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French Departments in Gulf Universities in Accordance with the Vision 2030: Reality, Challenges, and Prospects

Dr. Nada Mohammed Jameel Brengy¹

¹ Associate Professor of French Language and Literature, European Languages and Literature Department, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, King Abdulaziz University. Email: nbrnji@kau.edu.sa, +966505682539

Abstract

French is the sixth most commonly spoken language in the world and the second most taught language in the European Union. There are 274 million people who speak French worldwide. Since the introduction of the term 'Francophone' in 1880 and the establishment of the International Organisation of Francophonie in 1970, countries that use French as an official language and French colonies have exerted their utmost efforts to revive and globally spread French. The French language has been spreading throughout the Gulf countries since the end of the twentieth century, on personal and academic levels. Saudi universities have established French-language departments in Jeddah and Riyadh. Gulf universities in Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Qatar have also established French departments to teach French as a foreign language or as an elective course. This study discusses the prospects and challenges of the French departments in some Gulf universities in view of the educational objectives of the 2030 Vision and the language policy in the Gulf states. It analyses their curricula and identifies the most important challenges facing these departments, including finding job opportunities for the graduates, competition in the labour market, and the weakness of certain students. The research will make suggestions as to the prospects for the future of the French departments in the Gulf States.

Keywords: French Departments, the Gulf Region, Curricula of The French Language Departments, Gulf Universities, the GCC' 2030 Visions, Future of French in the Gulf States, Challenges and Opportunities of the French Language

Introduction

Being the sixth most commonly spoken language in the world, and the second most learned language in the European Union, the French language is spoken worldwide by 274 million people. Countries that use French as a first language and French colonies have made very important implementations to revive and globally spread French. In fact, French is spread over all continents: Europe, Africa, North and South America, and Asia.

In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the Sultanate of Oman, the Kingdom of Bahrain and Qatar), the French language was widespread at the end of the twentieth century, on personal and academic levels. Universities, colleges, centres, schools, and private institutes began to teach French as a foreign language. In Higher Education, Universities in the GCC states

established French units, sections, centres, programmes, and departments to teach elective or mandatory French courses.

This research will try to highlight the position of the French language in the GCC and focus on these questions: What are the reality, challenges, and prospects of educational bodies in Higher Education, and what is the future of the French language, in the GCC countries?

The study will mainly focus on the French Departments in the Gulf universities which offer programmes, Bachelor's or Master's degrees in French or in translation. It will also emphasise some French sections, units or faculties that offer French as elementary or elective courses. It will also analyse their curricula, in accordance with the educational objectives of the 2030 Vision in the Gulf states and identify the most important challenges facing these departments, including finding job opportunities for graduates, competition in the labour market, and the weakness of certain courses. Because of the rarity of studies that have covered the subject, the authenticity of the official websites of the French educational bodies, and the need to check the local newspaper which publishes the latest news about the presence of French language in the Gulf, the study had to collect information from several websites, so the notes will include a lot of website addresses. Moreover, the news articles from French and Arabic newspapers have been translated into English.

The World Education Forum held on May 19–22, 2015, in Incheon (the Republic of Korea), set out a new vision for education for the next 15 years. During this forum organised by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment (UN WOMEN) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 120 ministers, 1,600 participants including heads and members of delegations, representatives of agencies and civil society, official organisations, teachers, youth and the private sector from 160 countries adopted (on May 21, 2015) the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 which constitutes 'the commitment of the education community to Education 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognising the important role of education as a main driver of development'. (1)

Within the context of the Incheon Framework for Action Education 2030, educational quality is a central goal, so the GCC states started to implement 'Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education 2030' in 2016. All the GCC countries are currently implementing their own 2030 Vision, to undergo a fundamental transformation in the education system to meet the needs of the labour market by establishing a stronger higher education system.

The Ministries of Education in these countries formed plans and defined stakeholders to match the outcomes of universities' departments with the needs of the job market. In the Momentum for Education 2030, the GCC states have used two systems for the management of higher education: either a joint government department for university and pre-university education as in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, or the establishment within national governments of Ministries or Departments of Higher Education, as in Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE.

At the 7th Gulf Education Conference, 'Education for Work,' which began on February 21, 2018, at the University of Business and Technology (UBT) in Jeddah for the second successive year, Hameed reported that the Saudi Minister of Education Ahmed Al-Issa, said:

'Universities should keep pace with development plans and visions in our countries. For example, in the Kingdom, they must adapt their plans and programmes in accordance with Vision 2030's targets of raising the number of women at work to 30 percent, increasing local content in oil and gas to 75 percent and reducing the unemployment rate to 7%.'

Each country of the GCC has established its own vision: in 2008, Bahrain published 'The Economic Vision 2030', and Qatar 'Qatar National Vision 2030', Kuwait 'Kuwait 2035 Vision' and the UAE 'UAE 2021 Vision' in 2010, and finally Saudi Arabia with its 2030 Vision strategy issued in 2016. All these visions establish a relation between higher education and the economy. The GCC countries 2030 Visions can be found in the

official sites of each country as follows: Bahrain Economic 2030 Vision (2), Kuwait 2035 Vision (3), Oman 2040 Vision (4) Qatar 2030 Vision (5), Saudi Arabia 2030 Vision (6), and UAE 2021 Vision (7).

To highlight the relation between the Higher Education and the labour market, Wilkens specified that:

‘Higher Education plays an important role in society because it creates new knowledge, transfers it to students, and promotes creativity and innovation.’ Universities ‘are key actors in the production and dissemination of knowledge through research and instruction, and therefore bear a unique social responsibility for fostering values, citizenship, and civic engagement. They are also products of human capital, which is demanded by employers in the labour market and critical to social and economic advancement. When the quality and appropriateness of human capital produced align with the needs of society, employment opportunities are expanded, and economic actors are better able to achieve their goals’ (Wilkens et al., 201).

On the other hand, the Declaration of Incheon emphasises:

‘the relation between the fact of gathering and using evidence about changing skills which demand to guide skills development, reduce disparity and respond to changing labour market and societal needs and contexts, as well as to the needs of the ‘informal economy’ and rural development’ (Incheon Declaration, p. 41)’

This relationship between Higher Education and the visions of GCC states is closely related to the research for many reasons: first it will help to evaluate the reality of the French departments, sections, units, centres and programmes in GCC states, and it will lead the study to wonder if the Gulf labour markets really need the graduates of these French educational bodies.

This question is very important and crucial because French is facing several threats these days, so the research will analyse the needs of the labour market for the French specialisation, to study the opportunities for the French educational bodies in the Gulf region, and to explore the challenges that face the French Departments in Gulf Universities.

Indeed, the French government is trying to confront all the fears about the future of the French language by spreading it, and by encouraging people over the world to learn French. On May 29, 2017, Gaël Nofri published an article in *Le Figaro* titled ‘Francophonie: Is French still a language of the future?’ in which he analysed the human, geographical and political reality of French language. He expected that ‘the French-speaking world will be strongly influenced by its evolution to nearly 800 million speakers by 2050 or nearly 9% of the world’s population, compared to only 3.5% today, and it will be the language of youth’.

