic, Arab and national Educational principles by strengthening the culture identity.
- Reinforcing the National Identity by responding to the society needs in human resources.
- Providing equal education opportunities for all citizens.

(Ministry of Education, 2006)

2.5.2.1 The American/English Educational System

In the UAE, schools follow a number of different curricula. Certain schools favor the American system and some employ the British system, whereas other schools use both systems. The British system's standards and expectations are similar to the French, whereas a large difference exits between the latter and the American system in education. This system emphasizes the development of freedom and creativity among its students and considers that children can learn effectively only when they are allowed to explore freely with their ideas, without which they will not be able to think or believe in themselves (Oppapers, 2004). The system believes that brilliant and bright students are those that have creative and unique ideas and in order to develop creativity, it neglects good academic performance that most systems, including the French,

treasure (Oppapers, 2004). The problem resides in the fact that students in that system have been taught that they have the ability to achieve whatever they want to be, but rarely have been told how they can achieve their goal (just free papers, 2001). The advantage is that students develop individual thinking skills and are encouraged to try out different options to achieve their goal, yet students don't hold the responsibility of getting good grades since they believe that even without good education one can still get a good paying job (Just free papers, 2001). American schools focus a lot on building self-esteem (Mick, 2007) and strengthening the public personality of the student. Schools are less strict than French schools and social status and group values are not based on the education level attained. This hinders the student's progress and does not provide them with the minimal requirements for continuing their tertiary studies. In the emirates, a large number of students study at US curriculum schools including 17,870 UAE nationals who prefer an American education (Ahmed, 2010). For this purpose the curriculum was re-evaluated, particularly the English language curriculum, in order to meet the expected needs. According to the ministry of education (2006), the curriculum will give greater emphasis on the acquisition of transferrable skills appropriate to higher education and the labor market in the UAE.

2.5.2.2 Broad Goals and Standards for the UAE English Curriculum

To prepare the UAE students to meet the demands of the society in the 21st century, the standards were designed to address the application of skills in content areas where English is the medium of instruction (Ministry of Education, 2006). The standards focus on what students should know and be able to do, which requires students to extend the learning they have acquired by applying knowledge and skills of English to real life and work situations (Ministry of Education, 2006). These goals / standards will be attained as students acquire the facts, concepts, skills and processes enumerated under each of the following:

I- <u>Goals</u>

1- Students will listen attentively and critically.
2- Students will speak purposefully and articulately.
3- Students will read fluently with understanding and appreciation.
4- Students will write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences.

5- Students will understand, appreciate, interpret, and critically analyze texts in English.
6- Students will use reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking skills to gather and organize information; communicate effectively; and succeed in educational, occupational, civic, social, and everyday settings.

II- <u>Standards:</u>

1- Students communicate using Standard English grammar, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling and handwriting.
2- Students demonstrate competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning and communicating.
3- Students read, comprehend, and respond to a range of materials, using a variety of strategies for different purposes.
4- Students locate, select, synthesize and interpret information from variety of texts, media, references, and technological sources to acquire and communicate knowledge.
5- Students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.
6- Students apply reasoning and problem solving skills to reading, writing, speaking, listening and varied cultural and social situations.

(Source: Ministry of Education, 2006).

2.5.3 French and English Curricula in Practice

Application of both curricula requirements highlights a large number of differences between the French and the English systems, taking into consideration many criteria, such as student's personality, social background, and their capacities and perseverance in the learning process. Moreover, the methods and techniques applied by teachers who also come from different schools are different which does not make the education system in one country transposable to the system in any other country since the cultures of those countries are not the same (Dedeyne, 2007). Even though the systems diverge greatly, each system succeeds in preparing children for a career (Dedeyne, 2007). Some areas that seem to stand out the most between the French and American educational systems are: grading systems, teacher/student relationships (Dedeyne,

2007). These differences shape social structures, values, cultural identities, competitiveness and interrelations among these societies (Dedeyne, 2007).

1- Grading system: As mentioned earlier, French educators favor the 20-point grading scale, in which 20 is the highest grade and 0 is the lowest, while Americans grade on a percentage of 100 and give letter grades such as A,B,C,D and F (Dedeyne, 2007). The letter grading system gives the students the luxury of being ranked among students who differ in capacities within a range of 10 points over 100. On the other hand, a student enrolled in the French programme is labelled as "incapable" for lagging behind a few decimal points.
2- Teacher/Student relationship: in the American system, teachers are seen more as friends, people to rely on and trust (Dedeyne, 2007), where students feel more free to express themselves and ideas without any fear of prejudgements. Teachers are more involved in students' daily lives, concerns, ambitions and even problems which give the teachers a wider perspective of students' expectations in order to create a solid base for the learning process. In many situations teachers are often called "facilitators", which gives students the ability to deal with the authoritative figure in the community represented by the friendly teacher image in the classroom. This relation is usually based on effective communication and mutual understanding which is one of the most essential requirements in the American system. On the other hand, the French system does not provide the circumstances for personal interaction between teachers and students. The only credible relationship is between the student and the curriculum, since the French system is known to be curriculum-centred and the teacher is considered 'the Goddess of Knowledge'.

Regardless of differences in both school systems, the learning process has only one purpose, that is to prepare students to access university and therefore become more productive, better analyzers, have a scientific mind, and capable of taking part in society. Yet, which system will better prepare students for the targeted goal? Systems that are based on memorization, recitation and drill work might enrich the students' repertoire of

