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Globalisation: The Threatening Tool to the Egyptian Identity and Sense of Nationalism

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Abstract: Globalisation is a term that defines a diversity of accelerating economic, political and cultural processes that are rapidly altering our familiarity of the world (35). Scholars have intensively examined the impact on globalisation on –both- the economic and political aspect. However, the cultural dimension of globalization which explores the expansion of cultural flows across the globe has not been thoroughly examined. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to critically assess the impact of globalisation on a modern nation-states' culture. Taking Egypt as a case study, the paper will argue that the Egyptian culture has been negatively affected by globalisation which was noticeable in the declining role of Arabic language and the highly westernised identity among youth that slowly oppressed the authentic Egyptian identity. The paper will be divided into four sections. The first section will introduce the concept of culture and globalisation, in addition, theory of social constructivism by Alexander Wendt will be utilized from a top-down approach to explain how the values of globalisation trickled down into Egyptian society. The second section will explain the negative impact of globalisation on Egypt. The third section will tackle the alternation of the Egyptian identity and language into a globalized modern identity. Finally, the fourth section will draw analysis of the aforementioned with respect to the chosen theory.
Keywords: Cultural globalisation, Social Constructivism, Egypt, Westernised identity, Bilingualism, Cultural imperialism

1 Introduction

Globalisation is a term that defines the on-going process of the world getting together by interaction and integration. It is a term that defines a diversity of accelerating economic, political and cultural processes that are rapidly altering our familiarity of the world (35). Defining the afore-mentioned types of globalisation, the paper starts by explaining Economic globalisation. The term 'Economic globalisation' means an expanding mutual integration and interdependence of world economies as a result of cross-border trade of commodities and speedy expansion of technologies (36). This type of globalisation is a result of vast spread of technology and technological advancements (36). It must be stated that globalisation also has an impact on Politics, especially domestic politics (Gourevitch, 1978 as cite in Berger, 2000). On the other hand, it has a huge effect of the expansion and growth of global political system.

Two groups of scholars were classified after reviewing the literature, scholars as Amin (2001) and Frank (1966) argued that globalisation represents domination over nation-state by controlling international financial trade. This has been seen as key-element in reducing local provincial authority (Brown & Lauder, 1996 as cited in Ginsburg &Megahed, 2011). In addition, Block and Cameron (2002), saw globalisation as another form of imperialism and expansion of Western hegemony. Neuland& Hough (1991), also stated that world economy had been united and cohesive ever since globalisation expanded and because of that the role of regionalisation has been diminished (20). The termregionalisation is an increase of economies of countries in a region (27). Keet (1998) supported the aforementioned claim by arguing that globalisation as a process is

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not complete as it can be opposed by regional integration –regionalism- (27) as cited in (31).

Another group of scholars as Brittan (1998), opposed the aforementioned scholarly claims by arguing that globalisation is a positive process that leads to economic increase in developed countries without increasing poverty rates in developing countries. He further provided example to support his claim by referring to the improvement of economic situation in Asian countries (Brittan 1998, as cited on Mostert, 2003). In addition, Darling-Hammond & Lieberman (2012), glorified globalisation benefits on country's economic growth and social development. Kelly (2009) and McLauren (2007) agreed with the aforesaid claims and sided positively with globalisation.

As a result of the previous scholarly debate, a lack of research was founded concerning the impact of globalisation on culture. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the negative impact of globalisation on the Egyptian culture. The paper argues that the Egyptian culture has been negatively affected by globalisation which was noticeable in the declining role of Arabic language and the highly westernised identity among youth which slowly oppressed the authentic Egyptian identity.
Cultural globalisation has been a core of controversy to many scholars; for instance Tomlinson (1999 as cited in Movius, 2010) considered the importance of including the cultural aspect when examining the impact of globalisation. Hence, Giddens (1990) came up with a definition for globalisation as "intensification of worldwide social relations'' (Giddens 1990, as cited in Movius, 2010). Thus, Giddens (2010) view globalisation as a speedy spread of modernity.

2 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

This sections deals with the main concepts of the research and gives a brief definition of these concepts. The conceptual framework defines the concepts globalisation, culture, cultural globalisation, nation-state and the authentic Egyptian identity.The term globalisation cannot only be defined from an economic perspective, but social, cultural and political perspective must be taken in consideration (24). Thus, the term can be defined as the process of unifying different cultural values, social and economic systems, making the world rather a small village (Hutton & Giddens, 2001 as cited in Elsherif, 2006). While the term culture comes from Latin origins –cultura- which mean cultivate (Vesajoki, 2002). The term culture will be utilized as a set of traits practiced and shared among individuals, those traits are a complex of behaviours which has been developed by human race with time (30). Meanwhile, the term cultural globalisation is defined as the cross-border, where an idea or technological developments are exchanged and absorbed among the world (21). As for the term nation-state, the paper utilizes it as a territorial political sovereign community with an organized government (34). Lastly, the paper defines authentic identity as ones' distinctiveness from anything or anyone, without external factors that contribute in altering some of its' common traditions and principles. 16).