On March 21, 2018, Laurent Martin published in ‘*the carnet de la recherche*’ of the History Committee of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, ‘*Politiques de la culture*’, a communication entitled ‘Cultural diversity and the defence of the language by France: the stakes of a modern external cultural action’ on the occasion of the Franco-Japanese forum held on January 16, 2016, in the auditorium of the Franco-Japanese House in Tokyo. During the forum, which was under the scientific direction of Mariko Oka-Fukuroi (Aoyama Gakuin University), he said:

‘The defence of the French language has long been the central pillar of France’s external cultural action and continues to be an essential element through the action of the cultural network abroad, one of the most important in the world. However, in recent years, a reflection has been emerging in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other governmental institutions to broaden this action and focus on cultural diversity and multilingualism, whether through audiovisual outside France, cultural diplomacy at UNESCO, the agency France-Museums or the various instruments of the Francophonie’.

In fact, the acquisition of a foreign language is a vital need for all mankind, and it allows them to communicate, to interact, to do business, to exchange information, to express opinions, feelings, and desires. The opening dialogue between cultures, civilisations, and religions requires us to learn, acquire and master many languages.

The French language is considered as one of the most important languages because it is the language of knowledge, culture, literature, poetry, art, philosophy and science. Learning French is a very important factor in communication, because of its cross-cultural influences and presence in the world. More than 24 countries on five continents use it, and it is an official language of work in many international organisations. In the 21st century, economy, knowledge, and languages help to create vibrant and progressive societies. Moreover, the brochure of Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi confirms that 'the French education system is known for its high level of rigorous critical thinking and debating skills, which play a significant role in developing future pioneers and leaders.' (8)

Learning French in the GCC states will open new academic and professional horizons for the students in the future, and income sources for the Gulf region, but let us face the truth and admit that hundreds of students (male and female) have graduated from the French Departments in the Gulf countries, but few of them have found good opportunities in the labour market. Some of them have expressed, through the local press and the social media, their fear, and their disappointment, others their aspirations to master the French language.

Badr Al Aikail replied to the complaint concerning the unemployment of the French Department graduates of the Faculty of Language and Translation at King Saud University (KSU). He defended 'the government which offered them all the occasions to study. He advised them to be patient and to try to develop their competences and skills to find the adequate job'.

In Kuwait, Al Mulla wrote about the students of the French Section at the Faculty of Education, who 'expressed their need to practise the French language, their hope to excel in their studies and asked the Kuwaiti government to pay more attention to the French language.'

In Oman, students of the French Department addressed several questions to the competent authorities and to those who care about it: 'What is our fault and what is the liability of those who are waiting to be employed? What is the solution now? Do we sit idly and wait for a mirage because the responsible concerned with our employment does not know even our specialisation? They wondered why universities decided to create a specialisation that does not have vacancies in the labour market, and why there was no coordination between universities and the job market. (9)'

French Departments, Sections, Units and Centres in GCC States.

The beginning of the 21st century marked a turning point in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, as it brought awareness that major social and economic reforms were needed to avoid future economic decline (Shochat, 2008: 69). As mentioned before, all the governments of Gulf states have recently introduced 2030 Visions to expand, enhance, and diversify income from non-oil industries. The Ministries of Education and Higher Education in these countries have changed their educational goals in accordance with the economic development and the needs of the job market because higher education opportunities will give rise to a future generation of ambitious individuals and will increase growth in tourism and the economy of the Gulf region.

The Gulf 2030 Visions confront the study with some facts about the future of the French educational bodies in the Gulf, the challenges that face them, the real needs of the Gulf labour market for the French language, and finally the level of the students to be competent in the job market. A lot of points arise to explore reality, opportunities, and challenges for the French Departments in the Gulf. At first hand, we will see which Gulf universities are teaching French and what will be their future in accordance with the Gulf state Visions.

Gulf universities in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, Oman, and Qatar have launched French language departments, sections, centres or units to offer diplomas, minor programmes, Bachelor's or Master's degrees and to teach French as a compulsory or elective course.

Since 2001, most of the French educational bodies in the world and specifically in the Gulf region have begun to adopt the CEFR (*The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*) published by the Council of

Europe in 2001. This framework fixed the four competences of learning a foreign language: reception (listening and reading), production (spoken and written), interaction (spoken and written), and mediation (translating and interpreting). It fixed six reference levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2), which use descriptors to define the learners' ability and proficiency at each level. The first two levels (A1 Breakthrough, A2 Waystage) concerned the basic user. The next two levels (B1 Threshold, Operational Proficiency, B2 Vantage) are for independent users, the fifth level (C1 effective) is addressed at proficient users, and the last one (C2 Mastery) represents a high level of mastering the language. (10)

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi universities established French-language departments in the most important cities in the country. In Saudi Arabia, three French departments had been founded at King Abdul Aziz University (KAU) in 1983, King Saud University (KSU) in 1991, and Princess Norah University (PNU) in 2009. Some other universities teach French as an elective or mandatory course. Consequently, these departments do not require any previous knowledge of French because they begin teaching French from scratch.

King Abdul Aziz University, was the first, among the Gulf region universities, to found a French Section in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Jeddah. The French Section had been established for male students in 1983, and for female students in 1989. At first, the French language was introduced as a departmental course to the English Department and then as an elective one to other faculties of the university. (Recently, the Faculty of Tourism teaches two elementary courses of the French language.)

Since 1983, the English Department (the first department to be launched in the College of Arts and Humanities in 1969) was renamed the Department of European Languages and Literature, offering Bachelor's degrees in both English and French. The Department is currently planning to develop a translation track for undergraduate students and a Master's programme for English and French. Since its founding, the curriculum has been changed four times. In the beginning, the French Section offered a French curriculum of 134 credit hours to earn a French Bachelor's degree over four years. The students had to complete the mandatory French courses, could choose from a variety of optional French literary courses and must accomplish all Faculty and University requirements.

Then, in the second phase of the plan, the Department fixed the 26 French courses (94 credit hours) and 30 credit hours for the requirement of the Faculty and the University, such as Arabic, English, Islamic culture, Islamic studies, history, and geography, over four years. The students were studying 13 basic courses (which covered the four competences of learning languages), 10 literary courses, three 'civilisation' courses, two 'direct reading' courses, two 'text study' courses and one course of 'translation.'

In the third curriculum, after introducing the Preparatory Year at the University, the number of French credit hours was reduced to 76 (over three years), and the Bachelor degree required 128 credit hours. Unfortunately, in the fourth plan, the number has been reduced to 72 hours, and some literary and advanced courses were replaced by Faculty and University requirements. The actual programme offers 24 French courses (three courses of 'reading and comprehension', of 'grammar', of 'oral and speaking', of 'writing' and of 'translation', two literary courses, 'French and Arabic civilisations', 'introduction to linguistics', 'functional French', 'text summary', 'directed reading', 'research methods' and 'practicum'.