knowledge, but are not sufficient to help the student adapt easily to higher education conditions (Baudry, 2004). French systems consider that their approach provides their graduates with the necessary critical thinking skills, that's why they evaluate their students based on competences (set of skills which focus on the learning outcome) which is not the case in the English system, since the English system focuses on a holistic approach which means they emphasize the social and physical aspects of students and not their cognitive abilities (Baudry, 2004). According to educators, researchers and parents, French systems are considered to be successful, regardless of minor linguistic delays, since it produces students who are good at criticism and analysis and like what is complicated (Baudry, 2004). On the other hand, student's development, self-confidence and self esteem are highly affected in this type of educational system (Baudry, 2004). This might be the reason why English educated students have greater abilities to work in cosmopolitan cities, since they can deal with differences among people, which is an indispensable condition in career success. Many schools are now focusing on early career orientation for their students and provide a considerable number of training and workshops on living values and communication skills (Spring etal, 2008) The evidence for that is the implementation of the Model United Nations (MUN) programme in most of their schools around the globe ( ) which build up students' capacities on leadership and conflict resolution issues. The English system was the pioneer in targeting community service program for high school students, which according to researchers indicates that service-learning leads to positive impacts on students' civic and academic engagement and achievement (Spring etal, 2008). However, insufficient funds are decreasing the opportunity of students in English schools to excel and grow further (Spring etal, 2008) which gives way to other school systems, in this case the French, to develop and prosper.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter explains the methods of the study; the research design, sampling technique, instrumentation, data collection and analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The methodology of this research is both qualitative and quantitative. The design planned for use was a survey design, which is a non-experimental descriptive design (Fink 1998; Babbie, 1990 cited in Rabah, 2006) to examine the differences, if any, in academic performances between French and English educated students in Higher Education, and to look into the importance of language learning nowadays. In addition, the Key Informant Approach (Johnson, Meiller, Miller, & Summers, 1987 cited in Rabah 2006) was used to solicit information from parents and French educated students, regarding French / English school standards and their language teaching approach. This method is often used in institutional research to ascertain the ethos or procedures of institutions from different perspectives (Rabah, 2006). This mixed method approach, as stated by Bell (2005), is called "triangulation" and ensures the robustness of results.

3.2 Sampling Method

The sampling method used was a case-study of one American University in the UAE. The criteria for selection were: being located in Dubai; using English as a medium of instruction, and having students from different nationalities and educational background, among them the French educated. Even though questionnaires are widely used in gathering data for social research, they have their restrictions as any other method. This fact results in a more complex and elaborate understanding to both the subject studied and the results obtained (Oppenheim, 2003). In this situation, more reliable data were provided to the researcher by the research staffs at the American University in Dubai (AUD), who were personally approached as a source for data collection. Respondents (males and females of different religious identities and nationalities) were randomly selected. Two-hundred questionnaires were prepared and distributed among students during the study with the help of university research staffs. Only One-hundred and twenty-nine questionnaires were returned. The data were gathered on an excel sheet and provided by the staffs to the researcher. This process facilitated the selection of a good sample of data related to students' prior curriculum, language of instruction, country of origin, public /

private school attended, grade point average (GPA), current major and status at AUD. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to handle the obtained data which were evaluated thoroughly using SPSS. A total of twenty key informants in the study, parents and French educated students from French and English schools, were interviewed to help gather qualitative information that can be manually analyzed and gives the researcher richer information and more reliable data that can be reported.

3.3 Instrumentation

One questionnaire compromised of different questions was prepared during the study. The researcher did not confine the questions into one form. The questions were set into sections and items that depict information on how students perceive and relate performance at university with prior school system and language of instruction. The key informant approach elicited data from 10 parents and 10 French educated students on the following:

1- What the first foreign language that children learn at school is?

2- Whether they learn other foreign languages?

3- How good are students in learning a second foreign language? Whether they take it as seriously as the first?

4- What are the school's standards when choosing a second foreign language to be taught, what universities do they advise their students to enroll in and why? Whether students believe they are better performers in English or French?

5- What are the reasons they shift from a French medium school to an American system?

6- Are there any differences in academic performance between English and French educated students?

7- Which language do they prefer to learn as a foreign language?

The questionnaire was divided into five sections with various forms of questions:

- Section 1 requests respondents' personal demographics (gender, age, nationality).
- Section 2 asks respondents to specify their current major (Business administration, English as a Second language, General Studies, Engineering, Visual Communication, Communication and Information Technology, Interior Design), the date of enrollment, and current status.
- Section 3 presents respondents with a number of items that apply to the high schools from which students graduated (diploma obtained, and the languages that were used as a medium for instruction whether English medium-French medium or others).
- Section 4 requests respondents to specify their specific school curriculum (government, baccalaureate, Iranian, Indian, others) and to identify their school name, sector (public or private) and to specify the country of graduation from high school.
- Section 5 presents respondents with a number of questions related to their own beliefs regarding language learning: whether they think that English is substituting other languages in the country, particularly French, why is it necessary to know English, is it necessary to know French, where will they send their own children in the future, are there any differences in academic performances and attitudes at the university between English and French educated students, and to state the advantages of being educated in either curriculum.

  The questions in section 5 were accompanied by "yes"/ "no" response options, open-ended questions and circle as many as apply options. These questions were analyzed manually using the 'paper and pen' method in order to retain more specific data that could be generalized in this study. Table 1 presents the relation between the Research Questions and items on the questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire and the key informant approach questions are presented in Appendices A and B. The questionnaires provided have been piloted.

Table 3.1 Relationship between Questionnaire Items and Research Questions

RQ	Questionnaire Items
1	16-17 (school effect on student performance)
	18-19 (language effect on student performance)
2	4-5-6 (major, current enrollment and status at university)
	7-8 (previous school system attended and medium of instruction used)
	9-10 (prior school curriculum, sector and country of high school)
	11-12-13-14-15 (language importance and benefits perceived)

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are important elements of the tools used for data collection. Reliability refers to "the extent to which results are consistent over time and…..if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology" (Joppe, 2000 cited in Golafshani, 2003) while validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In this study, the questionnaires were adopted from a previous research completed at the Lebanese American University (LAU) were the questions were modified to fit its use in the UAE. The questions were administered to students at the American University in Dubai (AUD). Since both universities follow the American higher educational system, it was presumed that the surveys will yield the intended results and are reasonably valid.

3.5 Data Collection

Data was collected during the months of April and June 2010. The Lebanese French School in Dubai (LLFP) and the American University in Dubai (AUD) were the two educational institutions selected for the study. The researcher was an employee amongst the teaching staffs at the school and was therefore able to arrange interviews with the parents and students. The researcher clarified the purpose of the study and emphasized that anonymity is not to be disclosed. During the same week, meetings were arranged with the research staffs at the University for data collection purposes. The researcher explained the rationale of the study and the importance of students on campus to participate. Any issues regarding the anonymity of participants were reassured. The questionnaires were completed in a period of two days and collected immediately afterwards. The research staff team at the university offered the researcher help in gathering information on students' education (High school, current major, grade point average, nationality, background, language of curriculum at school etc…). The researcher collected the questionnaires from the staff. The figures related to section 5 of the questionnaire were analyzed manually using the 'paper and pen' method, and the remaining data was analyzed thoroughly using SPSS.

