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Status and function of the English language in Qatar: a social semiotic perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives an overview of the role(s) that the English language plays in the Qatari community. Firstly, it reviews the areas displaying the decisive role of the English language in Qatari society through a social semiotic analysis of a set of political cartoons published in the two best-selling Qatari newspapers, Al Sharq (The East) and Al Raya (The Banner), during the period of 2011–2014 in which a flurry of activity, in terms of both economic and linguistic changes, took place in Qatar. Secondly, it discusses the implications that the unequivocal priority given to the English language may have for Arab native speakers in the country by utilizing Foucault's concept of heterotopia. This paper concludes that English has occupied an influential role in Qatari society and has created a sense of estrangement among Arabic native residents of the country.

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1. Introduction: Qatar and the global spread of English

> Stranger in my own land, I see that people don't understand my words. Their garments do not cover their flaws and their glances follow me like a plague. I speak to them in Arabic and they respond in a foreign tongue; English. They laugh all around me and say: uneducated, but am I not in an Arab country? To where should I turn? To the West which sees me as backwards? Or to the people who see me as a rebel? To whom, to where, my country? (Personal Translation)

The preceding words were published by a Qatari blogger who writes under the penname Mimi.[1] Mimi's words begin with disaffection toward the language she wants to use and the tropes that arise because of her choice. With frustration, she notes that when she speaks her native language in her "own" country, the Arabic language, she finds "strangers" responding to her in English and calling her uneducated. Mimi ends her words with a question of belonging, or lack thereof. In her final words, "to whom, to where, my country," the Qatari blogger evokes a feeling of alienation, displacement, and estrangement.

Qatar is the region's most vibrant and diverse country (Forstenlechner and Rutledge 2011). In pursuing the vision of building a knowledge-based Qatari society that relies on innovation to drive the dynamism of the economy, the

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country needed a helping hand. As the indigenous Qatari workforce is small and does not yet contain adequate numbers of people with the full range of required skill sets, a rapid influx of expatriates has been intensively recruited. Expatriates now constitute 88% of Qatar's population. Comprehending the sheer scale of demographic change in Qatar requires imagination, as the aggregate population increased from 676,498 in 2002 to 1,832,903 in 2012. This increase is considered the most rapid demographic change anywhere in the world during that period (Forstenlechner and Rutledge 2011).

With rapid growth comes change, and in the case of Qatar, part of this change centers on language. As in many multicultural places in this world, expatriates from different countries and nationals have signed an undeclared treaty to communicate in English. Over the last 20 years, three main paradigms have dominated the debate regarding the global spread of English. These are World Englishes (Kachru 1990), English as a lingua franca (Seidlhofer 2012), and linguistic imperialism (Phillipson 1992).

While the World Englishes paradigm tends to work from an inclusionary agenda as it attempts to acknowledge the emerging localized varieties of English, it has been nonetheless exclusionary, operating along national and class lines in ways that neglect the struggles over language (Pennycook 2017). In contrast, the English as a lingua franca paradigm has avoided exclusionary emphasis on nation- and class-based varieties, and has opened up a more flexible version of English. Yet, according to O'Regan (2014), the English as a lingua franca paradigm has been hampered by the profound disconnect between the desire to promote English as a lingua franca and the inequitable distribution of such resources in a neoliberal world where English is materialized and appraised as a "volatile" commodity that is being impacted by external factors of market failure such as "currency fluctuations, the threat of terrorism, pandemics such as avian flu or government legislation" (British Council 2006, 3) and hence evaluated to a terrain of competitiveness where individual and societal worth are established. In short, "while the World Englishes approach has framed its position as a struggle between the former colonial center and its postcolonial offspring, the English as a lingua franca approach has located its struggle between so-called native and nonnative speakers" (Pennycook 2017, vii).

Whereas neither of the above-mentioned paradigms engaged with questions of access, inequality, or ideology, a third approach attempted to place questions of power squarely in the picture. Phillipson's (1992) linguistic imperialism examined not only the global spread of English in relation to other languages, but also the role English plays in the broader processes of the global capital dominance, and the presumed homogenization of world culture. For Phillipson, the "acceptance of the status of English, and its assumed neutrality implies uncritical adherence to the dominant world disorder, unless policies to counteract neolinguistic imperialism and to resist linguistic capital dispossession are in force" (2009, 38).

Yet, according to Park and Wee (2014), a "problem of linguistic imperialism's macrosocial emphasis is that it does not leave room for more specific and ethnographically sensitive accounts of actual language use" (16). It has been argued that in order to make the case for linguistic imperialism, Phillipson has to "materialize language" (Holborow 2012, 27), a position that cannot appropriately account for the ways in which English is resisted, or how English users negotiate, alter, and oppose political structures and reconstruct their languages, cultures, and identities to their advantage (Pennycook 2017).

Such scholarly debate over the global spread of English led scholars such as Pennycook (2017) to suggest the failure of the three main paradigms in addressing the fundamental questions of power and inequality in any "adequate" way. Still he argues,

> If we reject linguistic imperialism entirely because of its monologically dystopian approach to language and culture, we run the danger of overlooking central questions of power and inequality. Likewise, the World Englishes and English as a lingua franca frameworks are not prerequisites for an understanding of the diversity of English use around the world, though if we reject them entirely because of their utopian pluralistic visions of diversity we run the risk of overlooking central questions of language variety. (Pennycook 2017, vii)

Instead, he calls to reconstitute the debate over the global spread of English in more inclusive, ethical, and democratic terms "to find a better balance between the deterministic macrosociological framework of linguistic imperialism and more liberal and voluntaristic views of English that failed to adequately address questions of power" (Pennycook 2017, vii). Adopting Pennycook's views means not only attempting to understand the global spread of English in relation to the processes of globalization, modernization, and neoliberalism that operate either with a utopian vision of linguistic diversity or with a dystopian assumption of linguistic imperialism, but also in relation to the struggle over linguistic rights.