In 1991, King Saud University launched the French Department at the Faculty of Language and Translation in Riyadh. The French language course was established in 1977 within the curricula of the Centre for European Languages and Translation (CELT). Then, it was taught as an elective course for students in all faculties of the university.

In 1991, the Bachelor's degree was developed within the programme of the Department of European Languages and Translation, with the founding of the Institute of Languages and Translation, which was converted to the College of Languages and Translation in 1995. Until now, the French Department has changed the curriculum twice. The old curriculum included 174 credit hours over five years. The students used to begin their French

studies from the first semester. They studied 58 French courses (140 credit hours), and 34 credit hours for the other courses (Arabic grammar, Islamic culture and computer applications in translation). They studied four levels of basic French (reading, listening, speaking and writing), 'linguistics', 'linguistics text', 'introduction to semantics', 'introduction to translation', 'stylistics', 'comparative culture', 'readings in target language culture', 'sequential translation', 'interpretation', 'sight translation', 'consecutive translation', 'summary translation', 'bilingual translation', 'issues and problems in translation', eleven courses in specialised translation in several fields such as: agricultural, oil, security, political, commercial, educational, legal and literary translations, computer and finally a project in which the student must translate a book from French to Arabic or vice versa.

However, after the adoption of the preparatory year, the amount of credit hours in the new plan was reduced to 164 spread over five years (93 French credit hours over four years, 31 credit hours for the preparatory year, 12 Arabic hours for faculty requirements, eight for Islamic culture hours, and 36 hours for English courses (16 taught during the preparatory years and 20 hours over four years as Faculty requirements) (11). The Master's degree in Translation Studies was launched in 2010 in King Saud University.

In Princess Norah University, the Department of French Language and Translation was founded in 2009 in the College of Languages. The programme is formed of 130 credit hours taught over four years. The students start learning French from the first semester. The mandatory French requirements are 28 courses (88 credit hours).

The plan of the Bachelor's degree is formed of 130 credits hours, 88 French mandatory hours, nine for French elective courses, eight hours for other elective courses and 25 compulsory credit hours required by the University and the Faculty. The French obligatory courses are distributed as follows. They are composed of three levels of 'reading and writing', 'applied grammar', 'oral expression', 'directed reading', 'practical acquisition of oral language', 'workshop of writing', skills of using dictionaries', 'introduction to linguistics', 'introduction to translation', 'translation in the humanitarian and social fields', 'contrastive analysis', 'consecutive translation', 'translation in scientific and technical fields', 'translation of advanced texts', 'bilateral translation', 'computer-assisted translation', two levels of 'simultaneous translation', 'project', and 'practicum'. Concerning the elective courses, students must choose three of the following elective courses (nine credit hours): the three advanced levels of 'English language,' 'translation of the lexicon from French to English' and 'translation of the lexicon from English to French.' For the obligatory requirements (three courses) totalling seven credit hours, the college offers four levels of 'Islamic culture,' 'Arabic composition' and the first two levels of 'English language,' 'statistics,' two Arabic courses: 'applied rhetoric,' 'applied syntax and morphology.'

Recently, PNU has provided a French Master's programme in Specialised Translation. It offers two paths: modules and thesis (37 credit hours) and modules and research project (42 hours). both paths provide courses in 'translation theories', 'specialised translation', 'research methods', 'dictionaries', 'translation and technology', Islamic translation', 'media and political translation', 'economic translation' and 'writing techniques' and two elective courses (that should be chosen from these five: 'website translation', 'comparative linguistics', 'cultural interference and translation', 'ethics and professional skills of the interpreter'.

Students in the first path have a special elective course for 'critical research issues in translation' and should write a thesis (nine credit hours). The other path provides a second level of 'Islamic, media, political and economic translation,' 'teaching translation,' 'speech analysis,' 'practicum,' 'research project,' and offers a special elective course entitled 'audit and review techniques in translation.'

French is also taught as an optional or a basic course in other Saudi Universities such as Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University (ImamU), King Khaled University, Prince Sultan University, Effat University, Dar Al Hekmah University. All the French Departments in Saudi Arabia accept students who do not have any prior knowledge in the French language. They will learn French from scratch, and after three or four years they will acquire a high level of fluency and competence in the language.

These Departments aim to develop students' personalities, to improve their knowledge, to expertise their skills, to improve their proficiency in written and spoken communication, to train them and to introduce them to the public and private sectors in the labour market as professional teachers, translators, interpreters, editors, reporters, journalists, media correspondents, secretaries, tourist guides and sellers. They can also work in various fields such as scientific research, national and foreign companies, banking and finance, and the administrative, legal, educational and banking sectors.

To resume the 2030 Saudi Vision, the research reports the words of King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. When he introduced Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, he said: 'My first objective for our country is to be a pioneering and successful global model of excellence, on all fronts, and I will work with you to achieve that.' The 2030 Saudi Vision is established on three themes: a vibrant society, a thriving economy, and an ambitious nation.

This study will focus on the second theme, 'a thriving economy,' which provides opportunities for all by building a higher education system aligned with market needs and creating economic opportunities for the entrepreneur, the small enterprise as well as the large corporation. According to this objective, the education system must contribute to economic growth.

His Highness, the Crown Prince Mohamed Ben Salman Saudi, affirmed that:

'youth must enjoy higher quality, multifaceted education and has to be equipped for the jobs of the future, Saudi Colleges and Universities have to ensure that the outcomes of the education are in line with the labour market and the 2030 Vision Objectives. He guaranteed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would continue investing in education and training so that our young students are equipped for the jobs of the future' (Saudi 2030 Vision).

By examining the Visions of the French departments and the future of French language in Saudi Arabia in adherence to the 2030 Saudi vision, the study assumes that the French Section of the Department of European Languages and Literature in KAU seeks to become:

'an academic entity offering distinctive academic quality characterised by elevated intellect, knowledge, and culture.' (12)

The French language and Translation Department in KSA adopted its own vision to be:

'a distinguished college that provides the community with specialists in the fields of modern language education and translation participates in meeting the requirements of the labour market and contributes to the development of bridges of knowledge.' (13)

The French language and Translation Department in PNU aim to:

'graduate distinct and qualified cadres in the field of French language and translation to achieve international knowledge and cultural communication to serve the community.'(14)

All the visions intend to graduate qualified students and specialists in the French language, so they can meet the needs of the labour market, meaning that these departments are in accordance with the 2030 Saudi vision, which is relying on its human capital and is determined to transform the industrial economy into a powerful knowledge-based economy.