3.6 Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study to analyze the data collected using questionnaires. The sections contained open and closed ended questions as well as different question orders. First, one-way ANOVA designs were used to evaluate the differences between pairs of group means (Brace etal, 2006), according to specific school curriculum and language of instruction. Second, - descriptive statistics - focused on identifying the attained results from multi perspectives (nationality, program description or specialization and current status). Third, group statistics and independent *t*-tests were carried out to establish if there is a significant difference in GPA between students attending private versus public schools. All of the above were studied in relation to students' grade point averages (GPAs). These data were compared with previous research results. The responses on items in section V were analyzed by compiling further results that were congruent with previous research studies. Interviews were conducted with the French educated students and parents of both French and English educated students as

another method to seek clarification on unclear thoughts (Finn et al, 2000). This technique is more useful for collecting in-depth information since questions can be meticulously explained (Kumar, 2005:131).

3.7 Pilot Study and Modifications

It was important for any methodology to be critically investigated thus ensuring that the results obtained are consistent. For that reason, a pilot study was carried out with a number of randomly selected students, at the American University in Dubai, and in the presence of the researcher, in order for the questionnaire to yield the intended results and to "sort out technical matters to do with methods of data collection…to ensure that you are on the right lines conceptually…[and is] an opportunity to revise the design, to sharpen up the theoretical framework, develop research questions, [and] rethink the sampling strategy…" (Robson, 2002, p.97). The items were checked for any essential changes which in turn did not require serious modifications to the questionnaire. Yet, minor changes resulted from this pilot study and these changes were as follows:

- First, the questionnaire was not originally divided into sections. This was changed to a questionnaire with 5 different sections, each pertaining to a particular set of questions.
- Item 2 in section I was added (age related question) for more detailed demographics of each respondent.
- Item 4 in section II originally asked participants to indicate their native language. This item was changed to specify each student's major.
- Item 5 and 6 in section II originally asked students to state the language(s) they use for oral and written purposes. Both items were changed to identify students' year of enrollment at university and current status.
- Item 7 in section III originally asked respondents to identify their school as English / French medium. This question was modified to include more specific information on students' high school diploma obtained, and languages studied at school.

- New items were added to section IV. These items included questions on school curriculum, sector (private / public), school name, and high school country name. Previous items on language difficulty and importance were eliminated.

- Section 5 on the questionnaire was not modified.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

There are many reasons why it is important to adhere to ethical norms in research. First, norms promote the aims of research, such as knowledge, truth, and avoidance of error (Resnik, 2010). Second, ethical standards promote the values that are essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness (Resnik, 2010). Third, ethical norms help to ensure that researchers can be held accountable to the public, for instance, human subjects' protection (Resnik, 2010). Fourth, ethical norms help to build public support for research, where people are more likely to fund research if they trust the quality and integrity of research (Resnik, 2010). Finally, many of the norms of research promote a variety of other important moral and social values, such as social responsibility, human rights, health and safety (Resnik, 2010). Due to all these ethical restrains, the researcher informed all those involved in the study, of the purpose, and risks if any, arising from taking part in this project (Code of Federal Regulation, 2003, p.2). Assurance of anonymity and the freedom of withdrawal without loss of benefit or penalty were also given (Code of Federal Regulation, 2033, p.2).

The research staffs at the American University in Dubai, as well as parents and French educated students, were approached during the year 2009-2010, and asked to cooperate in the study. The staffs, students and parents were informed of the nature of the research and its benefits orally. The researcher was then given a formal consent to conduct the study. The surveys were distributed during the operating university hours, more precisely "on campus". Interviews were held on a separate day, with both parents and students from the Lebanese French School in Dubai (LLFP) and another English based school in the area. Afterwards the data collected was analyzed and discussed.

Chapter Four: Results

This section summarizes the data obtained from the research study conducted. The sample is described and followed by a detailed explanation of the results pertaining to each research question. These results are demonstrated using tables that show the mean, standard deviation, degrees of freedom, the *F*-ratio, the *p* value for each source of variable obtained from each depicted item.

4.1 Description of the Sample

Two-hundred questionnaires were distributed to students at the American University in Dubai campus. Only 129 were collected. Many of the questionnaires were not completed and as a result were disregarded. The key informant approach gathered explicit information from a total of 20 parents and French educated students. This allowed the researcher to discover new information and get responses that are more reliable and not biased.

4.1.1 Results Pertaining to Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do French and English educated students perform academically at the American Universities in the UAE?

Table 4.1.1 Descriptive Statistics: responses related to item 3 section 1 on the questionnaire (Whole Sample – N=116)

(Nationality perspective)

GPA (Scale 0→4)

Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
United States of America	3	1.360000	1.3650275
Argentina	1	2.850000	.
Canada	4	3.340000	.1783255
Egypt	3	2.430000	.6878953
France	1	3.370000	.
India	33	3.085758	.6406980
Iran	20	2.100500	.9872315
Iraq	1	1.660000	.
Jordan	9	2.448889	1.0573841
Lebanon	4	2.237500	.6220062
Morocco	2	2.565000	.2616295

Nigeria	11	2.729091	.7854483
Pakistan	1	1.720000	.
Palestine	3	2.900000	1.1523454
Saudi Arabia	8	1.726250	1.1073512
Syria	3	2.470000	.6341136
United Arab Emirates	8	1.508750	1.2908628
Yemen	1	1.500000	.
Total	116	2.481034	.9995341

Table 4.1.1 presents responses on item 3 in the questionnaire. The figures above helped determine the effect of student performance from a nationality perspective. A total of 116 participants have a mean (*M = 2.48*) and a standard deviation of (*s.d=0.99).* The results reveal that the greatest number of participants in the study were Indians with the second highest average of (*N=33, M=3.08, s.d= 0.64).* Only 1 participant was of French origin compared to the other 13 French educated students who participated in the study (*N=14* shown in the table 4.2.1) who previously studied in French schools. This participant had the highest average of all (*M=3.37).* The results indicate that Indians and French nationals do not have a significant difference in academic performance according to the above means (*M= 3.08; M= 3.37*), although the number of Indian nationals exceeds the French ones. The above table displays the results of other nationalities as well.

