



**UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING**

The Influence of Overseas Study on Saudi Female EFL Instructors:

A Narrative Inquiry

Budur Alharbi

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my original work. This work has not been previously submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other institution. All sources of information and materials used have been duly acknowledged and cited.

Acknowledgement

This project would not exist without the support and encouragement from many, for which I am eternally grateful to Allah. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, 'Whoever is not thankful to the people, then he is not thankful to Allah.'

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Abstract

This narrative study investigates the experiences of Saudi female English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors who have completed their postgraduate education overseas and returned home to teach in Saudi higher education institutions. The main aim of this study is to understand how their experiences at home and abroad have informed and determined their educational choices and their current teaching beliefs and practices. The practical relevance of this study is underscored by the growing number of Saudi academics, including EFL instructors, who pursue postgraduate education overseas, yet there remains a limited understanding of the effects of these international experiences, both on the academics themselves and on the students they teach. The study addresses a) the undocumented learning and teaching experiences of female EFL instructors, b) the limited research on Saudi EFL female instructors' professional learning in relation to overseas education, and c) the need for holistic methodologies when examining teachers' development (Mockler, 2011).

Data for this study were collected through four rounds of narrative interviews with six participants. Framed within a constructivist paradigm, the data analysis attends to both the narrated events and narrating events (Wortham & Reyes, 2015) of the narrative. The participants' narratives are approached through a joint model of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984) to explore their educational choices, learning experiences, and teaching practices. The study provides insights into the complex interplay of factors that influence Saudi female EFL instructors' educational choices and learning and teaching experiences.

Findings reveal that Saudi female EFL instructors' educational choices are shaped by both personal aspirations and external factors like family, societal norms, and the job market. Despite challenges, they demonstrate agency in pursuing desired educational pathways. Their learning journeys, from local BA programmes to overseas MA programmes, are marked by challenges and growth, leading to transformed perspectives on teaching. Overseas experiences, in particular, emerge as a catalyst for adopting more student-centred approaches. However, implementing these approaches is influenced by institutional support, student readiness, workload, and alignment between assessment and teaching philosophies. The study highlights

the impact of overseas education on teaching practices while emphasising the need to address contextual factors to support pedagogical innovation in local institutions.

List of Abbreviations

EFL	English as a foreign language
SA	Study abroad
HE	Higher Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
KASP	King Abdullah Scholarship Programme
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
MA TESOL	Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
PD	Professional Development
PL	Professional Learning
EMI	English as the medium of instruction
AoO	Apprenticeship of Observation

Table of Content

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgement	iii
Abstract	iv
List of Abbreviations	vi
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Figures	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.2 Rationale of the study.....	2
1.4 The research questions	3
1.5 Structure of the thesis	4
CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 The context: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	6
2.2.1 Saudi Higher Education (HE).....	7
2.2.2 Teachers' preparation programmes.....	9
2.3 Saudi Arabia EFL context.....	10
2.3.1 English Language Status in Saudi Arabia.....	10
2.3.2 English language in public education and HE.....	12
2.4 Overseas scholarship in Saudi Arabia	16
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW	23
3.1 Introduction	23
3.2 Teachers' professional learning	23
3.2.1 Professional learning (PL) or professional development (PD)?	23
3.2.2 Perspectives on teachers' professional learning.....	24
3.2.3 Influences on language teacher professional learning	26
3.3 Perspectives on international student experiences	27
3.3.1 Language teacher education in overseas contexts.....	30
3.3.2 Insights from previous research.....	36
3.4 Summary.....	37
CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	38
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 Gidden's theory of structuration	38
4.3 Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualization of agency	40

4.4.1 The iterational dimension.....	42
4.4.2 Practical evaluation dimension	43
4.4.3 The projective dimension	44
4.4 External and Internal Model of Agency	45
4.5 Summary	47
CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY	48
5.1 Introduction	48
5.2 Research stance	49
5.2.1 Constructivist stance.....	50
5.2.2 Narrative inquiry.....	51
5.3 Research design	56
5.3.1 Stage one: The pilot study	56
5.3.2 Stage Two: The main study	59
5.3.3. Interview design.....	62
5.4 Data analysis.....	76
5.4.1 Transcription	77
5.4.2 Translation	78
5.4.3 Data management	79
5.5 Positionality	85
5.6 Ethical considerations	87
5.7 Summary.....	88
CHAPTER 6: NARRATIVES OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICE	90
6.2 Narratives of educational choice: Bachelor's degree major.....	90
6.2.1 Yasmine.....	90
6.2.2 Danah	96
6.2.3 Layla	100
6.2.4 Rawan	102
6.3 Narratives of educational choice: Study abroad education.....	104
6.3.1 Yasmine.....	104
6.3.2 Rawan	107
6.3.3 Layla	110
6.4 Conclusion	113
CHAPTER 7 NARRATIVES OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES	115
7.1 Introduction	115
7.2 Analysis of Yasmine's story.....	115

7.2.1 BA experience	115
7.2.2 Early teaching experiences.....	117
7.2.3 SA education	119
7.3 Analysis of Danah's story.....	125
7.3.1 BA experience	125
7.3.2 SA experience	130
7.4 Analysis of Rawan's story	132
7.4.1 BA programme	133
7.4.2 The early teaching experience.....	135
7.4.3 SA education	136
7.5 Analysis of Layla's story	138
7.5.1 BA experience	139
7.5.2 Early teaching experiences.....	141
7.5.4 SA experience	142
7.6 Summary.....	144
CHAPTER 8: NARRATIVE OF TEACHING PRACTICE	147
8.2 Yasmine	147
8.3 Danah.....	158
8.4 Layla.....	164
8.5 Conclusion	171
CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION	172
9.1 Introduction	172
9.2. Q1 How did the participants construct the influences on their educational choices?	172
9.3. Q2: How do the participants construct their learning experiences?.....	176
9.3.1 <i>The BA programme</i>	176
9.3.2 <i>Early teaching experience</i>	177
9.3.3 <i>SA education</i>	178
9.4. Q3: What are the experiences that informed the participants' current practice?	179
9.5. Q4: What are the enabling and constraining factors that affect the achievement of desired teaching practices?	185
9.5.1 Yasmine (Rural newly established university)	185
9.5.2 Danah and Layla (Urban well-established university)	187
9.5 Summary.....	188