Social constructivism theory is utilized to explain how the values of globalisation expanded and trickled down into Egyptian society. Also, the theory emphasizes on the importance of culture in an attempt to understand what happens in society and therefore construct knowledge based on it (29). The theory relies on three basic assumptions: Reality, knowledge and learning. First, reality for constructivists is constructed through human activity (25). To them, reality cannot be discovered but rather constructed. Secondly knowledge, to social constructivist knowledge is also a human product and culturally constructed process (Ernest, 1999; Gredler, 1997; Prat&Fladder, 1994 as cited in Kim, 2001). Meaning that through interactions, human beings create meaning to the environment they live in (25). Lastly learning, it is a social process that does not only take place within individual interaction but rather a mutual process that takes place within external factors as well (McMahon, 1997 as cited in Kim, 2001).

3Declining Role of Arabic Language

Globalisation had a major negative impact on the role of Arabic language in Egyptian society; especially its' educational system. One of the factors that contributed in the process of globalisation of the Egyptian educational system is the lack of unity and clarity of the systems' philosophy (Ibrahim, 2010 as cited in Barakat& Brooks, 2016). Consequently and due to the fact that English has become a global language (Barakat& Brooks, 2016), American and private schools widely spread throughout Egypt (Cochran, 2014 as cited in Barakat& Brooks, 2016). This growth and dominance of English language is fuelled by the advantages that English offers to its' speakers (Alfehaid, 2014). These advantages facilitate and assist people who are familiar with the language and can readily use it. Due to that expansion use of English around the world, according to Crystal, (2003 as cited in Alfehaid, 2014) it had reached a high status in more than seventy-five countries. Meanwhile, according to the Egyptian Ministry of Education (2014), private schools constitute about 47% of the overall system; while public schools compromise the remaining 53% (8). Those private schools can be defined as aforeign scholastic system thatis different than the system implemented in Egypt's public schools by the Egyptian Ministry of Education (EME) (Barakat& Brooks, 2016). The highly competitive salaries for teachers (Scott, 2007 as cited in Barakat& Brooks, 2016) and the youths'

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exposition to technological advancements in a way that portrayed the Western culture as superior over their own culture was an opportunity for private schools to expand and spread in Egypt (8). Given that the official language of instruction is English;those schools succeeded in implementing their common static goal which is to deliver high-quality American educational style (Orr, 1976 as cited in (8). Consequently, the paper can conclude that due to the aforementioned factors an integration of culture is established between the western culture and the host country (8) causing a decline in the role of Arabic language in comparison with the English language.

4 WesternisedIdentitiesamong Egyptian Youth

According to Vesojoki (2002), the term identity is seen to be the feeling of belonging, continuity, identification and acceptance that an individual experience and feel within a group. (5), argued that identity –just like language- is a collective treasure not just a culture belonging. This treasure was discovered to be fragile and in a continuous need to be preserved or else, it could be easily lost (5). However, with the new facilitated technological advancements, Television satellites and Internet have turned to be modern-day essentials (3). A television for instance, delivers the same purpose in an occidental than it would do in an oriental (Peter, 2000) as a result, homogeneity of cultural view arose. Those means of communication had a strong influence to the extent that an alternation and shift in the normal traditional means of education occurred. Consequently, a negative impact on social bonds and deterioration of parent-child relationship was a key result (3). Therefore, dual eastern and western values and behaviours are currently common among youth (3), such as the quality of music being listened to and the chosen books to be read –not in their mother tongue language-.

After stating the analysis the paper can conclude by first introducing the main assumptions of the research and then relating it to the chose theory –social constructivism-. The paper came to two main assumptions of the negative impact of globalisation on the Arabic language and the identity, according to (10), the demand for non-English speakers which are currently seen as low skilled workers decreased. On the contrary, English speakers are highly demanded and have more job opportunities and facilities abroad (10). Having the chance to travel and work abroad, English speakers graduates' affiliation will be affected as a huge shift in employment rates will consequently be shifted towards global companies.

5 Social Constructivism and Globalisation

According to Adler (2002) and other social constructivists, interaction and communication are crucial in the international system. Meaning that, common values and norms are acquired through interaction. This theory aims to study the formation and development of communities –particularly- identity and value changes. Since norms and rules are key element of study of the theory; language and identity comes to the fore of theory as well. In addition, the theory mainly focuses on two assumptions; one of which is the structure of human association and how it is determined by shared ideas. Secondly, how those shared ideas construct what is called, identity. Relating this to the argument and the aforementioned analysis the paper can conclude that, nowadays, the notion of private schools has altered public schools. Meaning that it has been common among Egyptian society that English language is the dominant key element, making it more interesting among youth to investigate more of the 'Western world' and therefore, adapting some of the wests' traditions. This westernised phenomena –idea- has greatly expanded, targeting Youth. As a result of these westernised ideas among society and from a social constructivist point of view the paper can conclude that these westernised notions and ideas acts as a threats to the concept of 'identity' in general and specifically the 'Egyptian Identity'. Having being the most common among youth, the authentic Egyptian identity will consequently be altered by westernised norms and traditions. Lastly, the paper can conclude that from a social constructivist perspective, the declining role of Arabic language and the highly westernised identity among Egyptian youth are results of the impact of globalisation.

The paper also recommends further research to be conducted upon the impact of globalisation on Arab youth affiliation.

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