Table 4.1.2 Independent t-tests: responses related to item 10 section III on the questionnaire (Whole Sample - N=116)

(Private versus Public Schools Perspective)

Group Statistics

	Private /Public	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GPA	Public	33	1.840909	1.1320291	.1970610
	Private	83	2.735542	.8188842	.0898842

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
GPA	Equal variances assumed	4.693	.032	-4.737	114	.000	-.8946331	.1888443	-1.2687321	-.5205341
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.130	45.925	.000	-.8946331	.2165922	-1.3306300	-.4586362

The above table summarizes the data obtained on item 10 in the survey. The figures display a difference in GPAs between students who have completed their high school studies in public or private sectors. The first table "Group Statistics" includes: sample sizes, means, standard deviations and standard errors of the means. The total number of students in the public sector is 33, with a mean of 1.84 and a standard deviation of 1.13 (*N=33, M=1.84, S.D=1.13).* The total number of students in the private sector is 83, with a mean of 2.73 and a standard deviation of 0.81 (*N=83, M=2.73, S.D=0.81).* A higher average (*M=2.73)* was noted in private schools with a lower standard deviation (*S.D=0.81)* than the lower mean (*M=1.84)* with a higher standard deviation *(S.D=1.13)* of students in the public sector. The lower standard deviation (*S.D=0.81)* suggests that the data is more consistent in the private sector. In order to study the difference between both sectors, a test of independent samples has been conducted. SPSS was used by running Levene's test for equality of variances. The mean difference between sectors was -0.894 and the 95% confidence interval for the estimated population mean difference is between -1.26 and -0.52. The table also revealed the p-value (*p= 0.032)* of the top variances assumed. This showed that the difference in means between students in public versus private schools was statistically significant (*t=-4.737,* df= 114, *p=0.032).*

4.1.3 Results Pertaining to Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Why do French educated students shift into American Universities in the UAE? Do we observe large differences between students coming from a specific high school program?

Table 4.1.3 presents responses to item 9 section III on the questionnaire which were answered by a total of 116 participants. One way ANOVA between and within groups was run. The results from the top row show that there was a statistically significant difference between two groups with ($F= 6.603$, $df= 4$, $p<0.0005$)

Table 4.1.3 Responses to item 9 section III on the questionnaire (Whole Sample-N= 116)

(Curriculum Perspective)

ANOVA

GPA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.084	4	5.521	6.603	.000
Within Groups	92.809	111	.836		
Total	114.893	115			

GPA

Scheffe[a,,b]

Curriculum_1	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
		1	2
Government	33	1.993636	
Iranian	21	2.059048	2.059048
Nigerian	11	2.729091	2.729091
French	14	2.828571	2.828571
Indian	37		2.950000
Sig.		.107	.071

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 18.707.

It is evident that there is a significant difference between Government (*GPA=1.99*) and Indian (*GPA=2.95)* curricula in relation to GPA. It is also noted that there is a difference in GPAs between students coming from Government, Iranian, Nigerian and French curricula (*GPAs: 1.99; 2.05; 2.72; 2.82).* Then again, there is no significant difference in GPAs between students coming from Iranian, Nigerian, French, and Indian curricula (*GPAs: 2.05; 2.72; 2.82; 2.95).* To

evaluate the GPA's of students coming from different curricula, multiple comparisons (Post-hock Scheffe) tests were used to compare each curriculum with the other four. Each given number refers to a specific curriculum:

Iranian→ 1
Government→ 2
French → 3
Indian → 4
Nigerian → 5

Multiple Comparisons

GPA in relation to curriculum

Scheffe

(I) Curriculum_1	(J) Curriculum_1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Iranian	2.00	.0654113	.2552486	.999	-.734207	.865029
	3.00	-.7695238	.3154957	.211	-1.757878	.218831
	4.00	-.8909524*	.2498254	.016	-1.673581	-.108323
	5.00	-.6700433	.3403315	.428	-1.736201	.396114
Govern.	1.00	-.0654113	.2552486	.999	-.865029	.734207
	3.00	-.8349351	.2916494	.092	-1.748586	.078716
	4.00	-.9563636*	.2189396	.001	-1.642236	-.270491
	5.00	-.7354545	.3183509	.262	-1.732754	.261845
French	1.00	.7695238	.3154957	.211	-.218831	1.757878
	2.00	.8349351	.2916494	.092	-.078716	1.748586
	4.00	-.1214286	.2869150	.996	-1.020248	.777391
	5.00	.0994805	.3684196	.999	-1.054669	1.253630
Indian	1.00	.8909524*	.2498254	.016	.108323	1.673581
	2.00	.9563636*	.2189396	.001	.270491	1.642236
	3.00	.1214286	.2869150	.996	-.777391	1.020248
	5.00	.2209091	.3140194	.974	-.762821	1.204639
Nigerian	1.00	.6700433	.3403315	.428	-.396114	1.736201
	2.00	.7354545	.3183509	.262	-.261845	1.732754

3.00	-.0994805	.3684196	.999	-1.253630	1.054669
4.00	-.2209091	.3140194	.974	-1.204639	.762821

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.1.3.1 Responses to item 8 section III on the questionnaire (Whole Sample - N= 116)
(Language of Instruction Perspective)

ANOVA

GPA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	22.084	4	5.521	6.603	.000
Within Groups	92.809	111	.836		
Total	114.893	115			

GPA

Scheffe[a,,b]

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
Lng_1	N	1	2
Arabic	33	1.993636	
Iranian	21	2.059048	2.059048
Nigerian	11	2.729091	2.729091
French	14	2.828571	2.828571
English	37		2.950000
Sig.		.107	.071

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 18.707.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

The above table uses One-way ANOVA as well to study the effect of language of instruction at school in relation to students' performances at University. Each given number relates to a specific language:

Iranian → 1
Arabic → 2
French → 3
English → 4
Nigerian → 5

The results demonstrate a difference in group 1 that doesn't seem to be significant between students who come from schools that use different languages of instruction (languages 2, 1, 5 & 3). According to GPA, there is also a difference that is not significant in group 2 between students who come from schools using languages of instruction (languages 1, 5, 3 & 4). However, there seems to be a significant difference between schools that use Arabic (*GPA= 1.99)* and English (*GPA= 2.95)* as a medium of instruction. The multiple comparisons below relate each language of instruction used to the other 4 languages in order to get more specific and reliable data that can be further analyzed to find out if language use could be a factor influencing students' performance in Higher Education

Multiple Comparisons

GPA in relation to language of instruction

Scheffe

(I) Lng_1	(J) Lng_1	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Iranian	2.00	.0654113	.2552486	.999	-.734207	.865029
	3.00	-.7695238	.3154957	.211	-1.757878	.218831
	4.00	-.8909524*	.2498254	.016	-1.673581	-.108323
	5.00	-.6700433	.3403315	.428	-1.736201	.396114
Arabic	1.00	-.0654113	.2552486	.999	-.865029	.734207
	3.00	-.8349351	.2916494	.092	-1.748586	.078716
	4.00	-.9563636*	.2189396	.001	-1.642236	-.270491
	5.00	-.7354545	.3183509	.262	-1.732754	.261845