CHAPTER 10 : CONCLUSION	189
10.1 Introduction	189
10.2 Theoretical and methodological contributions	189
10.3 Implications of the study.....	191
10.4 Limitations and future research	193
10.5 Final remarks	195
Appendix 1: Ethical approval.....	221
Appendix 2: Advertisment on social media channels	222
Appendix 3. Information sheet	223
Appendix 4. Informed consent	224
Appendix 5. Danah 1st interview.....	225

List of Tables

Table 1: Chordal triad of agency (adapted from Emirbayer and Mische (1998))

Table 2. Participants' information

Table 3: Interviews' information

Table 4: Transcription conventions

List of Figures

Figure 1: Public scholarship programmes from the Ministry of Higher Education (2023)

Figure 2: Integrated model of external and internal agency

Figure 3: Interviews' focus

Figure 4: Events mapping adapted from Wortham (2001)

Figure 5: Data coding using Microsoft Excel

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this research is driven by my own life experiences and my attempt to understand how these experiences have shaped, and continue to shape, how I approach teaching. My journey in learning the language, learning to teach, and my educational experiences, BA, MA, and as a PhD student, all motivated me to explore how others in the same context perceive their experiences. Like the instructors in this study, I am a Saudi female, an English language learner, an English language instructor in a Saudi university, and someone who experienced overseas studies at both the master's level and as a PhD student.

I graduated with a BA in English Language and Literature. Afterwards, I applied for a government scholarship programme and was accepted. I applied for higher studies due to the highly competitive job market in Saudi Arabia, and I believed that a master's degree from a western country was the ticket to landing a job, especially in higher education (henceforth HE) institutions. Like some of the participants in this study, the decision to go abroad was not straightforward, as I had to navigate my options and negotiate them with my family.

My SA experience was enlightening at a personal and professional level. I noticed that it was not only me who had such an impression on their experience but also my international classmates, which was a constant topic of discussion. After I graduated with a master's in education from the US, I got a job at a Saudi Arabian university where I worked as a lecturer/English language instructor. Prior to my job at HE institution, I had no actual experience of teaching except for a two-week practicum in secondary schools that I undertook in the last year of my BA studies. The training was more teacher-centred and relied on flash cards, repeating grammatical rules, and solving textbook exercises. My first actual teaching experience was after I was hired at a local university. The level of students differs from that of secondary school students, and so was the prescribed curriculum. I recall my experience in the first classes that I taught, which were trial and error. I referred to my colleague for the ways how to teach and even observed some in their classes. Also, although my MA was not a language teaching degree, I recall replicating the ways I was taught in these classes.

When I began my PhD programme in the UK, I found myself navigating similar experiences to those I encountered during my MA studies. This sense of familiarity, coupled with my earlier experiences as a novice instructor and my observations of colleagues, deepened my interest in understanding the experiences of other EFL instructors. I became particularly curious about how they navigate their professional journeys, especially those who, like myself, have had the opportunity to study abroad. This curiosity fuelled my desire to explore how these instructors integrate their overseas educational experiences into their teaching practices upon returning to their home contexts.

1.2 Rationale of the study

The rapid expansion of Saudi HE institutions in recent decades has created a significant demand for qualified instructors, especially those with postgraduate degrees. To address this shortage, the government established overseas scholarship programmes, encouraging instructors to obtain postgraduate degrees, mainly from English-speaking countries. While these programmes aim to equip instructors with enhanced pedagogical skills, they are not specifically tailored to the Saudi context. Universities base their approval of these programmes on factors like compatibility with institutional goals and, particularly, the global ranking of overseas institutions (Phan & Barnawi, 2015). Despite the considerable financial investment in overseas education initiatives, evaluation of their success primarily focuses on narrow metrics like degree completion rates (Engberg, Glover, Rumbley, & Altbach, 2014) and securing employment upon return (Althumairi, 2017). This narrow focus highlights a significant gap in understanding how the educational experiences of returnees are materialized and implemented within local classrooms.

Furthermore, the existing literature exploring Saudi social experiences, in general, often falls into a limiting dichotomy, framing individuals as either privileged or disadvantaged. This binary perspective, as argued by Almoaibed (2020), fails to capture the complexities and nuances of lived experiences within the Kingdom. This oversimplification is particularly evident in portrayals of Saudi women, where narratives often swing between extremes of oppression and empowerment without acknowledging the spectrum of realities in between (Mustafa & Troudi, 2019).

In terms of research within the Saudi context, most of the research conducted at the local level often focuses on collecting quantitative data that can be used to support policy decisions (Almoaibed, 2020). This sort of data can be helpful in understanding the economic impact of a particular policy, but it can also obscure the diverse perspectives and experiences of the people who are affected by the policies and how these policies operate at the micro level.

This research embraces a narrative methodology and prioritises the interpretations of both local and international experiences. By examining personal and professional narratives, the study aims to uncover how these experiences intersect to shape teaching practices within Saudi Arabia. This approach seeks to bridge the gap between institutional realities and the lived experiences of EFL instructors within their classrooms.