To this end, this article reviews the areas displaying the decisive role of the English language in Qatari society through the social semiotic analysis of 10 political cartoons published in the Qatari media, during the period of 2011–2014 in which a flurry of activity, in terms of political, social, economic, and linguistic changes, took place in Qatar. During this period, Qatar had been pursuing its 2030 national vision of building a knowledge-based economy. At the outset of this vision, the state had launched educational and economic reforms. Also, winning the right to host the 2022 World Cup was a major coup for Qatar during the same period. The country had been launching massive infrastructure projects that required recruiting an influx of expatriates from all over the world.

To this end, I argue that these cartoons not only tell the globalized and modernized narrative of the Qatari state's ambitious political and social agendas, but also articulate a storyline of the local embeddedness of English. More

importantly, embedded in these cartoons are not only a governmental utopian vision of establishing a knowledge-based economy anchored in a positivist framework of global incorporation and reform, but also tales of "unequal Englishes" (Tupas 2015) and "worldliness" (Pennycook 1994) that show the worldly character of English and the ways in which the language is intertwined with relations of development, nationalism, popular culture, and education in the Qatari society. The main research question of this study then becomes: How does the macro narrative of establishing a knowledge-based economy attempt to naturalize English language in the Qatari society, and what are the repercussions on the micro level?

This article is structured as follows. I first justify utilizing social semiotics and multimodality analysis as a research tool before I review the areas displaying the decisive role of the English language in the Qatari society as portrayed by 10 political cartoons published in the local media. Finally, I link review to Foucault's concept of *heterotopias* to uncover the repercussions of the unequivocal priority given to the English language in Qatari society through the journey of establishing a knowledge-based economy in the country.

2. Research methodology

2.1. *Social semiotics and multimodality as a research tool*

The field of semiotics was defined by de Saussure as "the science of the life of signs in society" (cited in Hodge and Kress 1988). Social semiotics extended this general framework beyond its linguistic origins to account for multimodal text that refers to "a complex textual construction, in which verbal and visual elements form the integral structural, semantic and functional unity aimed at complex pragmatic influence on the recipient" (Anisimova 2003, 17). Social semiotics theorists, such as Kress and van Leeuwen, have built on Halliday's (1978) argument that the grammar of a language is neither a code nor a set of rules for producing correct sentences, but rather a resource for making meaning by providing "grammars" for semiotic modes (van Leeuwen 2005). Like language, these grammars are considered to be socially constructed, changeable sets of "semiotic resources" for making meaning in a given community.

van Leeuwen (2005) defines the term "semiotic resource" as "the actions, materials and artifacts we use for communicative purposes, whether produced physiologically – for example, with our vocal apparatus, the muscles we use to make facial expressions and gestures – or technologically – for example, with pen and ink, or computer hardware and software – together with the ways in which these resources can be organized. Semiotic resources have a meaning potential, based on their past uses, and a set of affordances based on their possible uses, and these will be actualized in concrete social contexts where their use is subject to some form of semiotic regime" (285). According to

O'Halloran and Smith (2010), multimodal analysis involves analysis of communication in all its forms, but is mainly concerned with texts containing the interaction and integration of two or more "semiotic resources" for the sake of achieving the communicative functions of the text. According to O'Halloran and Smith (2010), the semiotic resources include (1) aspects of speech (intonation and other vocal characteristics), (2) the semiotic action of other bodily resources (gestures and proxemics), (3) products of human technology (carving, painting, writing, architecture, image and sound recording), and (4) interactive computing resources (digital media hardware and software).

To this end, one can argue that political cartoons are bright examples of multimodal texts through which semiotic resources are designed to convey a social or political message. Through the application of social semiotics and multimodality analysis, my overall objective is to identify the particular linguistic and semiotic features of the cartoons to explore the political and social ecosystems surrounding them. Specifically, I attempt to explore the cartoons in terms of their implied social, semantic, and functional loads. I depend on the descriptive dimensions developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) in my analysis. These dimensions are the *representational*, the *interactive*, and the *compositional* features of a multimodal text. I argue that the cartoons manifest all three of these dimensions: they are (1) *representational* in that the message and content of the cartoonist reflects his vision and overall experience of the real world; (2) *interactive* in that the interlocutor's social roles, status, position, and relations in the network of speech acts, mood, and modality reflect his both inner and outer spheres; and (3) *compositional* in that textual construction, including themes and cohesive components, connect the text to situational contexts.

It should be noted here that "Kress and van Leeuwen's method of visual analysis provides essentially a descriptive framework" and "it does not, on its own, offer all that is needed for the sociological interpretation of images" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001, 154). "In studies of the use of social semiotic recourses, visual social semiotics can only ever be one element of an interdisciplinary equation which must also involve relevant theories" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001, 154). As such, to explain the results of the analysis, I had to draw on another recourse, particularly on Foucault's concept of *heterotopia*.

In his 1967 lecture, entitled *Of Other Space*, Foucault captured the notion of *heterotopias* in order to describe "places" and "spaces" of transition which reflect in their existence the "utopia" or ideal time or space. For Foucault, *heterotopias* can be found in physical places such as cemeteries, prisons, and gardens as well as in "heterotopias crisis" such as old age, pregnancy, and adolescence. In this article, Foucault's concept of *heterotopias* helps to provide an understanding of how Arabic native speakers in Qatar react toward the utopia of establishing a knowledge-based economy in the country through which, to a certain extent, English language has been granted primacy in the linguistic hierarchy of the country.

2.2. *Conducting a social semiotic approach to multimodality*

For each cartoon examined in this article, the intersemiotic relationship between visual and verbal modes is analyzed first in *representational* terms. This involves identifying (1) the participants (there are two types of participants involved in every semiotic act: interactive participants and represented participants. The former are the participants in the act of communication – those who speak and listen or write and read, make images or view them. The latter are those who constitute the subject matter of communication – the people, places, and things (including abstract things) represented in and by the speech or writing or image; the participant about whom or which we are speaking or writing or producing the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, 48)) and (2) the narrative structure, identified by a "vector." A vector is defined as a line, often diagonal, connecting participants. It emanates from an "actor" toward a "goal" – the participant to whom or which the action is done. A vector could be a motion (actional) or an eyeline (reactional). For cartoons that did not contain a vector, I examined their conceptual structures that, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), serve to visually "define" or "analyze" or "classify" people in a composition.