French	1.00	.7695238	.3154957	.211	-.218831	1.757878
	2.00	.8349351	.2916494	.092	-.078716	1.748586
	4.00	-.1214286	.2869150	.996	-1.020248	.777391
	5.00	.0994805	.3684196	.999	-1.054669	1.253630
English	1.00	.8909524*	.2498254	.016	.108323	1.673581
	2.00	.9563636*	.2189396	.001	.270491	1.642236
	3.00	.1214286	.2869150	.996	-.777391	1.020248
	5.00	.2209091	.3140194	.974	-.762821	1.204639
Nigerian	1.00	.6700433	.3403315	.428	-.396114	1.736201
	2.00	.7354545	.3183509	.262	-.261845	1.732754
	3.00	-.0994805	.3684196	.999	-1.253630	1.054669
	4.00	-.2209091	.3140194	.974	-1.204639	.762821

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4.1.3.2 Responses to item 4 section II on the questionnaire (Program description) Whole Sample –N=116

GPA

Program Description	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Business Administration	67	2.405672	1.1087137
Communication and Information Studies	2	3.260000	.2969848
Engineering	10	2.749000	.5094321
English as a Second Language	2	2.035000	.8273149
General Studies	9	2.026667	1.0519862
Information Technology	10	2.409000	1.0857302
Interior Design	9	3.096667	.5059397
Visual Communication	7	2.620000	.4036500
Total	116	2.481034	.9995341

Table 4.1.3.2 presents responses to items related to the effect of the program in which students are enrolled on their performance. The highest number of students are enrolled in the Business Administration Program (*N= 67).* Students in the Communication and Information studies

program have the highest average (*N=3.26)* and the lowest standard deviation *(s.d = 0.29).* Students enrolled in General Studies have the lowest mean (*N=2.02).* The report in (Appendix C) demonstrates the number of students enrolled in each program and relates the averages revealed from a curriculum and nationality perspective.

Table 4.1.3.3 Responses to item 6 section II on the questionnaire (Whole Sample – N= 116)

Report

GPA

Current Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Active	87	2.742184	.8215179
Drop	16	1.839375	1.3914907
NDS: Completer	5	1.178000	.6691562
Standard Period of Non-Enrollment	4	1.855000	.3924708
Suspension	4	1.622500	.0981071
Total	116	2.481034	.9995341

Table 4.1.3.3 presents responses to item 6 on the questionnaire (Status Description). The highest mean (*M=2.74)* was noted in students who are active at the university (*N= 87)* and the lowest average (*M= 1.17)* was noted in students with the status 'Completer' (*N=5).* Probably the number of students in each status directly affects performance, in this case GPA or mean average which shows that there exists many variables that might be related to students' academic achievements at the university, although it is not specified which students are active and which are not.

Table 4.2 Levels of significance between five curricula

Curriculum	Iranian	UAE Gov.	French	Indian	Nigerian
Iranian		.999	.211	.016	0.428
UAE Gov.			.092	.001	0.262
French				.966	0.999
Indian					0.974
Nigerian					

The above table shows the significance between five different curricula. The results reveal a significant difference between Iranian (*s.d= 0.16*) and UAE government (*s.d=0.001*) curricula. However, there is no significant difference between the French and Indian curricula.

4.3 Interviews

4.3.1 Results Pertaining to the interview questions with parents

The following information was decoded from the interviews held with 10 randomly chosen parents of students from either French medium or English medium schools (See Appendix B). The results revealed that 5 parents send their children to English schools whereas the other 5 send them to French schools. English educated students learn French as a second foreign language at school, and the French learn English as a second foreign language. Furthermore, parents of French educated students affirmed that their children considered the English language very important and studied for it as any other school subject. However, the parents of English educated students claimed that their children don't take the French subject at school seriously, simply because French is viewed as a hard language to learn and they don't really see the benefit they will get from learning French as a second language. Parents who have their children enrolled in French systems believe that the rigidity of system and the opportunity given to students in learning two or more languages is an advantage. These parents have no regrets on the choices they made. Conversely, parents of English educated students believe that learning a 'hard language' is not very useful especially when English today is dominating the world and has

become an international language. One parent stated that she would have chosen a French medium school for her children because multilingual students have more chances in their future professional life, even though she agreed that both systems have their pros and cons.

For that same reason, parents of French educated students will advise their children to enroll in American universities, while parents of English educated students have no other options but to send their children to English tertiary education.

4.3.2 Results pertaining to interview questions with students

Information from 10 participants was assembled through the interview. The results revealed that seven students are better performers in English, whereas three students perform equally in both languages for either written or oral purposes. French educated students indicated that they shifted from French to an English medium education because 'English is easier'; it gives students better job opportunities and the system is much more flexible and less strict. In addition, five out of 10 students believed that there are academic differences between English and French educated students. These students agreed that French educated students 'have more general knowledge', 'take things more seriously', and 'study more'. Other students viewed no academic differences between English and French educated students. They believed that academic differences are related to students themselves and the schools' level but not necessarily the curriculum. Six students stated that they will send their children in the future to French medium schools because they want their children to have the opportunity to acquire French and English, besides Arabic. However, four of them will send their children to English medium schools since they believe that French will be not be used in real professional practical life. Those students had similar opinions related to question 5 in the interview. Their answers varied between those six who will make the same decisions as their parents by choosing French as their first foreign language, and others who will not make the same decisions as their parents and would opt for English as a medium for education.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Results

This section discusses the research results in relation to previous results presented in the review of the literature (Chapter 2). Both research questions are answered followed by a conclusion and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion of results pertaining to Research Questions 1

Whether or not nationality is considered a factor in determining how students perform academically, it is still a matter undergoing disagreements between experts. According to (Harb etal, 2006), there is a strong relation between students' achievements and nationality. Although France scored the highest mean (*M=3.37)* on a scale (1→4) in the table above, it would be expected to fluctuate with a higher number of French nationals. The results also demonstrate that the Indians achieve higher scores (*N=33, M=3.08)* than all other nationalities, but fall a little short behind the French. This could be a sign of better academic performance of French educated students which appeared in some previous research studies (Baudry, 2004), nevertheless, nationality cannot be considered a factor alone pertaining to the results above, especially when the number of participants between French (*N=1)* and other nationalities is large. It was also perceived that if the nationalities with one participant are selected and compared, those with a similar ethnic and cultural background reflect almost the same standards (Yemen, Iraq) and to some extent (Pakistan) (*N=1.5; N=1.66 and N=1.72).* In order to generalize the data obtained, a greater number of participants should be considered in the study (French part reflects a much higher standard of performance compared to Yemen, Iraq and Pakistani nationals).