The study focuses on narratives to move beyond simplistic metrics of programme success, such as degree completion rates or employment statistics. Instead, it delves into the dynamic processes of professional development and career navigation within the specific context of Saudi Arabia. The overarching aim is to contribute a more nuanced and holistic understanding of instructor learning experiences within the Kingdom. These insights will, in turn, inform more effective policy decisions, pedagogical approaches and institutional practices that better support EFL instructors and enhance English language education in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 The research questions

The research was initially motivated by one main question: what do EFL instructors ascribe as meaningful experiences in their English language learning and teaching journeys? After the data collection, the research focused on the following questions.

- How did the participants construct the influences on their educational choices?
- How did the participants construct their learning experiences?
- What are the experiences that informed the participants' current practice?
- What are the enabling and constraining factors that affect the achievement of desired teaching practices?

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized into ten chapters. In **Chapter one**, I presented the research rationale for embarking on this study. I also introduced the research questions.

Chapter two focuses on the research context. This chapter highlights the background of the research by providing an overview of the Saudi socio-historical context, the history of education (including EFL teacher preparation programmes), Saudi higher education, and overseas scholarship programmes in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter three establishes the background of this study: teacher professional learning. In this chapter, I review the terminologies and approaches to teacher professional learning to situate the study within the broader literature. I then briefly review frequently reported factors that influence teachers' learning. The second section examines international educational experiences and how literature has explored these experiences. Additionally, I review the literature concerning teacher education in overseas contexts and post-sojourn teaching practices.

Chapter four introduces the theoretical framework used to understand the teachers' experiences. The focal concept of this framework is agency. In this chapter, I present an integrated model of agency that draws on the work of Giddens (1984) and Emirbayer and Mische (1998).

Chapter five explains the research methodology. It highlights the research paradigm and the rationale for adopting narrative inquiry as the chosen approach. This chapter also describes the procedures for data collection, analysis, and presentation. Considerations on the whole process are discussed, which include translation, transcription, ethics, and researcher positionality.

Chapter six presents the first analysis chapter, highlighting four participants' stories of educational choice. It is divided into two sections: choice of BA programme and choice of studying abroad.

Chapter seven presents the participants' narratives of learning experiences. In this chapter, I provide a narrative analysis of their educational journeys, from being a language learner in the BA English language programme to being a lecturer/instructor in Saudi HE institutions.

Chapter eight focuses on the narratives of three participants, specifically examining how they construct their teaching practices. The analysis delves into how these participants draw connections between their experiences and teaching, exploring both the constraining and enabling factors that shape their desired pedagogical approaches.

Chapter nine presents the discussion, addressing the four research questions. This chapter synthesizes the overarching themes emerging from participants' narratives, situating them within the existing literature and the specific context of Saudi Arabia.

Chapter ten is the conclusion. In this chapter, I reflect on the research process and findings. Also, I highlight the study's theoretical and methodological contributions, particularly its use of the integrated model of agency (Giddens ,1984; Emirbayer and Mische,1998) to understand Saudi female EFL instructors' experiences. The chapter also addresses the study's limitations and discusses its implications for Saudi higher education and research on EFL teacher education abroad.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the context of Saudi Arabia, where this research is situated. The chapter starts with a brief outline of its geographical location, economic status, and sociocultural structure. This is followed by a summary of the Saudi higher education (HE) system, which includes a brief history, governance, and reform initiatives. The following sections address teachers' preparation programmes, the Saudi EFL context, and overseas scholarship in Saudi Arabia. These sections include a review of the literature on the issues and factors concerning EFL education in Saudi Arabia.

2.2 The context: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

This study is set in one of the largest countries in the Middle East, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Geographically, Saudi Arabia is located at the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, covering 80% of its land. Saudi Arabia shares its borders with Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Iraq, and Jordan. The official language is Arabic, and Islam is the official religion (Pompea, 2002). It is the birthplace of Islam and the location of the two holy cities, Makkah and Medina. The kingdom was officially established in 1932 by King Abdulaziz bin Saud (Hamdan, 2005), creating an absolute monarchy ruled by the successors of the late King Abdulaziz (Baki, 2004). Saudi Arabia's population is estimated to be around 32,175,224 people (Saudi Census, 2023).

Economically, Saudi Arabia is known for being the world's largest oil supplier, accounting for 60% of global oil exports (L. Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). Prior to the discovery of oil, Saudi Arabia was one of the poorest countries in the world, which relied on revenues from trade customs and annual pilgrimage (Aldukheil, 2013). After the discovery of oil in 1938, Saudi Arabia rapidly became one of the wealthiest countries in the world. Saudi Arabia's economy is heavily reliant on oil revenue, accounting for more than 80% of total government revenue (Abdel-Latif, Osman, & Ahmed, 2018). In 2016, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman introduced Vision 2030, a national reform programme. Its overarching objectives are to 'strengthen Islamic and national identity, offer a fulfilling and healthy life, grow and diversify the economy, increase the employment rate, enhance government

effectiveness, and enable social responsibility' (Vision 2030, 2016). Vision 2030 aims to transform the current economy by shifting from an oil-based economy to a knowledge-based economy. This shift is intended to propel Saudi Arabia to a leading position in the global market economy across all sectors (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017).

Saudi society is often described as collectivist, which emphasises the importance of familial and tribal bonds over relationships with individuals outside these affiliations (Mellahi, 2006). Community and family are often highlighted when describing the Saudi context. Family is the core unit in Saudi society, which is bounded by a mixture of Islamic, cultural, and economic values. Within the family structure, Islamically and culturally, the father is obliged to provide financial support to the family and is in charge of major decisions concerning family members, whereas the mother is responsible for taking care of the children and the household (Almalki, 2020). As we will see in Chapter 6, family is present in all the participants' narratives when it comes to their educational decisions. However, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has witnessed changes in traditional gender roles due to globalisation as well as Saudi government reforms, especially in policies pertaining to women that facilitated their mobility, access, and participation in the workforce. Notable examples of change in policies include ending the ban on women driving, lifting the restrictions on single-gender workspaces, removing the *mahram* (male guardian) requirement for females who want to seek overseas education, and permitting adult women to live independently (Alselaimi & Allui, 2018). The policy changes contributed to increasing women's participation in the labour market, from 16% in 2016 to 37% in 2022 (Vision 2030, 2023).