As for the *interactive* features of the cartoons which refer to the relationships between the visual, the producer, and the viewer, I first examine the verbal mode of each cartoon through which the cartoonist addresses his readers by making statements and offers, asking questions, or requiring some kind of action from them. Next, the visual mode is examined, through which the cartoonist employs visual techniques, often with verbal support, to clarify his message functions. If applicable, among the visual techniques I analyze in the cartoons are (1) distance (the distance between the viewer and the characters in the cartoons); (2) contact (a particular relationship) created between viewers and the world inside the picture frame through facial expressions and gestures); and (3) point of view (the angles the cartoonist deploys to enhance the audiences' identification and involvement with represented participants).

Finally, I address the *compositional* features of each cartoon by examining aspects related to the layout of the page to determine the extent to which the visual and verbal elements achieve a sense of coherence to the whole unit. If applicable, these include the informative value (whether the elements of the composition are placed on the left or on the right, in the center or the margin, or in the upper or lower part of the picture space or page); salience (the difference between the elements of composition in terms of the degree to which they attract the viewer's attention. This is determined by differences between the elements in terms of one or more of the following: absence or presence of movement, size, amount of detail and texture shown, color contrast, and placement in the visual field); and framing (disconnection or connection of the elements of an image through devices such as lines, empty space, color, shape, etc.).

Regarding the cartoons' source, Giarelli and Tulman (2003) argue, "when methodological issues associated with the analysis of cartoons, such as researcher, cartoonist, and editorial biases, and sample representativeness, are addressed, the analyses yield findings that are credible, reliable, and significant" (12). To this end, I have considered the following questions: Where were the cartoons published? Where is their location (or locations) in the social and physical worlds? Who are the cartoonists and what information do they seek to present? Who are the viewers and what information or needs do they seek? What kind of editorial biases exist in the caricatures?

To understand the conditions in which the cartoons were made, one must go back to the source of where they appeared. Reading this source may also require some appreciation of the target audience. The analyzed cartoons were selected from the two best-selling Qatari newspapers, *Al Sharq* (*The East*) and *Al Raya* (*The Banner*).[2] Both newspapers are privately owned. The Gulf Company owns Al Raya while the owner of Al Sharq is Dar Al Sharq Publishing House. Dar Al Sharq Publishing House's mission states that the publisher's desire is "to produce quality media that satisfy the diversified needs of Qatari society, through objective evaluation and by covering local, regional and global news and distributing published works" (Dar Al Sharq website). In addition, *Al Raya* newspaper declares that its role and responsibility is reflected in the slogan of "from Qatar to the Arabs, and from the Arabs to the whole world … we aim to construct the national awareness among Qatari nationals regarding their own development" (Al Raya newspaper website). By examining the missions and purposes of these publishing entities, it can be argued that the cartoons examined in this study depict the social reality and worldviews of Arabic speakers living in Qatar. Phrases such as "from Qatar to the Arabs" and "construct the national awareness among Qatari nationals" both seem to indicate that the newspapers address what they consider important and critical to Qataris as Arabs, and that the content published is geared toward their needs and interests.

Regarding the cartoonists themselves, both are Qatari nationals. Employed by Al Raya newspaper, Mohammed Abdelatif's Facebook page profile is a cartoon of a Qatari national saluting the Qatari flag. The official website of Abd Alzeez Sadeq, from Al Sharq newspaper, describes him as a "Qatari national who aims to serve Qatar through his cartoons." Coupe (1969) argues that, like all journalists, cartoonists are concerned with the creation and manipulation of public opinion (82). I view both cartoonists as key players in "a mediated filtering system that helps construction and framing of social reality" (Giarelli and Tulman 2003, 12) among Arab speakers living in Qatar. Despite this, it is difficult to capture the audiences' views and see how each cartoon gradually shapes and transforms their opinions before leading to collective actions or reactions.

As for cartoons' selection, during the period of 2011–2014, I have collected and stored 34 physical copies of cartoons that discuss issues of language(s) in

Qatar. Clearly, the number is too big for analysis in a single study. As such, I have downsized the number by determining two main criteria. These are the following: (1) the cartoon makes reference to either Arabic or English languages in Qatar in relation to the processes of globalization and/or establishing knowledge-based economy and building competitive human capital and (2) the cartoon makes reference to either Arabic or English languages in Qatar in relation to linguistic discrimination and struggle for linguistic rights. Applying these criteria has downsized the sample to 10 cartoons for analysis in this study.

3. Analyses and discussion

Cartoon One presented in Figure 1 serves as a starting point for discussion. It consists of a short series of cartoon illustrations in sequence, published on 23 January 2013.

In Cartoon One, the Arabic language is illustrated as a male-represented participant who symbolizes Aladdin, a figure from an Arabian Nights folk story, being "booted" from six societal spheres in Qatar. As the Arabic language reads from the right side to the left, these places are, respectively, the office, the school, the hospital, the restaurant, the market, and, finally, the language is being booted out by the "driver" who represents domestic workers working in Qatari family households. The cartoon has no title; however, the captions imply that, in Qatar, Arab individuals who