In the 1960s and 70s, French was taught in public schools, but due to the complaints of some students about the difficulties of this language, the Ministry of Education cancelled the teaching of French in public schools and allowed Saudi students who studied abroad to be exempt from the French language (if they asked), even if they were studying in countries which taught French as a mandatory language in schools or colleges. However, a huge number of private schools introduced the French language as a foreign language, and recently some French schools (which teach French as a First language) have been opened in different regions of Saudi Arabia.

If the 2030 Saudi Vision is undergoing major changes in government, economy, construction, and education to fulfil its goals, the study suggests the reintegration of French language in public schools. This will offer opportunities to the French Department's graduates in the Saudi labour market to participate in and encourage tourism and intercultural aspects and will contribute to the success of the objectives of the 2030 Saudi Vision.

Alzahrani emphasised the importance of reconsidering the role of language in Saudi Arabia and proposed that:

‘educational policymakers should take action to ensure language education which is included in the Saudi Vision 2030’, and he raised the ‘awareness of how other countries have used language to acquire powerful positions in new markets and how this drives the development of a knowledge-based economy will help Saudi Arabia achieve the successes proposed by Vision 2030’ (Alzahrani, 2017).

Kuwait

In Kuwait, there are several universities and colleges that provide various degrees in French. Two French departments were launched at Kuwait University (KU): The French Unit at the Faculty of Basic Education in 2012, and the Department of French Language and Culture at the Faculty of Arts in the academic year 2014/2015. The third one is the non-degree Department of Arabic and Foreign Languages at the College of Arts and Sciences at the American University of Kuwait. In all these Kuwaiti educational bodies, students start as beginners at the commencement of the first specialised year.

The Faculty of Arts was among the earliest to be established at Kuwait University in 1966. The Department of French Language and Culture was founded in the first semester of the academic year 2014/2015 after it had been a programme administered by the Department of English Literature since 2006/2007. The department aims to develop linguistic and cultural concepts and practical experiences within a comprehensive context of modern human civilisations. Its message is to prepare and develop qualified competencies in the fields of French language and culture to meet the needs of the employment sectors in the State of Kuwait (15).

To graduate from this department, the student must accomplish 132 credit hours (48 for general knowledge, 60 for major specialisation, and 24 for supporter’s courses). The 60 major courses are divided into compulsory and elective courses. The 14 courses (42 credit hours) enable students to master the four competences of learning (reading, listening, comprehension and writing). The Department offers two basic courses and one advanced course of ‘reading, comprehension, and conversation.’ It also provides courses such as: ‘scientific research,’ ‘writing skills,’ ‘phonetics,’ two basic courses and one advanced course of ‘writing texts.’

The curriculum includes several introductory courses such as: ‘introduction to francophone literature and culture,’ ‘introduction to translation,’ ‘introduction to French linguistics,’ ‘historical introduction to French literature’ and ‘culture and introduction in grammatical and morphological studies.’ After completing 108 units, students must present a graduation project and choose topics in ‘French literature, culture or thought.’

For the six elective courses (18 credit hours), the students choose one course from the six groups which cover ‘media’, ‘culture’, ‘literature’, ‘literary criticism’, ‘comparative literature’, ‘theatre’, ‘linguistics’, ‘semantics,’ francophone literature, teaching French as foreign language and modern technology in teaching French language’.

After this level, the student could choose one course from the six groups of elective courses available, which include ‘media, culture or cultural relations between France and the Arab world’, ‘literature’, ‘criticism’ or ‘masterpieces and issues’, ‘speech analysis’ or ‘glossary and semantics’, ‘teaching French as a foreign language’ or ‘language modern technology in teaching French language’, ‘French/European comparative literature’, or ‘French/Arabic comparative literature’, ‘francophone literature’, ‘French literature and culture in modern and contemporary times’ or ‘French literature: masterpieces and issues’, ‘theatre and culture in the 20th century’ or ‘history of fine arts and French cinema’.

For the specialisation, the students should finish eight courses (24 credit hours) in one of the two support specialties: translation within the French programme or College courses. The translation specialty is only available for students of the French language programme. They have five mandatory courses (15 credit hours): 'introduction to terminology,' two levels of 'translation from French' and two of 'translation into French.' They have to study three elective courses: (nine credit hours), and select one course from the following: 'translation and culture' or 'media and translation'; 'special purpose translation' or 'translation and business administration'; and 'audiovisual translation' or 'computer-assisted translation.'

The Department of French Language and Culture offers French courses to the faculties of Arts, of Law, of Engineering, of Islamic Studies, and to the Commerce College.

The Unit of French language in the English department at the Faculty of Basic Education was established in 2012 to respond to the needs of the labour market. It offers a Bachelor's degree in French which consists of 132 credits over four years with 36 mandatory and elective French courses (72 obligatory hours and 36 elective hours). This Bachelor's degree will provide the labour market in Kuwait with 'national cadres of qualified teachers in the public schools of the Ministry of Education, especially for middle and high school.' (16)

At the American University of Kuwait and the College of Arts and Sciences, the non-degree Department of Arabic and Foreign languages provides a French course as an option, to develop proficiency in the four basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and appreciation of French culture. The Department aspires to be:

'the best department for the study of Arabic and foreign languages in the Gulf region, offering rigorous Arabic, foreign language, and translation instruction across a variety of levels, as well as advanced instruction in the Arabic literary heritage.' (17)

Recently, Kuwait has introduced the '2030 Vision Report' where the government plans to change the dynamics of the labour market so that Kuwait's economy will be fully driven by the private sector by 2030. The country's long-term development plan considers education as a catalyst to social progress, economic diversification, and sustainable growth.

Comparing the vision of the three Kuwaiti educational bodies and the 2030 Kuwaiti vision, the research finds that they emphasise the importance of the quality of the outcomes to compete in the job market and to fulfil the needs of the economic development.

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

In the United Arab Emirates, many universities offer French degrees, in particular, the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) and Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi (PSUAD). At the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and the University of Sharjah (UOS), French has been introduced as an elective course.

The Department of Translation Studies at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), provides an English Bachelor's degree in translation, three minors in French, in German and in Korean, and a minor in business translation.

The minor in the French Language at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences of the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) is an 18 credit-hours programme. It aims to equip students with basic written and oral skills of the French language. Students will have the ability to analyse and translate short texts from English and Arabic into French and vice versa. By the end of the courses, students should have acquired the necessary skills to take an exam set by the Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Paris to gain the 'French Professional Diploma B1'. (18)

The UAEU decided to introduce a four-year Bachelor's of Arts degree in the French language from September 2017. It consists of 132 credits over four years. Kazmi reported that Professor Adel Safty, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, announced that the course is a part of a drive under a recently signed cooperation pact to enhance cultural relations between the UAE and France. 'Learning a language is always advantageous for intellectual growth as well as for increasing employment and internship opportunities,' Safty added that the university's main objective was:

'to prepare students to meet the requirements of the job market. The faculty's mission is to introduce students to a major language to help them in the world of international business. Students will be required to attain proficiency and fluency in French ... so they can communicate with the Francophone world'.

But unfortunately, it seems that until now, the department has not opened.

The Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi offers various undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. All undergraduate degrees are taught in French, except for Physics (taught in English). To be accepted into this university, non-French-speaking students must study an additional year of intensive French classes to obtain the University Diploma (DU), which is mandatory. The Intensive French Course helps students to integrate into the Bachelor's programmes. PSUAD also gives degrees in French language and literature: a diploma in intensive French (one or two years), a Bachelor's in French literature, a Master's in teaching French as a Second language (one or two years) and Bachelor's in applied foreign languages.

The university requires a High School Diploma (or equivalent) to join the intensive French programme, and students who apply to join the intermediate level directly must take a French placement test. Since 2006, the university has provided world-class French education and French evening courses to a growing number of learners from around the world. (19)

The Diploma University (DU) in intensive French (a one- or two-year programme) is required for enrolment on any undergraduate programme. Over two semesters, daytime students receive approximately 23 hours of teaching per week to improve their language ability and skills in speaking, writing and listening. The evening course programme, offered for working professionals, is delivered over two years. Students are required to pass various tests during their studies, and for those who would like to prepare for the DU examination over two years, they can study a one-month course in France to practise the French language and to undertake the DELF B2 examinations of the CEFR. After getting this diploma, students can pursue further academic studies at Sorbonne Abu Dhabi University or at the Sorbonne University in France (20).

The Bachelor's in French literature explores the world of classical and modern literature, French and francophone writers. It teaches the most important competences of the French language and focuses on different expressions, verbal communication, techniques of writing, the historical and geographical varieties of the French language, linguistics, rhetoric, analysis, and synthesis. This programme prepares students to pursue careers in different fields such as teaching, communication, diplomacy, journalism, publishing, media, and audiovisual sectors, in demand in the UAE market. The degree is delivered by the Sorbonne University in Paris, according to the curriculum which follows the European, ECTS system:

'designed to make it easier for students to move between different countries. Since they are based on the learning achievements and workload of a course, a student can transfer their ECTS credits from one university to another, so they are added up to contribute to an individual's degree programme or training'. (21)

During the first two years, students will complete courses in 'literature and communication' and combine their studies with courses from other departments including 'history of art and archaeology' and 'history or philosophy and sociology.' During the third year, several elective pre-professional courses are added to the programme. This Bachelor's degree can lead to further study for the Master's in Teaching French as a Second Language at Paris Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi or institutions abroad. (22)

The Bachelor's in Applied Foreign Languages states as its objectives to train qualified students to meet the needs of the labour market with all the challenges that face the business market in the world. It is an exclusive three-year degree delivered in French or English with either German, Spanish, Italian, Arabic or Chinese that offers a double qualification in languages, economy, finance, business administration, marketing, human resource management, international business law, and management.

There is full cooperation between the UAE and France to spread the learning of French in the state. On May 30, 2017, the French Embassy, the American University of Sharjah (AUS) and the University of Sharjah (UOS) signed agreements to introduce the teaching of the French language. The French courses are taught to students enrolled in Bachelor programmes (23).

The two-year Master's degree in Teaching French as a Foreign Language is designed to broaden the knowledge and skills of teaching French as a foreign language (FLE) in Arabic countries. Those who have sufficient professional experience in this field can join the second year of the programme. It meets the needs of those who are interested in working in fields that sustain cultural relationships between Arab countries and France. The programme offers many courses focused on new information, communication technologies and methodologies of teaching French as a foreign language, linguistics, and comparative literature. (24)

The one-year Master's in Teaching French as a Second Language is designed for students to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills required for teaching French in Arabic cultures. All courses which cover cultural relations between the French-speaking world and the Arab world, linguistics (French and contrastive, analysed in the French-Arab area) and didactics (cognitive, psychological, cultural and practical) are taught in French. (25)

In 2020, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al Maktoum launched the 2021 Vision, which intends to make the United Arab Emirates (UAE) one of the best countries in the world. The UAE established its '2030 National Strategy for Higher Education' which seeks to equip a new generation of Emiratis to face the challenges of the future, to build and achieve the highest scientific and professional education standards to serve the UAE's future generations, and to ensure sustainable happiness and a better life for citizens as the UAE continues its path to diversification, growth, and development. It emphasises the need to provide youth with the necessary technical and practical skills to drive the economy in both the public and private sectors. It also aims to prepare a generation of Emirati professionals to sustain growth in vital sectors such as knowledge, economy, entrepreneurship and the overall development of the UAE's labour market. The UAE Government has set four main pillars to achieve this strategy: quality, efficiency, innovation, and harmonisation.

Hussain Ebrahim Al Hammadi, Emirati Minister of Education, affirmed that the Higher Education Strategy 2030 introduces:

‘a new model of education that empowers our students with the knowledge to face the future [...] Developing an innovative education system and enhancing students' skills are at the core of our strategy. We seek to engage the private sector in this process and continuously adapt our system, through research and studies, to develop curricula that will contribute to the UAE's competitiveness globally’. (26)

Analysing the Emirati 2030 Vision and the future of French educational bodies, the research assumes that all the objectives plan to prepare a new generation of specialists in teaching French, in translation, in tourism, and in communication. They also aim to sustain a cultural and civilisational relationship between UAE and France. This could open new opportunities for graduates in the labour market, in museums as tourist guides, in French companies in the UAE and especially in public and private schools as French teachers because ‘there are more than 25 French private schools in Dubai (27)’.

The *Al Bayan* newspaper affirmed that His Excellency Hossain bin Ibrahim Al Hammadi, Emirati Minister of Education, had revealed on February 16, 2018 ‘the intention of the Ministry to introduce the French language in public schools from the third grade next academic year 2018/2019’.

Sultanate of Oman

The French language in the Sultanate of Oman has long been taught in many international schools and universities: The Sultan Qaboos University, the Faculty of Tourism, the French language department at the University of Nizwa and the French school in Muscat.

On the study of the French language in the Sultanate, Al Jabery stated that His Excellency Dr. Hamoud Bin Khalfan Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Curriculum said that:

‘an institution that attracts more than 1,000 students a year is a symbol of the vitality of the relations between France and the Sultanate in terms of language and culture, and we look forward to the sustainability of the Omani-French Centre and all its employees and hope to continue to grow more than ever in the service of the International Organisation of Educational Francophonie in Oman. The sultanate has always stressed the importance of learning foreign languages and the need to teach our students to introduce French as an elective subject in some of the sultanate’s schools for 11th and 12th-grade students in four schools in Muscat and North Batinah governorates’.

At the University of Nizwa, especially in the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Department of Foreign Languages offers diplomas and Bachelor’s degrees in French and translation. It intends to offer a stimulating and engaging language learning and study experience. It undertakes the mission of:

‘offering quality English, French, and German programmes, together with courses in other foreign languages, to students of the University of Nizwa. This is primarily achieved through a focus on delivering stimulating lectures, creating an environment for meaningful classroom interaction, and developing students’ language and cognitive skills’.