2.2.1 Saudi Higher Education (HE)

Prior to the official establishment of the country in 1932, education in the region was primarily conducted through *Kuttab*, which were study circles held in homes or local mosques. The *Katateeb* (plural of *Kuttab*), mainly located in the Western region of Hijaz, focused on memorising the holy Quran, learning Islamic teachings, the Arabic language, and basic math (Elyas & Picard, 2010). Both boys and girls had access to *Kuttab* education, but girls' education would often cease once they reached puberty (Hamdan, 2005). In addition to *Kuttab*, four private schools exclusively for boys were established by merchants, offering a range of subjects (Al-Rasheed, 2013).

Formal education came later and went through several stages. The earliest formal education system was established in 1938 when King Abdulaziz founded the Directorate of Education, which was responsible for overseeing all boys' schools in the country (Rugh, 2002). In 1959, the General Presidency for Girls Education was established. The delay in girls' formal education was due to competing public discourses and the prevailing cultural norms at that time, which deemed female education unnecessary and potentially harmful to society (Al-Essa, 2009; Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013).

In terms of Saudi higher education, the first HE institution was King Saud University, which was established in 1957 in the Saudi capital, Riyadh (Alamri, 2011). Within 20 years, six other universities were instituted. To regulate the HE institutions, the government established the Ministry of Higher Education, under which all Saudi HE institutions would operate. The separate education directorates, the Directorate of Education, the General Presidency for Girls Education, and the Ministry of Higher Education, were later enjoined under one ministry, the Ministry of Education (MoE) (Ministry of Education, 2020). The government of education, including HE institutions, is centralised and the MoE is responsible for allocating funding, issuing educational policies, setting quality standards, and approving the overall education administrative process (Aburizaizah, 2022).

One major trend in Saudi HE is the shift towards internationalisation. The Saudi government has been actively promoting the internationalisation of HE by providing both financial and logistical support (Barnawi & Phan, 2015). The attention was drawn to Saudi education in general and HE institutions in particular after the country was confronted by a high unemployment rate. In 2011, the unemployment rate among Saudis reached 15% overall, and it was up to 22% in rural areas (Hani & Lopesciolo, 2021). HE institutions faced criticism for the mismatch between their degree programmes and the demands of the job market (Achoui, 2009; Mishrif & Alabduljabbar, 2018). Further, they were criticised for not adequately preparing graduates with skills and knowledge, including English language skills, that are needed in the labour market locally and globally (Phan & Barnawi, 2015).

Public and private HE institutions have tried to overhaul their education by adopting international curricula, partnering with global providers, and establishing

joint international programmes (Barnawi & Phan, 2015; Hamdan, 2015). One of the goals outlined in Vision 2030 is to have five Saudi universities ranked among the top 200 globally by the year 2030 (Vision 2030, 2016). This objective has spurred HE institutions to re-evaluate their programmes and educational methodologies to align with international standards.

The government, through the Ministry of Education (MoE), has made a massive investment in numerous projects to reform HE. An example of MoE's projects is the College of Excellence project (CoE). The project commenced in 2011 with a budget exceeding one billion US dollars; the project called upon global training providers to participate in a bidding process for establishing technical and vocational education college campuses in Saudi Arabia (Phan & Barnawi, 2015). In 2015, over 37 colleges were selected by the Saudi government and operated by international entities. The selected colleges are predominantly from anglophone countries such as the UK, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia. The training is conducted through English Medium Instruction (EMI), during which students receive comprehensive English language training in the first year of the programme (Phan & Barnawi, 2015).

2.2.2 Teachers' preparation programmes

The early rapid expansion of the education sector in Saudi Arabia has led to an increased demand for qualified teachers. To accommodate this expansion, the government hired teachers from neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. As education was fully segregated, with male teachers not allowed in female schools and vice versa, the shortages in higher education institutions were further addressed by using closed-circuit television to transmit lectures from male campuses to female campuses (EL-Sanabary, 1994 as cited in Hamdan, 2005). Additionally, the government founded teacher training programmes to train Saudis to become teachers. The early teacher training programmes were a two-year diploma that was awarded after high school. These programmes later developed into four-year bachelor's degrees that included teaching practicums in various fields. In order to address the high demand for qualified female teachers and the cultural restrictions on female mobility, the government opened Education Colleges in remote areas and small towns (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013).

EFL teachers' preparation programmes began in the 1970s (Al-Seghayer, 2017). The MoE created a training programme in which high school graduates would study the English language for a year and then take a comprehensive exam. Those who pass the exam would be offered an opportunity to study in UK universities for a teaching certificate. Graduates of this form of training were qualified to teach up to the intermediate level at public schools, which are government-funded and free of charge for all Saudi citizens (Ibrahim, 1985 as cited in Al-Seghayer, 2017). In the early 1980's, Saudi universities and Education Colleges started to open a variety of English-related programmes. The programmes include English Translation, English Language, and English Literature. These programmes were four years in duration, and graduates would be awarded a bachelor's degree. For universities, English Language programme candidates generally study language skills in the first two years and then take academic courses in Linguistics, Phonetics, Syntax, and Translation in addition to English Literature courses (Al-Seghayer, 2017). For the Education Colleges, the programmes further include teaching methodologies courses and a four-week teaching practicum in the last year of the programme. Due to the shortages of qualified EFL teachers from education colleges, graduates from universities with majors in English language-related fields, such as translation and English literature, are considered eligible to teach English at all levels in public schools. In 2018, the MoE announced that Education Colleges would cease to provide teacher qualifications through BA programmes, shifting instead to a 'sequential/consecutive system' where aspiring teachers must first earn a BA in their specialised field and then complete a one-year Education diploma programme to become qualified (Maash, 2021).