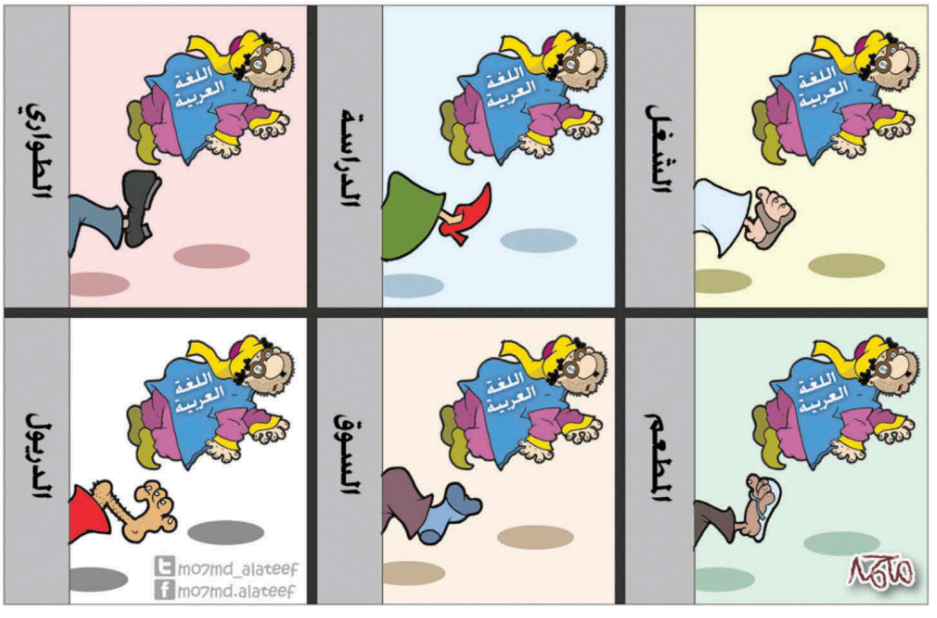

Figure 1. Cartoon One by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

live according to the belief that their native Arab language grants them admission through any door will be ousted from the vital social spheres in the country.

At first, it appears as though the cartoonist is illustrating the Arabic language as a victim: poor Aladdin, thrown out of many places in Qatar's society merely because he speaks Arabic. Aladdin is depicted at a frontal angle, making contact with the viewers and establishing an imaginary relationship with them. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) refer to such pictures as "demand" pictures, through which the represented participants symbolically demand something from the interactive participants. The facial expressions and gestures of the represented participants then fill in what exactly they demand. Aladdin looks pleadingly at the viewers, demanding pity, and may elicit empathy, compassion, and understanding from viewers, regarding his plight. However, the cartoonist also turns the mirror on Aladdin. Aladdin is portrayed as a fat, unshaven male, dressed in old-fashioned attire with thick spectacles, contradicting the conventional heroic image of Aladdin introduced in literature. This suggests that Aladdin himself could be blamed, for not adapting to Qatar's global context. Aladdin's lazy attitude has allowed him to be marginalized and sidelined.

In Cartoon One, six different feet expel the Arabic language from Qatar's social spheres. The feet, from the cartoonist's perspective, belong to the dominant professionals in each sector. Members of the Qatari community will readily recognize shoe styles as well as prejudices toward these different styles. Popular nationality stereotypes in Qatar are identifiable by physical appearance, in particular, fashion and dress. These stereotypes generally depend on gender and ethnicity, and have some basis in reality. As a member of the Qatari society, I interpret the feet as belonging to a Qatari male in the corporate world, a Qatari female in the education sector, a Westerner in the medical sector, a Filipino in a restaurant, an Arab in a local market, and, finally, an "Indian" driver, respectively. Cartoon One cannot be thought of as a whole; rather the "expulsion" of the Arabic language in each sphere must be examined separately. In what follows, my purpose is to offer a mapping of the above-mentioned societal spheres, through analyzing nine cartoons that discuss the place and importance of languages in Qatar as viewed by the local media.

3.1. *The status of the English language in Qatar's workplaces*

Two cartoons discussing the importance of proficiency in English in relation to employment and work promotions are analyzed in the coming lines. I start with Cartoon Two; a single-panel gag, consisting of a single drawing and including a caption, that was published on 7 April 2014.

Cartoon Two is staged in an office where an "adult" represented participant bearing gifts, offers a teddy bear to a "child" represented participant behind the manager's desk and says (Figure 2):

Figure 2. Cartoon Two by Abd Alzeez Sadeq in Al Sharq newspaper.

(1) May you live a long life; the employees congratulate you on your promotion as manager and have sent you some gifts.
(2) Behind the manager's desk, a child wearing the traditional Qatari outfit is sitting with an arrow pointing to him displaying the following message:
(3) "It is not important if the manager is young with no experience, as long as he knows English."

The narrative structure in Cartoon Two is characterized by the arrow that points to the "child" manager. The arrow serves as a vector, unifying elements of the composition, framing an interrogation of the visual text and prompting questions, such as who is playing the active and passive roles? The visual mode of Cartoon Two focuses on the Qatari child. A chocolate bar on the manager's desk, a toy robot on the floor, and a teddy bear are all details drawing in the interactive participants toward the "child" manager. Hence, the Qatari manager child is the most salient element in the cartoon, because his face is foregrounded and because of the other details (e.g., the toys) that bring him into relief against his surroundings.

While the "child" manager's gaze is direct, deliberate, and implies self-assurance, the adult employee is depicted with a potbelly – perhaps a sign of his advanced age and extensive experience – and as hidden behind a teddy bear. The adult employee's facial expression is hidden as well. Since imaginary contact between him and the viewer is intentionally absent, the viewer cannot identify with him. This mysterious man and his actions evoke uncertainty regarding whether he is pleased or displeased, deferential or defiant, etc. Yet, the verbal mode of the cartoonist provides some answers. The cartoonist uses the Qatari dialect to convey his message. The lexical choice of *Tal-Omrak* (your Excellency), for instance, is applicable in cultural situations that require a