In this study, independent t-tests (Table 4.1.2) were used to compare the performance of participants in group A (public sector) with the performance of group B (private sector). The results identify students in private schools as better performers than students in public schools. It was also noted that a difference in means (*M=1.84; M=2.73*) exists between both parties, although the sample size is different between both sectors (*N=33; N=83*). It was also shown that the results are quite consistent in the private sector even if the number of participants in the public sector is doubled.

In the UAE, it is generally known that students who graduate from the French system do not belong to the UAE public schools sector. This instantly places French educated students in the private sector, where students score a higher mean value. According to the knowledge and

human development authority (KHDA, 2010), most public schools in the UAE were rated unsatisfactory when compared to private schools. French schools, for example, were rated between (acceptable and good) for two consecutive years. Still, these results cannot be generalized to all the UAE universities, but they could be a factor affecting students' academic performance in English higher educational institutions especially when the English language teaching in the UAE public schools particularly, is below average (Ahmed, 2010) and studies show that English is essential upon entry to the university and throughout the student's years of study, regardless of the major being studied.

5.2 Discussion of Results Pertaining to Research Question 2

In order to evaluate the difference between pairs of group means, One-Way ANOVA between and within subjects was used. The figures displayed in table 4.2.1 show the outcome of the analysis of variance. Although the sample size between the government (*N=33*) and the Indian (*N=37*) curricula is close, there happens to be a significant difference in GPAs of students who come from either curriculum with the Indians scoring a higher mean (*M=2.95*) than the Government (*M= 2.82*). These results reveal that students who come from either the French of the Indian curriculum, perform almost the same, knowing that the sample size (*N=14*) for the French students and (*N= 37*) for the Indian students could be the factor affecting the results displayed. This also suggests a possible similarity between both curricula in terms of difficulty, and rigidity (Ghosh, 2011). Both Indian and French curricula have almost the same difference which is reflected by a better performance of the French and Indian students in the AUD.

ANOVA tests were also used to evaluate the differences between pairs according to the language of instruction (Table 4.2.2). The results demonstrate that students who are educated in schools that use Arabic as a medium of instruction do not perform academically as well as students who come from schools that use English as a medium of instruction. However, French and English educated students have a very close GPA in relation to the language used (GPA=2.82; GPA= 2.95). A multiple comparisons tests also relate each language to another language of instruction.

Table 4.2.3 demonstrates the data obtained from a "program description" perspective. With regards to the business administration program, the results reflect a higher performance of the Indian nationals (*N=2.91*) followed by baccalaureate curriculum students (*N= 2.79).* The

Nigerians came in third place (*N= 2.32*) followed by the Government curriculum students (*N= 1.74*). Taking into consideration the standard deviations of all students in the business program, the figures display an advance of the baccalaureate curriculum students (including the French baccalaureate students) (*s.d = 0.46*) over the Indian curriculum students (*s.d = 0.84*) who as previously mentioned, have a higher mean Grade Point Average (GPA). In the communication and Information studies program, the graduates from the baccalaureate curriculum (including the French educated students) perform better than students coming from Government schools (*N= 3.47; N= 3.05*). In the engineering department, Government school graduates achieved a higher mean value (*N= 2.84*) than the Indians and Iranians (*N= 2.7*). At the same time, the Government graduates results reveal a better standard deviation (*s.d = 0.19*) when compared to the Indians (*s.d = 0.46*) and the Iranians (*s.d = 0.67).* In the English as a second language program, the Government students (*N= 1.45*) performed poorer than the Nigerians (*N= 1.62*). On the other hand, the general studies program shows that the baccalaureate graduates students have the highest mean (*N= 2.38*) followed by the Nigerians (*N= 2.26*) and the Iranians (*N= 2.06*), while the Government graduates had the lowest mean (*N=1.92*). In the IT department, the Nigerian graduate students outperformed the other nationalities with a mean (*N= 3.16*) followed by the baccalaureate graduate students (*N= 2.27*). The Iranian came in last (*N= 1.27; s.d= 1.24*) behind the Government graduate students (*N= 2.15*). The performance of Indian graduates in the interior design department was the highest (*N= 3.53*) followed by the baccalaureate graduates (*N= 3.40*) and the Government graduate students (*N= 2.21*). The best academic performers in the visual communication program were the Indians with a mean (*N= 3.13*) a head of all others (*N=2.5*).

The analysis of these results show that the Indian graduate students have the highest mean overall (*N=2.95*). In second place comes the baccalaureate graduates with a mean (*N= 2.82*), whereas the Government graduates total performance was the lowest (*N= 1.99; s.d= 1.14*) behind the Indians (*N= 2.95*) and the Nigerians (*N= 2.72*).

It seems that the baccalaureate graduates including the French excelled in the following departments (communication and information studies and general studies) and performed well in the business administration program. The Indians on that part excelled in the (business administration, interior design and visual communication program). The Iranians however, did

well in the engineering program in which the Government graduate students excelled. The Nigerian graduates' only good performance was in the English language studies.

The above mentioned discussion of the results pertaining to table 4.2.3 provide evidence that the baccalaureate graduate students with a solid general knowledge background acquired while persuing their baccalaureate degrees, entices them to enroll in programs where they can find themselves at ease to stand out and hesitate to join programs in which they cannot rely on their background to give good results. The Nigerians excelled in the English language, information technology and general studies department. The Indians excelled in visual communication, interior design and business administration. Both Nigerians and Indians were under British influence which dominated their educational curricula (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2011), and made them acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to reach higher educational levels with a reliable background. The Government graduate students had not been guided into proper education from the start (KHDA, 2010). Their education (primary and secondary) was bits and pieces gathered from different curricula and surprisingly they obtained the highest score in the engineering department, knowing that the UAE is not a major industrial and engineering designed country. Most of the technical people in the UAE (blue and white collared technicians and engineers) are foreign nationals.