2.3 Saudi Arabia EFL context

In this section, I provide a brief historical overview of the English language in Saudi Arabia. I then offer a focused review of the status of the English language within both public education and higher education institutions. The review highlights frequent themes found in Saudi EFL literature regarding language learning and teaching.

2.3.1 English Language Status in Saudi Arabia

The spread of English in Saudi Arabia is a complex phenomenon with a long history. Unlike most neighbouring countries in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia was never colonised (Nouraldeen & Elyas, 2014; Wiegand, 2014), which suggests that the

English language did not arrive in the country through direct political or military means. Instead, the spread of English in Saudi Arabia is perceived to be influenced by several factors. According to Elyas and Picard (2018), the early formal education system in Saudi Arabia was a replica of the Egyptian school curriculum, which was modelled after the French education system. The borrowed curriculum included two foreign languages, English and French (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). Nonetheless, the French language was later removed from the curriculum in 1969, leaving English as the sole foreign language taught in public schools. The discovery of oil in 1938 was another major factor that contributed to the spread of English in Saudi Arabia. The oil industry was primarily operated by foreign workers, mainly from the United States. In order to interact with these workers and join the oil industry, Saudis had to learn English (Elyas & Picard, 2018). For a long time, the oil industry has been Saudi Arabia's main source of income, and a large portion of oil exports have been exported to English-speaking countries (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The reliance on oil industry income promoted more emphasis on learning the English language for international trade. In addition, the spread of English in Saudi Arabia was further facilitated by the global dominance of English as an imperative lingua franca (Kubota & McKay, 2009).

Nowadays, English language has been established as a medium of communication with non-Arabic speakers in the Saudi context. English is considered to be of great importance in the Saudi education system due to its perceived economic value (M. Alshahrani, 2016; Mahboob & Elyas, 2014). English language is seen as the language driving modernisation, science, and technology, which is reflected in government policies in Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). For example, Saudi Vision 2030 aims for 'a thriving economy' (Vision 2030, 2016). The emphasis on the economy underscores the importance of using English as it has a critical impact on facilitating global trade (Ku & Zussman, 2010). In addition to the move in the internationalisation of HE (section 2.1.1), Saudi Arabia's initiatives in other sectors have also played a significant role in increasing the importance of the English language in the country. For example, the opening of new sectors, such as tourism and the issuing of tourist visas, which was not possible prior to 2019, has increased the demand for English language skills. Al-Tamimi (2019) notes that since the introduction of Vision 2030 in 2016, English has increasingly become the preferred language of communication within the local private sector (Al-Tamimi, 2019).

The increasing prevalence of English in Saudi Arabia has raised concerns, eliciting two main responses. First, the view of English as being 'loaded with political, religious, social, and economic overtones' could be seen as a threat to Saudi identity and culture (Mahboob & Elyas, 2014, p. 128). Further, the push for English language in various sectors as a means of attaining globalisation generated local concerns on the status of Arabic language. A recent initiative to address these concerns is exemplified in the Saudi Shura Council's approval of the 'System for Promoting the Use of the Arabic Language' article (Alansari, 2023), which aims to encourage governmental and non-governmental agencies to prioritise the use of Arabic in their operations and communications. The second stream views English as an empowering tool which offers its speakers opportunities to compete locally and globally. While both perspectives are of importance exemplified in the Saudi Vision's objectives, the latter is seen as more aligned with the government's economic vision. Phan and Barnawi (2015) contend that 'introducing more English education across the country is perceived by the Saudi government as a strategic response and as a step towards realising healthy educational reforms' (Phan & Barnawi, 2015, p. 13). Under the current reform initiatives, it is expected that English will continue to have a significant presence in the country (Al-Tamimi, 2019). Further, it is predicted that 'economic, social, and political drivers of EFL and TESOL in Saudi Arabia over the next decade [will include] neoliberalism and privatisation' (Moskovsky & Picard, 2018, p. 157).

2.3.2 English language in public education and HE

English language was first added to the Saudi school curriculum in 1958, and since then, it has remained the sole official foreign language taught in public schools. English language is a compulsory subject in the public education system. The starting level at which English language subject is introduced has changed over the years. English was taught as a continuous subject from seventh grade for a long time. The reason for delaying English language subject to the elementary school curriculum is due to the belief that it may interfere with the students' learning of Arabic (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). In 2005, English language was introduced to the elementary school curriculum starting from the sixth grade, then later moved to the fifth grade (Al-Seghayer, 2011). Recently, in 2021, the MoE announced that English language ought to be taught from the first grade. The main aims for introducing English language in the first grade are 1) to prepare students for post-secondary education and qualify

them for admission to local and international universities, 2) to keep up with the best educational practices, and 3) to bridge the gap between academic requirements and the needs of the job market (Ministry of Education, 2022). Since the education system is centralised, the English language curriculum is unified across public schools in Saudi Arabia. MoE has contacted many international publishers such as Macmillan, McGraw Hill, and Pearson Education to design an EFL curriculum that suits the local needs as well as to meet the MoE EFL objectives (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017)

In the Saudi HE context, English language is EMI in many universities. This is especially the case for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. In the universities that do not adopt EMI, English language courses are a prerequisite for most degree programmes, and students take them in the preparatory year (also known as the foundation year). In the preparatory year, the number of English course hours that students must attend ranges between 16 to 20 hours a week (Barnawi, 2019). English language is also a required course in most degree programmes, including Arabic and Islamic Studies. Each university has its own prescribed curriculum and textbooks for the English language curriculum.