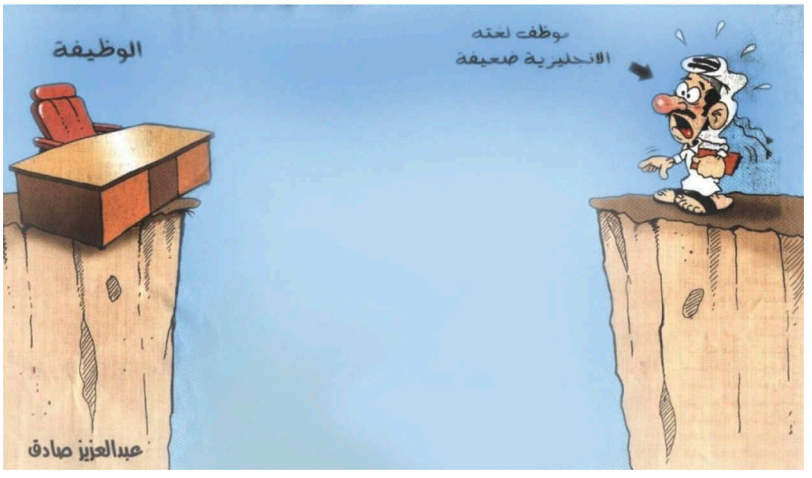

Figure 3. Cartoon Three by Abd Alzeez Sadeq in Al Sharq newspaper.

high degree of respect and consideration toward the addressee. Words such as *Sa-gheer* (Arabic for *young*) and *Kh-ebrah* (Arabic for *experienced*) also consolidate the cartoonist's message about disparity and inequality in the Qatar workplace. The body language of both figures suggests the kind of relationship they have. The "child" sits on a chair, smiling, while the "adult" is concealed behind a teddy bear, implying the dominance of the former and the submission of the latter – a commentary on prejudice toward the Arabic language and toward native speakers in the workplace with insufficient proficiency in the English language. The same cartoonist implies a similar message in Cartoon Three presented next (Figure 3).

Cartoon Three (published 1 April 2014) consists of a single drawing with a typeset caption. In Cartoon Three, an aghast Qatari represented participant is depicted looking at a desk that symbolizes work opportunity, while an abyss prevents him from reaching his goal. An arrow points to the aghast Qatari, indicating that he has "insufficient English language skills."

The vector here is the represented participant's eyeline – the direction of his gaze – which is not directed to the viewers but to the desk. van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2003) refer to such a vector as a "transactive reaction," arguing that it creates a reaction rather than an action. The facial expression of the represented participant then colors the nature of his or her reaction. The Qatari represented participant in Cartoon Three is terrified, as he must leap into the abyss to attain his employment goal.

The informative value of Cartoon Three is recognized through the direction in which the composition must be read. The represented participant is placed on the right, the desk on the left. Right–left placement in societies that adopt right–left transcript creates the "given-new" structure. Elements on the right are considered a

"given," elements on the left are "new." For something to be a "given" means it is something the interactive participants or viewers already know, a familiar departure point for the intended message. For something to be "new" means that it is something to which the viewer must pay attention. The "new" is therefore problematic and represents the information "at the issue" (van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2003, 148).

The framing in Cartoon Three suggests a "disconnection" between the Qatari represented participant and the work opportunity, through the visual metaphor of the abyss. Interactive participants sense that the elements are separated and do not belong together, reflecting the cultural angst about employment and its linguistic perquisites in Qatar. For many Qataris, the process of finding a job has become both dramatic and idiosyncratic. A gap exists between Qataris with insufficient English and the chance of employment. As portrayed in Cartoon Three, Qataris must leap into the abyss, jeopardizing their linguistic character to gain employment.

To explain the relationship between the discursive practices captured in Cartoons Two and Three, and the social practice on the ground, dates of the cartoons' publication need to be considered. Both cartoons were published in April, the month in which Qatar's annual Career Fair is held. The cartoons indicate that English, as perceived by local media, is the main selection criterion for employment in the Qatari society.

3.2. *The status of the English language in Qatar's educational system*

In this section, four cartoons concerned with the proliferation of the English language in Qatar's educational sector are analyzed. I start with Cartoon Four which was published on 18 September 2011, the day before schools reopened in Qatar, under the title *On the Last Night of the School Break* (Figure 4).

The cartoon illustrates the metaphor of a nightmare. The visual mode employs facial expression for its metaphorical purpose. Asleep in a dark

Figure 4. Cartoon Four by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

room, a terrified Qatari student has a nightmare about his English teacher. The teacher says:

(1) NO! NOT AGAIN!! Why are all my students harassing me tonight!!
(2) You are the tenth student who has had a nightmare about me tonight … please wake up, now! I want to go home and have my dinner!
(3) Let me go home and I promise not to teach the curriculum in English.
(4) Between brackets the Arabic transliteration of (I do not mind)!

A special kind of vector is observed in this Cartoon Four. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) refer to the vector formed by a "thought bubble" as *mental process* between two participants, the *senser* and the *phenomenon*. The *sensor* is the participant from whom the thought bubble emanates, while the *phenomenon* refers to the participant whose speech is enclosed by a thought bubble. The oblique protrusion of the thought bubble emanating from the student functions as a vector, which serves to connect participants in the composition, as well as to allow viewers access to the content of the inner mental process of the *sensor* (i.e., the student): trepidation.

The student's eyes are tightly shut – an indication of stressful sleep. He therefore neither makes contact with the interactive participants nor establishes an imaginary relation to them, in which he demands something symbolically. Yet, his gestures of panic and fear suggest that what he demands is defense.

The teacher is code switching between English and Arabic. Although he promises his student not to teach the curriculum in English, his promise is expressed partially in English. Via code switching, the cartoonist demonstrates the role of English in a typical conversation between Arabic speakers. The use of some English in the teacher's promise to his student suggests that he may not completely fulfil his promise, and that English will habitually function as an important element in Qatar's education sector. It is worth noting that in 2003 the Qatari government launched a standard-based educational reform through which the English language was adopted as the medium of instruction in public schools, as well as at Qatar University. The argument was that education in Qatar should be tied to generic policy development, and in this case "English was deemed important for use in the labour market and to prepare students for post-secondary education" (RAND 2007, 10).

Yet, Qatar's former Supreme Education Council[3] fulfilled the teacher's promise on his behalf, a year after Cartoon Four was published. In 2012, the former Supreme Education Council issued a decree declaring Arabic the medium of instruction at public schools.[4] Many viewed the change as an abandonment of the "unsuccessful" Qatar's former Supreme Education Council decision a decade earlier that declares English as the medium of instruction in Qatar's schools and universities. The nightmare of the English language as the

Figure 5. Cartoon Five by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

medium of instruction may be over; it was not, however, without consequence. Cartoon Five conceptualizes the consequences as a recurring nightmare.