It aims to be known as:

‘a vibrant department which offers first-class language, linguistics, literature and translation courses, and engages in cutting-edge research. In addition, we want to be student-centred, friendly and professional in all that we do’. (28)

Students who want to join the department must have a GPA (Grade Point Average) of not less than Good, which is the equivalent of ‘C.’

In the French section, the minimum of hours for the Diploma in French and Translation is 72 credit hours including 24 credit hours for University requirements, six for mandatory university courses, six for college compulsory courses, 30 for major requirements and six for the minor. The ten courses taught in major are: elementary French, two levels of ‘intermediate French’, three courses of ‘elementary and intermediate communication in French’, ‘written expression’, ‘practice of oral communication 1’, ‘practical grammar of language 1’, ‘phonetics and phonology’, ‘introduction to linguistics’ and ‘civilisation and history 1’. The two courses for the minor are ‘initiation to translation from and to’ and ‘initiation to the interpretation from and to.’

The credit hours for the Bachelor’s in French and Translation are 132 hours, which include 24 credit hours for university requirements, six for university elective courses, 12 for college requirements, six for college elective courses, 63 for major requirements and 21 for minor in translation. The 21 major courses comprise: three levels of ‘written expression’, ‘practice of oral communication’, two levels of ‘practical grammar of language’, two levels of ‘French literature’, ‘phonetics and phonology of French’, two levels of ‘civilisation and history’, ‘introduction to linguistics’, ‘general linguistics’, ‘grammatical systems’, ‘sociolinguistics’, ‘applied linguistics’, ‘semantics and semiotics of language’, ‘comparative stylistics’, and a ‘project’. Among the objectives figure

their ultimate one: aiming to produce high-calibre graduates, employable in a wide range of fields, including education, translation, and interpretation, the media, and tourism.

Launched in 1986, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) began with five colleges: medicine, engineering, agriculture, education, and science. The College of Arts, established in 1987, provides its students with studies that draw on the knowledge of both past and present civilisations. The Tourism Department in the College of Arts and Social Sciences was founded in 2001 because of the Sultanate of Oman's interest in enhancing the tourism industry. The Tourism Department aspires 'to become a leading national, regional and international centre of excellence in tourism and hospitality teaching, research and community service.' They have four mandatory courses entitled French for Tourism. (29)

Furthermore, the International Business Administration Department, at the College of Applied Sciences, At Rustaq offers courses leading to a Bachelor degree of International Business Administration in the three specializations: International Business Management, Tourism Management, and Hospitality Management and Accounting. In the specialization of Tourism Management, the department teaches four courses of elementary French.

Effectively, French will open new academic and professional horizons for the Omani students in the foreseeable future in the Sultanate of Oman.

It is worth mentioning that teaching French as a foreign language is optional in the Ministry of Education schools. Since 1970, it has opened two schools, one for girls and the other for boys. In 2013, there was a great development in teaching French. In the academic year 2013/2014, the Omani Ministry of Education introduced the French language as an optional subject for the post-primary education (for the eleventh and twelfth grades). The pilot was started in four schools until the experiment would be considered, then expand in this aspect

Al Khawaja stated that there are:

'187 schools which taught French, including 94 public schools and eight training centres', and 'in public schools, French has been taught in the eighth grade as an optional foreign language since 2004. Those who choose to study French in eighth grade are obliged to complete their studies until the tenth grade'. (30)

Oman accords a priority in producing students better equipped to meet labour market expectations. This objective goes with the Omani Vision 2030. The vision of 1995 was first replaced by the Oman 2020 Strategic Vision and then supplemented by a longer-term vision entitled 'Oman Vision 2040'.

Indeed, education holds the key to achieving the primary goals of the Sultanate's 2020 Vision, the country's long-term economic development plan. Economic diversification, sustainable development, the enhancement of human resources and the increasing of the role of the private sector to economic growth are linked in one way or another to the quality of the country's basic, secondary and tertiary education systems.

Education remains crucial for another reason, too. 'With about half of the country's population under the age of 21, it is imperative that the government find a way to create jobs for the growing number of nationals who will soon be entering the labour market'. (31)

The educational philosophy of the Sultanate of Oman includes many principles that encourage communication; respect and openness to other civilisations; knowledge; and acquirement of various skills. By teaching French in schools and universities, the Omani Ministry of Education seeks to identify the components of French culture and civilisation, to build the intercultural relations between the two countries, to develop respect for others and to cooperate with them effectively and positively.

For all these reasons, the study assumes that there are opportunities for the French departments and sections which intend to improve the skills and competences of their students to meet the crucial needs of the job market, particularly with the growth of diplomatic and economic relations between Oman and France.

Kingdom of Bahrain

In Bahrain, three educational bodies teach French: The Centre for French Studies, the Faculty of Arts at the University of Bahrain (UoB), and the Arab Open University (AOU). In fact, French is the second foreign language in Bahrain, although it:

'is still dwarfed by English, which is heavily subsidized by the United States and the United Kingdom. For both economic and political reasons, it is France's interest to cultivate the promotion of its language and culture in this small Gulf state (Bahrain)' (Benammour, 2014).

To spread the French language in Bahrain, France has signed an agreement with Bahrain to open the Centre for French Studies at the University of Bahrain to strengthen relations between the two countries. Opened in 2009, the Centre teaches an optional course in basic French, offered to students of three faculties: The College of Business Administration, the Faculty of Information Technology, and the Faculty of Science.

At the Faculty of Arts, the minor in French specialisation is an academic programme dedicated to students of the Faculty. Along with their main specialisation in the Bachelor's degree, they study 30 credit hours (10 courses of French) that include two basic French courses, two 'intermediate French,' three 'advanced French' and three 'specialised French.' The Centre of languages offers an opportunity to study the diploma in French for students of the Faculty of Arts at the University. It also provides French courses for the Bahraini community.

The University of Bahrain plans to introduce a BA programme in French and present it to the University Council for approval. On April 4, 2015. The Bahraini newspaper *Al Yaum* mentioned that Dr. Zayed Shaheen, Ex-Director of the Centre, expressed his hopes to offer:

'an independent study programme in French at the level of the Bachelor's or the level of the diploma to teach French, introduce its culture, and allows students to obtain more information, deepen their knowledge in French culture. The centre also aims to strengthen relations between the Kingdom of Bahrain and France and to build further bridges of communication, and to forge cultural, academic and scientific partnerships through the organisation of events such as exhibitions, seminars, lectures and cultural meetings [...] The increasing number of students demanding for French courses offered by the Centre encourages the founding of the French language programme. [...] 'the number of students registered in the different sections of the Centre, this year is about 426 students and expected to be increased in the next few years, given the importance of the French language in our time as an effective tool for communication, understanding and starting dialogues between civilisations and cultures'.

But unfortunately, the Centre has not yet established the programme.