Despite the presence of English language education at all levels in the Saudi education system, the education system has been criticised for the graduates' low proficiency levels. This criticism has been echoed by both earlier and more recent publications (Al-Hazmi, 2003; Al-Qahtani, 2016; Alkubaidi, 2014; Alrabai, 2016; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). The criticism is that Saudi students' low English skills do not reflect the expected level of proficiency after years of language learning in schools and universities. Alrabai (2016) argues that Saudi students' English language proficiency is significantly lower than that of their counterparts in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the broader Middle Eastern countries. He cites statistics from The Official Guide to the TOEFL Test (2009), which ranked Saudi students second to last in the Middle East. A more recent statistic from the website of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) shows that Saudi test takers scored among the lowest in the world (IELTS, 2022).

Several factors have been suggested to explain why Saudi students have low English language proficiency. Among these factors is the limited exposure to the English language outside the classroom (Alharbi, 2015). Students in Saudi Arabia

may not have many opportunities to use or encounter English in their everyday lives, such as in their homes or communities. Al-Seghayer (2011) observes that exposure to English within the public education curriculum is also quite limited. Students typically have only three English language classes per week, each lasting just 35 minutes. This limited duration is deemed inadequate for the comprehensive development of students' language skills. Assalahi (2015) elucidates that education in Saudi Arabia predominantly prioritises written examinations, which in turn impedes the cultivation of students' oral proficiency. Alrabai (2016) suggests that another factor contributing to the students' low language proficiency is the lack of relevance of the curriculum's content to the students' realities. That is, the disconnection between what they are being taught and their actual life experiences outside the classroom makes it difficult for students to grasp and apply the language skills effectively.

Culture is also seen as a significant factor that influences EFL education in Saudi Arabia. Educational practices in Saudi Arabia are rooted in Islamic tradition and Arab culture. Elyas and Picard (2010) clarify that the Islamic tradition of Quran preservation through memorisation has influenced the educational practices in the Saudi context. This tradition formed the view that knowledge is determined by the learners' ability to memorise and recall the given text (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Islamic traditions have also influenced teacher/student roles in the classrooms. Elyas and Picard (2010) explain that the image of an Imam preaching to the audience with no interaction unless it is after the lecture resembles the lecturers' teaching style in university halls. Further, respect for the teacher is rooted in Arabic and Islamic culture, which respects older and more knowledgeable people (Elyas & Picard, 2010). The teacher is traditionally seen as the transmitter of unquestioned truth, while the students are seen as the receivers. The teacher's authority is absolute, and students are expected to be obedient and respectful (Al-Johani, 2009). This was echoed by several studies, which concluded that the instructors spoke most of the class time, and students were given a limited window to participate or pose questions (Al-Johani, 2009; Alkubaidi, 2014; Fareh, 2010).

Recently, it has been noted that the cultural value of silence is seen as an additional factor that influences the teachers' educational approaches in the classroom. According to Al-Ahmadi and King (2023), silence is encouraged in Saudi culture and often is seen in proverbs such as 'silence is wisdom'. The authors note

that some researchers may interpret it as a sign of students' lack of motivation to participate in class discussions/activities or view it as a form of resistance to changes in instructional practices.

Situational factors such as large classes and time constraints can also influence teachers' practices (Liton, 2013). In Alrabai (2016)'s study, the instructors reported that the large classes pose difficulties for them in terms of class management, variation in students' proficiency level, difficulty in conducting activities, properly evaluating students' performance, and providing constructive feedback.

Although there are many factors that contribute to students' low oral communication and overall language proficiency, the instructional practices of Saudi EFL teachers have been the centre of much of the criticism. One of the recurring criticisms is related to the inadequate communicative competence of graduate teachers (Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013). In an analysis of the MoE survey of EFL teachers' professional training needs, Mitchell and Alfuraih (2017) report that over 70% of teachers professed the need for English language courses to develop their language skills. Similar reports were found in other studies (Al-Abiky, 2019; Al-Harbi, 2006; Alshuaifan, 2009).

Another criticism of teachers' preparation programmes questions the programmes' capacity to equip pre-service EFL teachers with the necessary knowledge about teaching methodologies and practices. Al-Hazmi (2003) posits that teacher education programmes do not prepare pre-service EFL teachers to teach the language. He asserts that most of these programmes are theoretical, and the teacher training in these programmes is not sufficient to prepare them for actual classroom teaching. Similarly, Al-Seghayer (2014) states that pre-service EFL teachers lack the theoretical and practical knowledge to teach language skills such as Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. He points out that the issue could be due to the fact that teaching methodology courses, including the practicum, do not exceed 10% of the programme (Al-Seghayer, 2017). This criticism has been supported by a number of researchers (Albahiri, 2010; Albedaiwi, 2014). From the teachers' perspective, Alshuaifan (2009) investigated the perceptions of 83 in-service EFL teachers regarding their teacher preparation programs. Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their education in these programmes. The respondents reported

that the programs did not provide them with sufficient courses on linguistics and syllabus design and thus did not prepare them for actual classroom challenges.

The Saudi education system is centralised, with MoE overseeing all aspects of education in Saudi Arabia. This includes introducing educational policies, hiring teachers and staff, allocating financial funding, designing curricula, planning and implementing educational programmes, and provisioning professional development for teachers and other education professionals (Bentahar, Copeland, Stevens, & Vukelich, 2021; Khalil & Karim, 2016). However, unlike the K-12 education system, Saudi HE institutions have a degree of autonomy in how they deliver and achieve the MoE's policies and objectives, including professional development plans for their faculty and staff.