Entitled *Schools are to stop teaching mathematics and science in the English language*, Cartoon Five depicts a teacher addressing a curious Qatari parent (Figure 5):

(1) Have you seen this?! Your son is clearly (damaged)!!
(2) I had been making him memorize the English language for two months, when suddenly the curriculum switched to Arabic!!
(3) The poor boy! His (memory) crashed! He looks (mental)!!

I have tried to refresh his memory by pressing Ctrl +Alt+ Del but even that did not work!!

The vector here is bidirectional: it emanates from the stretched arms of the teacher bearing a Qatari student, and formed by the eyeline of the "goal" at whom the action is directed – the curious Qatari parent. As discussed earlier, van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2003) refer to such a vector as a transactive reaction, arguing that it creates a reaction rather than an action and that the precise nature of the reaction is colored by the facial expression of the "goal." The Qatari parent reacts with a stupefied look. Through direct eye contact, the Qatari student establishes an imaginary relation with the viewers. His appearance of malfunction may be interpreted as demanding of "sympathy," or perhaps of a solution to the problem.

The cartoon's verbal mode reveals something about Qatar's former Supreme Education Council's decree that was not made officially explicit.

Cartoon Five was published on 25 October 2012, nearly two months after the start of the academic year in Qatar. It implies that the former Supreme Education Council's decree of adopting the Arabic language as the medium of instruction was rash. The teacher stresses that he spent two months (September and October) trying to make the student memorize English. Yet, the medium of instruction was abruptly interrupted and switched to Arabic.

The word "memorize" implies that English was not being acquired in a natural, second language manner. Memorization implies knowledge without understanding. The comment is that memorizing English, rather than learning it, added to the chaotic language in education policy, disrupting the normal functioning of students. Attempts by teachers to minimize side effects failed. Eventually, the malfunctioning student – the subject of the unplanned language in education policy who memorized English rather than acquired it – will seek to enroll in higher education. The following cartoon portrays a possible resulting scenario.

Cartoon Six, entitled *Qatar's International College Fair* (published 9 November 2013), depicts two Qatari students approaching the entrance gate at Qatar's International College Fair. They are confronted by an Afghan security guard who states (Figure 6):

(1) You are not allowed, gentlemen, unless you pass TOEFL, SAT, IELTS and Barcelona exams, then you might be allowed in!

The vector in Cartoon Six is bidirectional, emanating from the Afghan security guard's stretched arm preventing entry, and from the eyeline of the Qatari represented participants, who react with an alienated gaze. The Afghan

Figure 6. Cartoon Six by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

security guard is using Gulf Pidgin Arabic (Muuhlhaausler 1986), which is a contact language variation used in the Gulf countries as a tool of communication between local citizens and the large Asian labour force in the area. Gulf Pidgin is usually used in situations between non-homoglot speakers for the purposes of fleeting conversations that serve a specific purpose and provide basic information. Its use here suggests that Qataris are provided with the basic and essential information regarding the linguistic regulations of and perquisites for Qatar's education sector but are not allowed to question, challenge or negotiate it.

While the Afghan security guard mentions two English language standardized exams (TOEFL and IELTS) and one math standardized exam (SAT), the fictitious "Barcelona" exam is the cartoonist's style of introducing more sarcasm to the situation. Yet, the use of "Barcelona" here may bear other interpretations. By "Barcelona" the cartoonist refers to the Barcelona football team, which provides a compelling case for globalization. In recent years, the Barcelona football club has grown into a global brand. The club has stated, "our team feeling is global, we will continue to develop and project *el barcelonismo* in the whole world and this will allow us to be a Catalan football club with universal influence."[5] The suggestion is that in order for a Qatari to be allowed entry to any of the world's prestigious universities, they must first become global citizens. On that note, Qatar's first lady, Sheikha Moza, has argued that "in Qatar, we hope to inspire such self confidence in our citizens. We envision that every Qatari will perceive himself as both a Qatari and as a global citizen" (Sheikha Moza, Education a Must for Just Society Speech, 18 March 2005). Yet, local media appear critical of the government's attempt to create global individuals through legitimizing the "other's" language in the name of progress and development. The alienated gazes of the Qatari students in this cartoon indicate a sense of estrangement. Cartoon Seven presented in the following expresses a similar sense (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Cartoon Seven by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

In Cartoon Seven, entitled *What if Ibn al-Haytham was amongst us today?*, the cartoonist recalls the famous scholar Ibn al-Haytham (965–1040), an Arab and Muslim scientist and philosopher who made significant contributions to optics and visual perception and has been described as the father of modern optics. The reader is asked to ponder *Ibn al-Haytham's* living in Qatar's current globalized context. The combination of visual and verbal inputs presents interesting possibilities for interpretation.

Ibn al-Haytham is represented as a baker working in Doha's suburbs, retelling his life story to readers. The imaginary *Ibn al-Haytham* says:

(1) My goal in life was to be a mathematician, architect or an optic scientist…
(2) I have a lot of publications in this regard…
(3) I once discovered the phenomenon of light reflection!
(4) But unfortunately I failed to pass the (TOEFL) exam five times and I could not enter (university).
(5) Instead of being a famous scientist in the Islamic world, I became famous in *Om Goulina* < a Qatari town outside Doha> for my bread.

On the shop window is written:

(1) Al Hassan Ibn Al-hytham and Sons Bakery.
(2) We provide: kho-bez I-ra-ni (Iranian bread), Na-kh-y (Qatari traditional dish of Hummus Beans), Ba-je-la (Qatari traditional dish of boiled Peas), Kara-aeen (Egyptian traditional dish of sheep head, stomach and feet) and Steak.

Although *Ibn Al-Hytham* works in a bakery whose primary purpose is to bake and sell bread, the notice in the shop window indicates that the shop can provide Iranian bread, two types of Qatari cooked dishes, an Egyptian cooked dish, and, finally, a Western dish. This rich menu denotes globalization through food diversity and defines Doha as a global city.