Her Excellency Mme Malika Berak, French Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, attended the opening ceremony of the department for teaching French as a foreign language at the Arab Open University (AOU). This department was established by the University of Rouen by the French Director of the E-learning programme, Mr. Philippe Lane, and the Bahraini Director of the AOU, Mr. Samir Fakhro. They were pleased with the success of this partnership and the multimedia learning platform. Since the beginning of the 2006 academic year, the AOU has offered four French courses as a foreign language for the following diplomas: 'Certificat d'Aptitude professionnelle à l'Enseignement du FLE', CAPEFLE (Certificate of Professional Ability to Teach FFL), licence mention FLE (Bachelor's in FLE), Diplôme universitaire en FLE (University Diploma in French as a Foreign Language) and DUFLE et Master's FLE. These diplomas are recognised by the Bahraini Ministry of Education. (32)

The French Arabian Business School (FABS) at the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) (a member of the Federation of the Universities of the Islamic World, accredited by the Bahraini Ministry of Education and governed by the GCC countries), was established in 2007 as a result of an agreement between the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Arabian Gulf University. The FABS cooperates with the ESSEC Business School, one of the leading business schools in France and one of Europe's top business schools in the world. Unfortunately, the language of instruction is English, but the FABS gives weekly Spanish and French courses within the community service programme for all those wishing to learn the two languages.

Since 2007, the French Embassy in Bahrain has promoted the learning of French. In September 2010, French was launched on an experimental basis in five schools; all sixth graders start learning French with a session of 40 minutes per day. At the end of three years, the pupil should reach the level A2 of the CEFR and the level B2 at the end of the three following years. Furthermore:

‘the French Embassy supports this movement with training French teachers funded by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Department. The expansion of the French language education reform project should reach 59 colleges and 31 public high schools, plus a hundred private schools. The French Ministry of Education donated thousands of books to the Bahraini schools and hopes to see French book donations spread to all the high schools and colleges that do not yet have a French reading corner’. (33)

In regards to Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, launched in 2008 by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Bahraini government is trying to realise all the objectives which will lead:

‘to offering every Bahraini a better and more prosperous life. It is seeking to build a just society enjoying competitive aspects able to deal with all matters concerning the Bahraini society, government, and companies. In the 1990s, only three Bahraini public universities served as centres of Higher Education, but the 2000s were marked by a boom in education with the opening of twelve private universities, and the establishment of institutions while others worked in affiliation with foreign-based universities (34)’.

The Ministry of Education issued a 2015/2016 report which showed that there were ‘a total of 208 government schools, 75 private schools and 14 universities within the Kingdom (35)’.

Effectively, the Kingdom of Bahrain is reshaping its government, society and the economy, to pursue and realise sustainability, fairness, and competitiveness, The Vision entails shifting away from an oil-based economy and embracing a globally competitive one that is built by a productive and pioneering private sector.

Bahrain is focusing on the importance of an education system which meets the demands of the international market, and that was crystallised in the national educational initiatives launched in 2005. This was considered as one of the promising programmes in investing in Bahraini human capital to achieve the goals of 2030 Economic Vision.

On March 26, 2017, *Al Watan* stated that Dr. Majid al-Nuaimi, Bahraini Minister of Education, confirmed that ‘Bahrain has been able, for many years to teach the French language for its students in public and junior high schools, as well as its interest in teaching this language at the Higher Education level. As well as the opportunity to join the local or international labour market’.

Al Watan also reported that

‘the French Ambassador Bernard Reyno-Faber affirmed that Bahrain is one of the pioneers in teaching French in the Middle East and the government secondary schools have achieved outstanding successes in this area. He also praised the accomplishments in the implementation of the French language project in the preparatory stage’.

Moreover, the Higher Education Council (HEC) has an important role:

‘to make decisions based on evidence and setting policy based on the future direction of the country and the Gulf region. The outcomes of its work must allow the sector to produce graduates that have skills that employers need, that have entrepreneurial skills to become job makers and for graduates to be able to contribute to national economic growth and to society’.

HEC’s role has also focused on:

‘improving performance across the sector, to reach the 2030 vision of a world-class Higher Education sector. This has meant helping universities to learn from our international partners. Increasingly through globalisation, Higher Education is becoming increasingly collaborative, and HEC has developed strong international partnerships with many universities and experts coming to Bahrain to transfer their knowledge and expertise (36)’.

According to the vision of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the French presence in some Bahraini schools and universities, the research finds that there are a lot of opportunities for French graduates in the labour market, especially as France is making a great effort to introduce and spread the French language in Bahrain. Furthermore, both countries are acting to build excellent diplomatic, economic and cultural relations between them, which gives opportunities for the employment of graduates.

Qatar

In Qatar, there are two universities that teach French: Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Qatar University. The Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII) is part of Hamad Bin Khalifa University’s College of Humanities and Social Sciences. It was founded in 2012 with a remit:

‘to build capacity in Qatar and the region and to function as a physical and virtual space that delivers sophisticated translator and interpreter education, high-level training in a range of languages, and quality translation and to interpret services of the highest international standards.’ Its core mission is ‘to equip students for a successful career as translators and interpreters in multiple language combinations.’

Furthermore, the Translation and Interpreting Institute’s Language Centre in HBKU offers a French programme, besides programmes in several other languages: Arab, Mandarin Chinese, German, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese for personal enrichment or professional purposes. The Centre teaches these languages within a cultural context. The courses generally focus on the four aspects of language learning of the CEFR. The Centre also provides, ‘world-class education in translation, interpreting, and foreign language, contributing to the growth of the knowledge-based economy as a centre of education and research, and a service provider and employer.’ (37)

Additionally, it offers a minor in French which consists of regular courses for beginners spread over five weeks (20 to 35 meeting hours for each course ‘French beginner 1’, ‘French conversational course’, four levels of ‘speak French’, ‘French culture and current events’, and a specialised French short course, ‘French for travellers’.

It also conducts French placement tests, destined for beginners (A1), Pre-intermediate (A2), Pre-intermediate (B1) levels, and a ‘summer programme’ that consists of six different courses during the week and one specialised short course on Saturdays, French for travellers, to practise French and to improve speaking skills. ‘During this programme, no textbook is used, and the Centre provides relevant material for students.’ (38)

The College of Arts and Sciences at Qatar University (QU) offers a minor in French designed for beginners. It consists of a variety of language skill courses, in addition to an ‘introduction to French literature and civilisation.’ The programme allows students to develop functional communicative skills in French and enables them to become familiar with the diversity of contemporary French culture across the world. It presents 24 credit hours, including 15 credit hours in minor requirements (basic French, two levels of ‘intermediate French’,

‘language, culture and society’, ‘French for oral communication’ and nine credit hours in minor electives ‘French for oral communication ii’, two levels of ‘French composition’, ‘French phonetics’, ‘introduction to French literature’ and ‘business French’.