When considering the final report of the GPA (listing the program and nationalities), the results show slight differences with the previous report (listing the program and curriculum). It is quite evident that the educational system leading to the general baccalaureate, mainly adopted by the French cultural and educational system, place them in all university programs in first place as shown in the overall final report with a total mean of (*N= 3.37*) for the French and (*N= 3.34*) for the Canadians. However, it is not justified that in the engineering department they were not enrolled, although France builds the most selling aircraft in the world, the famous airbus series and are also famous car manufacturers (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2011). The baccalaureate students who also showed a good GPA mean are the French educated Moroccans (*N= 2.56*) and the Lebanese (*N=2.23*). The Indian's attainment of a high mean GPA in several disciplines (programs) is attributed to the practical implementation of these programs in their daily lives and skilled performance such as engineering (the Indians built jet fighters), visual communication

(Bollywood produces more movies than Hollywood) and interior design (skilled craftsmanship in furniture manufacture, including wood aging) leading to entice their enthusiasm in their field. The Nigerians excelled in the language program as a reaction to their colonial masters “The British”. One important nationality is missing from the study (German Nationals). This reflects that they persue their higher education in German universities in their own country (Cohen, 2010).

The report in table 4.2.4, which relates the current status of students is quite understood because the enrollment in AUD might reflect the temporary residence of those students in Dubai or surrounding the Emirates, due to the fact that their parents are temporary residents of Dubai. The good accreditation of AUD allows those students to return to their home countries and easily transfer the credits earned to complete their Higher Education and graduate from a different university.

Table 4.3 displays the results of the levels of significance between five curricula. The difference between French and Indian students is not significant: effectively they are the same. The difference between the Indians and Iranians is definitely significant in favor of Indians. The difference between Indian students and UAE government students is very significant. None of the other differences is significant.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

As we have seen, French and English educational systems are different and complex, yet complementary (Dedeyne, 2007). To better understand these differences, one needs to look at the whole system approach and its application in the UAE society. Based on the idea of "no child left behind" which according to Dedeyne (2007) is adopted by both systems and implemented within their curriculum, the learning strategies which include project based learning, character education and living values programmes do not fall within the same criteria in those systems. This is evident in previous and recent research studies which show that students who come from either system, do not reveal the same academic performance in Higher Education.

Baudry (2004) explains the many differences existing between the French and English cultures, particularly the American, which are the main reasons the educational systems in both countries hold opposing views. However, the globalization of the English language and its domination in academia is evident among cultures and also in countries where English is not primarily spoken. This effect spread and influenced other world languages, mainly the French, whose educational system is being applied in the UAE French schools, where the teaching of English as a second language became mandatory since it is imperative for people nowadays to study in English in order to pursue tertiary education in American Universities. This study portrayed the reality regarding the educational systems in France and the US. The surveys targeted the points that needed to be evaluated. 1) The first was to establish if there are differences in academic performance between French and English educated students from diverse nationalities. 2) The second was to determine the reasons behind students shifting into American Universities. 3) The third was to look into prior school curricula to find out if any differences exist between students coming from a specific high school program. Interestingly, the results correlate with earlier studies (Shami, 2008) which show that French educated students score higher means at a university level and adapt easily to English systems. Since the research was a case study of one American University in Dubai (AUD), and where the sample population was small, generalizations can only be made about the high level of literacy that French students possess. Although the analysis of the data demonstrate the fact that French systems are more solid compared to English systems, where schools set stricter rules than English schools, focus on the importance of language learning, and make their students work harder, other factors related to

students' socioeconomic background, culture and character might be affecting the results obtained. In this sense, the English system should consider modifying its curriculum in order to help students tackle all subjects with full confidence, minimize the specialization of those students at the secondary level and enhance students' capabilities. On the other hand, French systems should continue improving the English language skills of their students so that they face the challenges of the real practical world which relies heavily on the English language as the main language of communication.

6.1 Recommendations

Further research with the same type of schools in the UAE (Abu Dhabi and other emirates), can look into other important factors and their impact on students' academic performance. Implications of such research could assist the respective school principals, stakeholders and parents in choosing good education for their children. In that case, it is beneficial for French schools to reinforce the English language skills, since English stands out in many fields of work, is highly needed in educational or governmental institutions and labels the socioeconomic status of people and the educational level attained.

Clearly, English schools need to keep up with all those changes by means of restructuring their curriculum including essential criteria, content, teaching methods and evaluation measures, in order to give the aspired educational benefit that would profit the society and the individuals within it (Shaaban & Ghaith, 1997).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thank you for participating in this study. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. There is no right or wrong answer. Please do not indicate your name.

Circle the most appropriate answer:

Section I

Please fill in the following section for demographic purposes only.

1. **What is your gender?**

- Female
- Male

2. **What is your age (in years)?**

- 17→24
- 25→30
- 30+

3. **What is your nationality?**

- French
- Emirati
- Lebanese
- Others (please specify): ……

Section II

4. What is your major?

- Business Administration
- English as a Second Language
- General Studies
- Engineering
- Visual Communication
- Communication and Information Studies
- Information Technology
- Interior Design
- Others (please specify): ……

5. When did you enroll at the university?

- Day/Month/Year: ……..

6. What is your current status?

- Active
- Standard period of non-enrollment
- Drop
- Completing
- Suspension

Section III

Please answer the following as it applies to your school.

7. **Your graduated from high school with:**

- High school diploma
- French Baccalaureate
- Others (please specify): ……..

8. **Which language(s) did you study at school? (Circle as many as apply)**

- Arabic
- English
- French
- Iranian
- Indian
- Others (please specify)……

Section IV

9. **What was your school's specific curriculum?**

- Governmental
- Baccalaureate
- Iranian
- Indian
- Others (please specify): ……

10. **Did you attend a public / private school?**

- Public
- Private

11. **The name of your school was:**

- ……

12. **The high school country name was:**

- United Arab Emirates
- Iran
- Saudi Arabia
- Qatar
- Others (please specify): …….

Section V

13. **Do you believe it is easier to learn:**

- French before English
- English before French
- Why?

……

……

14. You think it is a necessity to know English because: (Circle as many as apply)

- All jobs require this language
- It is important for communication and social purposes
- It is an international and universal language
- It is a prestigious language
- You don't think it is a necessity to know English
- Other (please specify): …….

15. You think it is a necessity to know French because: (Circle as many as apply)

- All jobs require this language
- It is important for communication and social purposes
- It is an international and universal language
- It is a prestigious language
- You don't think it is a necessity to know French
- Other (please specify): …….

16. In the future, you will send your own children to:

- Arabic-medium school
- English-medium school
- French-medium school

17. **Are there differences in academic performances of English and French educated students?**

- English educated students perform academically better than French educated students.
- French educated students perform academically better than English educated students.
- There are no differences between the two. It depends on the student himself/herself.