Ibn al-Haytham is represented in rags, suggesting that those who are fluent in English are at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy of Qatari society, while those who lack proficiency in the language are likely to occupy the lowest social strata. His expression reflects his grief. Lines 2 and 3 imply that *Ibn al-Haytham* is a man who learns through experience and is hard working. However, Line 4 indicates that *Ibn al-Haytham* was not granted a place in academia (anywhere), owing to language barriers. Even after five attempts, *Ibn al-Haytham* has failed to achieve the entry requirements. Considering the linguistic demands of study abroad, it is understandable that international universities expect a certain level of proficiency in English in order for international students to be eligible for their courses. But it begs the question of

why the *Ibn al-Haythams* of the world would be denied a place at a university in their own Arabic-speaking country.

3.3. *The status of the English language in health care*

Cartoon Eight (published on 4 May 2014) depicts the spread of the English language in Qatar's health-care system (Figure 8).

Cartoon Eight portrays an Egyptian man[6] (in the green shirt), addressing his Qatari friend in the Emergency Room of a public hospital in Doha. The Egyptian man says:

(1) Relax! Enough of explaining my problem to the doctor!
(2) The doctor does not know (Arabic) and we are 0 level in English.
(3) For the last hour we have been trying to explain to the (on duty) doctor that I have (intestinal gases). No point… enough… put my (intestines) back into my belly…
(4) I will take a Panadol tablet and I will be (fine)!
(5) However, the Qatari man keeps trying to imitate the sound of breaking wind to the confused doctor.

The three main participants (the Qatari man, his Egyptian friend, and the foreign doctor) are represented in a "close-up" shot: every detail of the participants' faces and expressions is visible to viewer, revealing their individuality and personality. An incurious Filipino nurse standing behind the front scene is seen from a distance, encouraging viewers to see her in outline – as a type, rather than as an individual (van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2003, 146).

Figure 8. Cartoon Eight by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

The Egyptian man is using words from both Egyptian and Qatari dialects. Words such as *ashou-ah* (Arabic for "I will be fine") bear relation to the Arabic of the Gulf, while *ma ta-abeshi nafesak* (Arabic for "Relax, my friend") is derived from the Egyptian variation of the Arabic language. This suggests familiarity among Arabic speakers of the Arabic dialects, and the ability of the speakers to switch between them.

Words in brackets are emphasized: Arabic language, English language, doctor on duty, intestinal gases, intestines, and fine. These words facilitate an understanding of the cartoon's theme, which revolves around the dilemma and frustration Arabic-speaking individuals face in public hospitals in Qatar when trying to explain their health problems in a foreign language. The facial expressions of the "confused" doctor and the indifferent Filipino nurse suggest that little that can be done to serve Arabic only speakers in Qatar's public hospitals. It is worth noting that in some cases, such as seeing a consultant, translators are provided for Arab patients. However, the emergency room does not provide translators.

All the attempts by the Egyptian man to calm his Qatari friend down are met by the latter's sustained attempt to make himself understood by the doctor. The Qatari man's endeavors end with the extreme action of taking out his friend's intestines. The Qatari man's extreme action of taking out his friend's intestines could possibly resemble the pressure of acquiring the English language in the Qatari society. The pressure to acquire English has resulted in Qataris taking extreme actions, including recruiting well-paid personal English tutors, enrolling in expensive language courses, recruiting English-speaking nannies, and even sending children to English-speaking countries for a period of time, to acquire the language.[7]

3.4. *The status of the English language in dining places*

Cartoon Nine (published on 27 November 2013) reflects media perception on the spread of English in Qatar's dining places (Figure 9).

A Qatari man is sitting with his Egyptian friend in a restaurant, trying to order a grilled chicken. Using basic code-switching between English, Arabic and Urdu, they try to define grilled chicken for the waiter. While the Qatari man tries to define a "chicken," his Egyptian friend works hard to explain "grilled" to the waiter.

(1) The Qatari man says, "A bird no fly," (imitates the clucking of a chicken) "a sister of Donald duck. Its body looks like a pillow. It has two legs and three fingers in each."
(2) Explaining "grilled," the Egyptian man says: fire, very hot, *bahaut gharmee* -very hot- in Urdu, let it sleep inside hill, Doha summer, sizzling.

Figure 9. Cartoon Nine by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

(3) The cartoonist concludes his caricature with the title: This is typical of what happens when you do not speak (English) and choose to dine in a restaurant in Qatar.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, 72), narrative images may contain secondary participants, participants related to the main participants not by mean of vectors, but in other ways. They refer to such participants as "circumstances" and argue that they could be excluded without affecting the fundamental narrative. Cartoon Eight consists of a short series of cartoon illustrations, in sequence. In the first four illustrations (right to left), a Qatari and his Egyptian friend are represented trying to order a grilled chicken to an unseen character. In the fifth illustration, a waiter appears. The cartoonist concludes his caricature in the sixth illustration, with the statement, "this is typical of what happens when you do not speak (English) and choose to dine in a restaurant in Qatar." In this case, I would interpret the represented participants' actions of addressing unseen circumstances (the waiter) through their hands and facial gestures as a vector.

The men in the cartoon use three languages, all at an elementary level. The facial expression of the waiter, however, suggests that it is only acceptable to take orders communicated by an advanced level of English. An elementary level in English affords the speaker no functional ability. He or she may list objects and be able to say a few memorized words, but communication is limited. The cartoon implies that living in Doha requires a more advanced level of English. With an advanced level, a speaker may function well in a second language environment. He or she will be able to understand and engage in conversations. At an advanced level, the speaker is equipped with a vocabulary and syntax native English speakers can understand.

3.5. *The status of the English language in the market*

Here I analyze a cartoon that specifically clarifies how the English language enjoys a privilege in Qatar's local markets, through analyzing Cartoon Ten, which was published on 6 April 2013 (Figure 10).

