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ENGL 123

### New meaning of literacy

From ancient time people divided themselves to two categories. They are either literate or illiterate. Literacy used to mean the ability to read and write, but there is more to literacy than it used to be. In my opinion reading books is still a critical part of our lives. However, standards of literacy went higher in the past ten years. I believe being multilingual is like a coin with two completely different sides. The two sides represent the advantages and disadvantages of being knowing a foreign language and operate the computer. Some of the people who have the ability to use more than one language think that mastering two or more languages, and have the knowledge to operate the computer make them more refined. Being knowledgeable of your surroundings and the world is a useful tool. Also getting up to date on technology and reading in a foreign language can help you to be a better reader and writer in any language.

Literacy has changed. In Saudi Arabia literacy has a new meaning. Also, the companies have a higher standards when it comes to jobs. “Illiterate” nowadays, describes the people that don’t know how to operate الحاسب الألي or speak اللغة الانجليزية. If you don’t know how to operate the computer or speak English language your chance in getting a job is very slim. These high standards have been sat by the private companies in Saudi Arabia. In my opinion, most of the people in Saudi Arabia are living or studying to meet with this high standards. I believe that the ability to speak English is the best way to communicate with the world. In the past the people

used to go to المتخصص to help them write a letter or to ask for advice. While now a day people have programs to help them, and can send it by e-mail to be checked.

The importance of getting updated to newest technology and to have the ability to communicate with the world is considered highly literate. The level of literacy is not measured by how many books you read or how many books you write. If you read or write many books that only will mean that you are a very good reader or writer. In the other hand if you do not know anything about technology you can be considered أمي because technology has an essential connection between knowledge and communication. For instance, writing and reading are ways of communication between the author and the reader. Technology took the same concept and made it bigger.

However, the other side of the coin. For instance, some people in Saudi Arabia believe that speaking English make them look classy. Therefore they think that العربية او اللغة العربية is an antique language that only exist because of Islam. In my opinion, English language plays a crucial part in Saudi Arabia, because we do not live in this planet alone. Also, Allah commanded us to learn foreign languages and to get to know each other. I believe that learning new ways of communicating does not give us the right to kill our mother tongue. In my opinion, if we have a good knowledge of our mother tongue. that can give us a competitive-edge in any other language we want to learn.

On the other hand, some people fight for the opportunity to kill the foreign tongue in Saudi Arabia. Almost of them are ignorant and illiterate people who have pride of their linguistic heritage. I believe they are highly literate, but most of the people call them illiterate because they hold the tradition of the mother tongue. The competition between two different languages in one mind is similar to a civil war in one country. They would fight all the time until one of them kills

the other. If someone asked me which one of the languages I will use as my main way to communicate with others? I would reply simple by saying whatever work in the minute. I will never abandon my mother tongue because that what defines me as multilingual. If I abandon my mother tongue, I will be transformed from a multilingual to a monolingual. That means that I am not considered as highly literate as I was before. In my opinion my mother tongue is the core of my education.

I had only thought if English language as useful tool when I travel until my tenth birthday. My first encounter with English and computers was when I was ten years old. My family is a traditional family that only reads. And they don't believe in technology or the benefits of internet or any kind of technology. With that being said my mother always screams at me when she sees me watching T.V. Yet, my brother has all the credit to change their minds. He gave me his old P.C. I was very excited but it was in English. I did not know that I could change it to Arabic with a push of a button. I am glad I did not know how because that was my gate to English. I started learning English by reading some English books my brother had when he was studying English. I used his dictionary and climbed my way to understand the words without knowing how to pronounce them. I trained myself to recognize the letters and memorized the meaning. Then, I started using the computer, but I was not sure what to do with it. I applied to an institute to learn English and computer for one month on the summer of 2003. I spent my summer studying English, discovering my computer, and surfing the internet for the first time in my life. The computer started to get me away from my books, that what my mother noticed. What I really did was I started downloading books from the internet and reading it instead of buying them from the bookstore. After the summer ended I was back in school my grades were skyrocketing. I was not allowed to use the computer during school period. Then my father

noticed that I am spending my allowance in English books, so he increased my allowance. I did not have any friends other than my cousins that I go to their house every Wednesdays to play with them (the first day of the weekend in Saudi Arabia was Wednesday at that period of time ). After a couple of years, my father got me a new computer, and it was a laptop. After a while, my father started showing some interest in computers and the usages of computer. He asked me about the computer that he gave me I was very excited that I gave him books about computer and how computers are effecting the world.

Everything has changed before I left Saudi Arabia, I brought my laptop to my father and I put the laptop he gave me and I said, "I am going to America to study and I want you to use this computer, so I can call you and talk to you and see you on the webcam." At first I did not know what to expect from him. Now my father has all kind of poets, writers, and scholars as his friends on Facebook, and more followers on Twitter than I have ever imagined. Also, my mother did the same thing. In fact they are ahead of me in technology and knowledge.

To sum up briefly, being a multilingual has a lot of advantages, but it also has disadvantages, if you ignored your native language. The only thing that you can benefit from my story is that time changed but personality never changed. Even that my father started using technology three years ago, he still doing everything better than me. I guess I will never do anything better than him. I am very proud of my family because they taught me how to love reading and gave the opportunity to be me.