The General Secretariat for Development Planning in the State of Qatar launched Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) in October 2008. The Qatari Vision intends to:

‘transform Qatar into an advanced society capable of achieving sustainable development’ by 2030. Economic, social, human and environmental development, these are the four central pillars of the plan’s development goals. The Qatari government seeks to meet these goals by developing a strong framework and implementing strategies to address the challenges presented in human development reports. (38)

According to the Qatari vision, French educational bodies in Qatar have established their goals within the QNV 2030 to equip the job market with specialists in teaching French, in translation, in tourism, and in business.

Conclusion

The study highlights the reality of the French departments, sections, centres units and colleges among the Gulf’s universities and finds that in each country of the GCC, there are more than two educational bodies which provide minors, diplomas, Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in French language, literature and translation and offer French courses as college or university requirements. There are other institutes or centres that offer French courses for the community or give placement tests to evaluate the level of learning according to the CEFR.

In fact, the main specialisation, the amount of credit hours and the number of years to obtain the degree vary in the same country from one university to another.

The study finds that from all the Gulf universities there are only three (Sultan Qaboos University, Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi and Hamad Bin Khalifa University) that teach French for specific purposes through the Bachelor’s in Applied Foreign Languages, the ‘French for tourism’ at the Faculty of Tourism and the course of ‘French for travellers’ provided by TII. Several universities offer degrees in French language and translation, and others teach French language and literature.

In the following table, there is an overview of the degrees, the number of years, the amount of credit hours to get the degrees and the number of specialised hours at the French educational bodies in the Gulf universities.

Country	University/ Faculty/ College/ Department/ Section/Centre	degree	Year of Establishment	Credit hours for the degree	French Specialisation hours/CH
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	King Abdul Aziz University (KAU) / Faculty of Arts and Humanities / Department of European Languages and Literature/ French Section	Bachelor’s in French Language and Literature	1983	128 over 4 years	72
	King Saud University (KSU)/ Faculty of Language and Translation/ French Department	Bachelor’s in French Language and Translation	1991	164 over 5 years	93
	Princess Norah University (PNU)/ College of Languages/ Department of French Language and Translation	Bachelor’s in French Language and Translation	2009	130 over 4 years	88
	Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic (Imam U), King	Elective courses			3

	Khaled University (KKY), Prince Sultan University (PSU), Effat University (EU), Dar Al Hekmah University (DAH)					
Kuwait	Kuwait University' (KU)/ Faculty of Arts/ French Language and Literature Department	Bachelor's in French Language and Literature French courses for other faculties	2014/2015	132	60 for Major specialisation, + 24 for Supporters course	
	Kuwait University' (KU) Faculty of Basic Education/ French Unit	French language	2012	132	72 +36 elective French hours	
	American University of Kuwait College of Arts and Sciences/ the non-degree Department of Arab and Foreign Languages,	Optional courses			3	
United Arab Emirates	United Arab Emirates University (UAEU)/ Department of Translation Studies/	English Bachelor's degree in Translation with Minor in French			18	
	Paris-Sorbonne Université Abu Dhabi (PSUAD)	world-class French education and French evening courses	2006	one or two years 23 h per week		
		The University Diploma in Intensive French				
		Bachelor's in French Literature,				3 years
		Bachelor's in Applied Foreign Languages				3 years
		Master's in Teaching French as a Second Language		one or two years		
	American University of Sharjah (AUS)	Elective courses	2017		3	
University of Sharjah (UOS)	Elective courses	2017		3		
Sultanate of Oman	Sultan Qaboos University	Faculty of Tourism Four mandatory courses 'French for Tourism'	2001		12	
		International Business Administration Department the College of Applied Sciences, At Rustaq Specialisation of Tourism & Hospitality Management	2007		12	
	University of Nizwa Faculty of Arts and Science Department of Foreign Languages French Language Section	Diploma in French and Translation	2004	72	36	
		Bachelor's in French and Translation	2004	132	84	
Kingdom of Bahrain	University of Bahrain/ Centre for French Studies	Elective course	2009		3	
	University of Bahrain/Faculty of Arts	Minor in French language specialisation	2009		30	

		Diploma in French			72
		French courses for the Bahraini community			
	Arabian Gulf University (AGU) The French Arabian Business School (FABS)	French courses within the community service program weekly	2007		
	Arab Open University (AOU)/Department for Teaching French as a foreign language	French courses as a foreign language for diplomas:	2006		
		Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle à l'Enseignement du FLE CAPEFLE (Certificate of Professional Ability to Teach FFL)			
Licence Mention FLE (Bachelor's Mention FLE),					
Diplôme Universitaire en FLE (University Diploma in French as a Foreign Language) DUFLE					
	Master's FLE				
Qatar	Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) College of Humanities and Social Sciences The Translation and Interpreting Institute (TII)	Minor in French	2012	7 courses (20 to 35 hours) over five weeks for each	course. French specialised short courses 'French for Travellers'.
	The Translation and Interpreting Institute's Language Centre	French Summer Programme			
		a world-class education in translation, interpreting, and foreign language			
	Qatar University College of Arts and Sciences	Minor in French	January 2017	24 credit hours	15 French credit hours
		French Placement Tests (A1), (A2), (B1) levels.			

Accordingly, for the GCC states' 2030 Vision, the Gulf universities should change their curricula to launch a new interdisciplinary specialisation. In a previous study entitled 'Integration of knowledge between the Humanities to develop interdisciplinary paths according to the (Saudi) Vision 2030', Brengy suggested many solutions to match the outcomes of the French graduates with the needs of the labour market:

'launch paths between the French educational bodies and tourism, tourism guidance, marketing, media, journalism, the services of the Da'wa (preaching), the services of the pilgrims (in Saudi Arabia), the general guidance of youth, Social welfare and volunteerism, psychological service, environment and sociology departments' (Brengy, 2017).

As a result, the students in French language departments can have a double major with a French degree or minor in different disciplines needed in the labour market such as business, tourism, history, comparative literature, sociology, and psychology, besides the specialisations in translation and interpretation which need more proficiency and practice.

The study finds that the French educational bodies in Gulf universities must launch specialised Master's degree and Doctorates in translation, interpretation and in applied foreign languages.

Consequently, French teachers and professors must apply the cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective strategies for learning foreign languages to teach their students the French language in a way that enables them to master the language and encourages them to overcome difficulties in learning French to compete in the job market and to continue their high studies.

Concerning the challenges of the future of French in the Gulf countries and specifically in Saudi Arabia after the privatisation of higher education, some French educational bodies may face serious challenges pertaining to the changes in their curricula, the cancelling of some specialisations or the establishment of new ones to meet the needs of the job market. However, the good diplomatic relations and the economic, educational, commercial and military partnerships between France and the GCC states will open new horizons in the labour market and will offer new opportunities for the employment of graduates from the Gulf states.

Notes

1. Incheon Declaration and framework for action for the implementation of the Sustainable Development http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brasilia/about-this-office/single-view/news/education_2030_incheon_declaration_and_framework_for_ac/
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