Cartoon Ten is entitled *No English … No Shopping*. A TOEFL Egyptian teacher addresses a Qatari (who is crying with joy), congratulating him:

(1) The Arabic transliteration of (a thousand congratulations).
(2) The TOEFL Egyptian teacher switches back to the Arabic language to say, "I mean *Mabrook*" (the Arabic for *congratulations*).
(3) Finally, you passed the TOEFL exam!! Now you can go anywhere you desire in Doha, whether it is a restaurant or a car-washing station. You will be fine.

Cartoon Ten is staged in a classroom, where an Egyptian teacher grants his student a certificate for the TOEFL exam, endorsed with a red ribbon, denoting achievement (red is a salient color, making the TOEFL certificate stand out). The vector here is bidirectional, emanating from the stretched arms of the Egyptian English teacher (actor) and formed by the eyeline of the Qatari student (goal). It is therefore a transactive reaction process, through which the Qatari student as a "goal" reacts by "excessive happiness."

The title of the cartoon is derived from the idiom "No-Money-No-Funny." The cartoonist makes the statement that whereas a lack of money may be a problem for shoppers anywhere in the world; in Qatar, the difficulty is lacking an English linguistic repertoire. The cartoonist promotes – in a critical and ironic manner – the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) as the best solution to cope with Qatar's situation. His approach is consistent with the argument that "those learning English do so as a means of empowering themselves and widening their range of communication possibilities" (Berns et al. 1998, 279). This renders English

Figure 10. Cartoon Ten by Mohammed Abdelatif in Al Raya newspaper.

not only good for education, communication, and business, but also a good business itself (Pennycook 1994, 154).

4. Conclusion

I conclude my social semiotics and multimodality analysis by calling upon Foucault's concept of *heterotopia* in attempt to answer the main research question of this study: How does the macro narrative of establishing a knowledge-based economy attempt to naturalize English language in Qatari society, and what are the repercussions on the micro level?

As discussed earlier, Foucault captured the notion of *heterotopias* in order to describe "places" and "spaces" of transition which reflect in their existence the "utopia" or ideal time or space. As such, *heterotopias* relate to notions such as utopia and dystopia. Russell argued, "Utopia is a place where everything is good; dystopia is a place where everything is bad; *heterotopia* is where things are different – that is, a collection whose members have few or no intelligible connections with one another" (1996, 15). In concrete terms, a *heterotopia* is a real space that is produced in the midst of a utopian ideal, and it contains undesirable bodies to make a real utopian space possible. In this study, the real is represented in cartoons while the disruptive real is presented through humor. I have a broad understanding of Foucault's concept of *heterotopia* as a disruptive force that does not oppose the immanent utopia in some form of a binary sense, but undermines and shatters it.

Foucault captured the *heterotopia*'s reflection of utopia in the example of a mirror, as the following quote illustrates (enumerated sentences in the following quote are to be elaborated upon in the analysis that follows):

> The mirror is, after all, **(1)** a utopia, since it is a placeless place. **(2)** In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a **(3)** heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of **(4)** counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and **(5)** to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely **(6)** unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (Foucault 1967, 3)

In Qatar, the political activities of creating "difference" and "otherness," by hosting huge numbers of expertise, outnumbering locals to help establish a knowledge-based economy, created a utopian vision that forced many Qataris

to capture Foucault's *heterotopia*. The macro narrative of building a knowledge-based economy that aims to create competitive human capital created **(1)** a utopian vision that grants English language primacy in the linguistic hierarchy of the country. **(2)** In its mirror, native Arabic speakers in the country capture a **(3)** linguistic *heterotopia*[8] that **(4)** counteracts their accustomed image as Arabs. While they are trying to **(5)** reconstitute themselves, they feel **(6)** unsettled, knowing that their image in the mirror is unreal.

Between the "unreal" utopia and the "real" *heterotopia*, many Arabic native speakers in Qatar are confined to a lesser life, as they face varied spatial and temporal disruptions that imaginatively interrogate and undermine the formulations of their linguistic character. Their "linguistic" *heterotopias* contest the space in which they live; a utopia of otherness that has been created for them to live in, through which they are compelled to step into the space of a utopia and fit in by adopting a different language. This out-of-space experience through which Arabic native speakers in Qatar attempt to see themselves from a different perspective – through another language – produces a feeling of estrangement. On entering a "linguistic" *heterotopia*, Arabic native speakers in Qatar reflexively recognize discomfort with the English language. A discomfort that reminds us of Mimi's words mentioned at the very beginning of this article. A feeling of estrangement that policymakers in the country should not devalue or simplify, rather deal with to enact solutions.

Notes

1. Source: https://mimizwords.wordpress.com/2010/11/08/غريبٌ-في-بلادي/.
2. According to the Araboo website: http://www.araboo.com/dir/qatari-newspapers.
3. Replaced by the Ministry of Education and higher education in 2014.
4. There are some results of this law being implemented. Yet, discussing them is not the point of this study. The thrust of this study is to identify the repercussions of the state's language policy as portrayed by the local media.
5. Source: Laporta: "El sen-timento barcelonista es global.
6. In Cartoon Eight, as well as in others analyzed in this article, the cartoonist portrays the main character as Qatari and the sub-character as Egyptian. The Egyptian sub-character is identified through his dialect. There are two possible explanations for the sub-character being Egyptian. First, Egypt occupies a position of primacy within the body of the Arab nation. It is common for Arabs to refer to Egypt as the "big sister," with all the responsibilities of an elder sibling toward her younger kin. Second, it is an indication of the cartoonist's generation. In the 1970s and 1980s, Egyptians were among the main nationalities building the newly independent Qatar. Egyptians were teachers, doctors, judges, and consultants, among many other professions needed in the Qatari society at the time. Although Egyptians still function in these professions in the Qatari society, they are now outnumbered by other many nationalities.
7. In South Korea and China, the pressure to speak English like a native speaker has led to tongue operations known as "lingual frenectomy" for better English pronunciation.
8. By linguistic heterotopia, I refer to the linguistic knowledge required in spaces of otherness.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

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