The MoE introduced various initiatives to overhaul the education system, including EFL education. One notable example of MoE initiatives is the King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Project, commonly known as Tatweer, which commenced in 2007 with the goal of reforming the Saudi education system over a span of ten years. The programme encompassed various objectives, one of which is reforming the education system from traditional teacher-centred education towards student-centred education. To achieve educational reform, the MoE made a substantial investment in teachers' professional development (PD) (Alyami & Floyd, 2019). As stated in the Tatweer report, investment in professional development (PD) for EFL teachers entails providing periodic training opportunities aimed at enhancing their language proficiency and teaching strategies (Tatweer, 2007). Nonetheless, the largest government initiative for PD of public sector employees, including the education sector, is overseas education scholarship. In section 2.4, I provide an overview of overseas scholarship in the Saudi context in general and in relation to EFL instructors.

2.4 Overseas scholarship in Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's investment in overseas education is traced back to 1927 when three teachers sent a proposal letter to King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud to request sending students overseas to study. The letter stated, 'Knowledge is the only way to build a country, and it will not happen unless we send youth abroad to learn' (Aljawadi, 1972 as cited in Althoiei, 2014, p.21). In response to this letter, 14 students were sent to Egypt to study different fields. This marked the

start of various overseas programmes that served different purposes. The main objective of the first initiative was to serve the needs of building a system for the new kingdom at that time. Eighty-five years later, study abroad programmes have come a long way, sending thousands of students overseas every year. Saudi Arabia's allocation for education and training, including funding for overseas scholarships, accounts for 25% of its annual budget (Barnawi, 2020; Mishrif & Alabduljabbar, 2018). The investment in scholarship programmes reached two billion US dollars annually in the case of King Abdullah Scholarship programme (KASP) (Yakaboski, Perez-Velez, & Almutairi, 2016). The massive investment in overseas education ranked Saudi Arabia third in 2014 (behind China and India) in the number of students sent for overseas education and fourth in 2018 (Khamis, 2022).

The largest scholarship programme in Saudi Arabian history is King Abdullah Scholarship programme (KASP). KASP started in 2005 through an agreement between the late King Abdullah and former US President George Bush to send students to the US for all levels of HE. Although the start of the programme was an agreement between the US and Saudi Arabia, it was not limited to the United States. The applicants had the choice of 20 other countries. However, most Saudi sojourners tend to choose countries in which the English language is the language of education and communication (Taylor & Albasri, 2014). The programme provided funding not only for academic degrees but also for one year of pre-sessional English courses for each student until they achieved the language requirement of their intended academic programmes. Additionally, the scholarship holders' companions, either wife or *Mehram* (male guardian for female applicants), are treated as scholarship holders and are offered the same benefits of education, health insurance, and monthly pay (Bukhari & Denman, 2013). From the start of the KASP programme in 2005 to 2015 the programme had sent over 150,000 Saudis for overseas education (Abdullah,

2022). Currently, there are new forms of government scholarship that are open to the public. Figure 1 serves as an example of the recent scholarship programme.

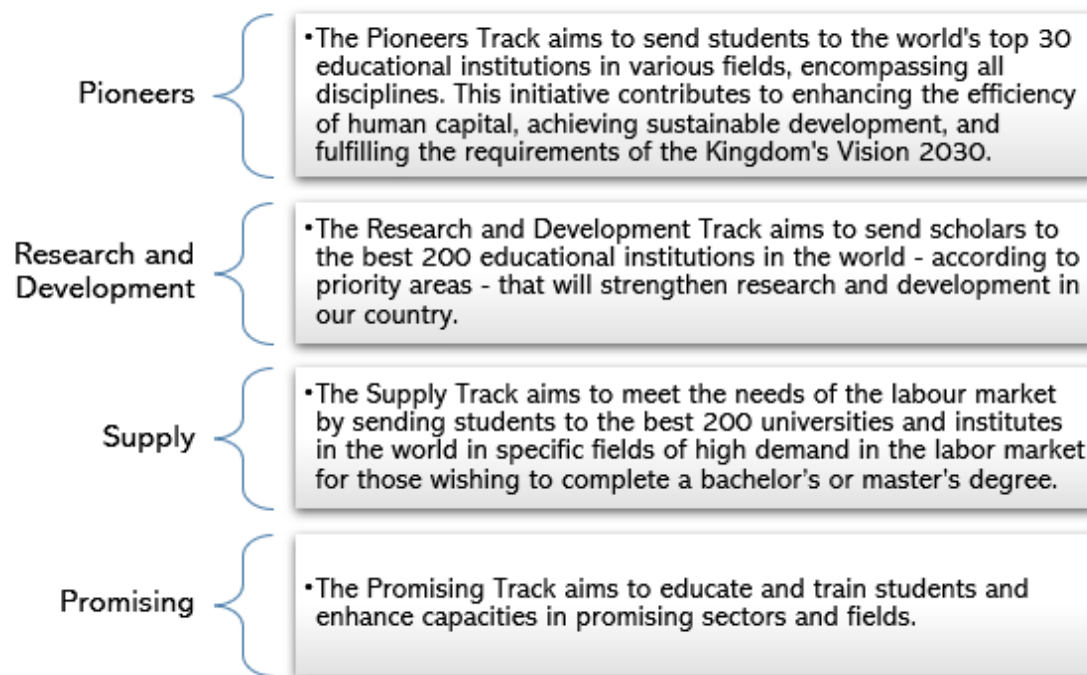


Figure 1: Public scholarship programmes adapted from the Ministry of Higher Education (2023)

The objectives of the early and recent SA programmes in the Saudi context are aligned in its focus on equipping human capital with the necessary skills to advance the country. The Saudi government plans to continue its massive investment SA programmes. In 2022, the Minister of Education, Dr Hamad bin Mohammed Al-Sheikh, revealed that the latest scholarship programmes phase targets the scholarship of 70,000 Saudi citizens to the best 200 educational and training institutions around the world by 2030 (Algharsan, 2022). Aside from public scholarship programmes, government employees in various sectors can embark on overseas education as a form of professional development. In the following section, I will explain SA scholarship to HE faculty, including EFL instructors.