18. **Are there differences in the attitudes of English and French educated students?**

- Yes
- No

19. **In your opinion, the advantage(s) of being English-educated students is/are: (Circle as many as apply)**

- You will learn easily French as a second foreign language
- You will have more job opportunities
- You will be more disciplined and organized
- You will be more prestigious than those who don't know it
- Other (please specify): ……

20. **In your opinion, the advantage(s) of being French-educated students is/are: (Circle as many as apply)**

- You will learn easily English as a second foreign language
- You will have more job opportunities
- You will be more disciplined and organized
- You will be more prestigious than those who don't know it
- Other (please specify): ……

Thank you for your help & time. It is much appreciated.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEWS

Interview with Parents

1- What is the first foreign language that your child/children learn at school?

2- Do they learn a second foreign language? If yes, what is it? Are they taking it as seriously as the first foreign language?

3- According to which standards you chose a French/English medium school for your children?

4- If time goes back when your first child was born and you had to decide on which first foreign language he/she should acquire, would you make the same decision?

5- When applying to universities, will you advise them to enroll in English or French medium universities? Why?

Interviews with French Educated Students

1- Do you believe you are a better performer in English or French?

2- Would you consider shifting from a French medium school to an American university?

3- Do you believe there are academic differences between English and French educated students? Justify your answer.

4- Which medium school will you send your children to in the future? Why?

5- If you had to choose your first foreign language, would you make the same decision as your parents did? Why?

APPENDIX C

Report Multiple Comparisons

Report (GPA)

Program Description	Curriculum	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Business Administration	Bacc	7	2.795714	.4681829
	Govt	17	1.741176	1.3133920
	Indian	30	2.910333	.8488308
	Iranian	9	1.711111	.9442119
	Nigerian	4	2.325000	1.0967072
	Total	67	2.405672	1.1087137
Communication and Information Studies	Bacc	1	3.470000	.
	Govt	1	3.050000	.
	Total	2	3.260000	.2969848
Engineering	Govt	2	2.840000	.1979899
	Indian	3	2.706667	.4654389
	Iranian	5	2.738000	.6783583
	Total	10	2.749000	.5094321
English as a Second Language	Govt	1	1.450000	.
	Nigerian	1	2.620000	.
	Total	2	2.035000	.8273149
General Studies	Bacc	1	2.380000	.
	Govt	6	1.923333	1.3121687

	Iranian	1	2.060000	.
	Nigerian	1	2.260000	.
	Total	9	2.026667	1.0519862
Information Technology	Bacc	1	2.270000	.
	Govt	1	2.150000	.
	Iranian	3	1.276667	1.2416253
	Nigerian	5	3.168000	.4221019
	Total	10	2.409000	1.0857302
Interior Design	Bacc	2	3.405000	.0494975
	Govt	1	2.210000	.
	Indian	3	3.530000	.0529150
	Iranian	3	2.753333	.2706166
	Total	9	3.096667	.5059397
Visual Communication	Bacc	2	2.550000	.4242641
	Govt	4	2.527500	.4055757
	Indian	1	3.130000	.
	Total	7	2.620000	.4036500
Total	Bacc	14	2.828571	.4999670
	Govt	33	1.993636	1.1444180
	Indian	37	2.950000	.7923278
	Iranian	21	2.059048	.9715858

	Nigerian	11	2.729091	.7854483
	Total	116	2.481034	.9995341

Report

GPA

ProgramDescrip	NationalityDesc	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Business Administration	.United States of America	1	.000000	.
	Canada	2	3.225000	.2050610
	Egypt	2	2.520000	.9475231
	India	26	3.076538	.6832156
	Iran	10	1.825000	.9603038
	Jordan	2	1.135000	1.6051324
	Lebanon	4	2.237500	.6220062
	Morocco	1	2.750000	.
	Nigeria	4	2.325000	1.0967072
	Pakistan	1	1.720000	.
	Palestine	2	2.825000	1.6192745
	Saudi Arabia	4	1.840000	1.4983324

	Syria	2	2.570000	.8626703
	United Arab Emirates	6	1.385000	1.3154277
	Total	67	2.405672	1.1087137
Communication and Information Studies	Canada	1	3.470000	.
	Palestine	1	3.050000	.
	Total	2	3.260000	.2969848
Engineering	.United States of America	1	2.730000	.
	India	3	2.706667	.4654389
	Iran	4	2.740000	.7832837
	Jordan	2	2.840000	.1979899
	Total	10	2.749000	.5094321
English as a Second Language	Nigeria	1	2.620000	.
	Saudi Arabia	1	1.450000	.
	Total	2	2.035000	.8273149
General Studies	Iran	1	2.060000	.
	Iraq	1	1.660000	.
	Jordan	2	3.525000	.2333452
	Morocco	1	2.380000	.
	Nigeria	1	2.260000	.
	Saudi Arabia	1	.600000	.

	United Arab Emirates	1	.730000	.
	Yemen	1	1.500000	.
	Total	9	2.026667	1.0519862
Information Technology	.United States of America	1	1.350000	.
	Iran	2	1.240000	1.7536248
	Jordan	1	2.150000	.
	Nigeria	5	3.168000	.4221019
	Syria	1	2.270000	.
	Total	10	2.409000	1.0857302
Interior Design	Canada	1	3.440000	.
	France	1	3.370000	.
	India	3	3.530000	.0529150
	Iran	3	2.753333	.2706166
	Jordan	1	2.210000	.
	Total	9	3.096667	.5059397
Visual Communication	Argentina	1	2.850000	.
	Egypt	1	2.250000	.
	India	1	3.130000	.
	Jordan	1	2.680000	.
	Saudi Arabia	2	2.200000	.0565685
	United Arab Emirates	1	3.030000	.

	Total	7	2.620000	.4036500
Total	.United States of America	3	1.360000	1.3650275
	Argentina	1	2.850000	.
	Canada	4	3.340000	.1783255
	Egypt	3	2.430000	.6878953
	France	1	3.370000	.
	India	33	3.085758	.6406980
	Iran	20	2.100500	.9872315
	Iraq	1	1.660000	.
	Jordan	9	2.448889	1.0573841
	Lebanon	4	2.237500	.6220062
	Morocco	2	2.565000	.2616295
	Nigeria	11	2.729091	.7854483
	Pakistan	1	1.720000	.
	Palestine	3	2.900000	1.1523454
	Saudi Arabia	8	1.726250	1.1073512
	Syria	3	2.470000	.6341136
	United Arab Emirates	8	1.508750	1.2908628
	Yemen	1	1.500000	.
	Total	116	2.481034	.9995341