In-service teachers' overseas education

In the context of Saudi HE, overseas education scholarship programmes were instituted in response to the urgent need for highly qualified instructors to teach in the rapidly expanding number of Saudi HE institutions. In the past two decades, the number of higher education institutions has increased to 67 HE institutions, with 11 of

these new institutions being established in the past ten years (Ministry of Education, 2022). The 67 HE institutions are offering education to approximately 1,982,722 enrolled students. This represents 90% of all high school graduates in the country (Ministry of Education, 2022). However, the Saudi higher education sector is currently limited by a shortage of master's and PhD holders, making it difficult to find sufficient numbers of local instructors to staff these universities.

To address the shortage of qualified instructors, including EFL instructors, in Saudi Arabia, universities have to hire graduates with bachelor's degrees. These graduates were then obliged to obtain higher degrees from an overseas university, preferably in English-speaking countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada. For EFL instructors, the overseas programmes are not tailored for Saudi instructors, but they are standard graduate programmes such as Master's in TESOL or Applied Linguistics. Nonetheless, each sponsoring university has its criteria for approving overseas programmes. The criteria could relate to the compatibility of the overseas programmes with the sending university's internal goals, such as a need for a specific field. One of the most common criteria that Saudi universities rely on to evaluate SA programmes is the world ranking of overseas institutions (Barnawi & Phan, 2015). The world ranking is used in Saudi HE institutions as a 'benchmarking or quality assurance tool, and eligibility criteria' for assessing the appropriateness of overseas programmes and institutions (Shehatta & Mahmood, 2016, p. 1249). The HE faculty application process is entirely individual. Faculty usually apply to graduate programmes, and once they are accepted, they apply to their employing university's scholarship committee for approval. Those who receive conditional acceptance that requires meeting the programme's English language proficiency requirement are funded for pre-sessional language courses prior to the start of their graduate programmes.

One of the unstated expectations of instructors who complete their graduate degrees is that they will return home to their university positions and contribute to the educational development of their country (Barnawi, 2018; Pikos-Sallie, 2018). For EFL instructors, they are expected to enhance their English proficiency and acquire the latest theoretical and practical knowledge in foreign language teaching. They are also expected to apply their knowledge in classrooms to foster students' communicative competence (Osailan, 2009). Changing Saudi classrooms, including

EFL classrooms, from a traditional lecture style of teaching towards more interactive and communicative learning has been one of the objectives of educational reform in Saudi Arabia over the last decade (Tatweer, 2007, 2010)

The number of university faculty members in Saudi Arabia who have pursued international education has increased significantly in recent years. In 2018, 14,746 faculty members were studying in overseas institutions (Saudi Arabian Higher Education Statistics, 2018). This number had grown to 18,560, including EFL instructors in 2019. Although Saudi Arabia has a long history of scholarship programmes and significant financial investment in its citizens' overseas education, the impact of such investment on the Saudi context remains unexplored. The Saudi government has not yet established any programme to measure/follow the outcome of investing in SA programmes. In their review of KASP programme as a Saudi case, Engberg et al. (2014) conclude that the Saudi government 'measures the success of KASP based on the number of successful recipients that complete their programmes on time. No other measurements have been put in place' (Engberg et al., 2014, p. 44). In addition to degree completion as a measure of success, local reports of SA graduates securing a job in the local context are often projected as indicators of the success of scholarship initiatives (Althumairi, 2017).

Similar to public scholarship programmes, Saudi HE institutions assume the success of SA returnees by degree completion (Barnawi & Phan, 2015). Nonetheless, degree completion alone does not reflect the skills and knowledge that EFL instructors have accumulated in their SA sojourn, nor does it guarantee the success of applying them in local classrooms. The absence of follow-up programmes from the government or employing institutions leaves much ambiguity about the impact of SA education on local classrooms. Furthermore, there is a lack of local research that has explored SA's influence on local classrooms in general and EFL classrooms in particular. To my knowledge, only two recent studies have examined the effect of SA on EFL instructors: Al-Samiri (2020) and Alhuwaydi (2020) (more details on these studies in Chapter 3). The impact of scholarship programmes on Saudi instructors remains largely unclear (Pikos-Sallie, 2018).

The Saudi education context is commonly known for adopting a top-down approach in implementing policies and plans for educational reform (Barnawi &

Alhawsawi, 2017). However, this approach can sometimes overlook the crucial role that teachers play in the successful implementation of these reforms. The literature concerning teachers under educational reform indicates that negligence of teachers' voices may result in failure to attain the policies' objectives (Allmnakrah & Evers, 2020; Alnefaie & Gritter, 2016; Assalahi, 2015). In relation to this study, I believe that the instructors' perspectives on their local and international experiences are crucial in comprehending the influence of these encounters on their work contexts and teaching practice. The instructors' interpretation and sense-making of these experiences are pivotal since they hold an emic perspective on Saudi HE and overseas education.

Moreover, I believe that taking into account EFL instructors' perspectives is crucial for a holistic evaluation of local and international programmes, particularly in light of the significant investment the Saudi government has made in EFL instructors' education. This investment is particularly noteworthy given the persistent challenge of low achievement levels within Saudi education. The apparent disconnect between these large-scale training initiatives and classroom outcomes raises important questions about the effectiveness of current approaches to EFL instructor learning experiences. My narrative inquiry aims to explore these complexities by examining the lived experiences of EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia, focusing not only on their SA experiences but also on their broader professional journeys. By delving into their personal stories, I seek to illuminate the various factors that have shaped their growth as EFL instructors, including their international experiences, their reintegration into the Saudi context, and their ongoing navigation of the opportunities and challenges within their profession.

My research embraces an emic perspective, privileging the instructors' own interpretations of their experiences and shedding light on the interplay between their individual agency, the institutional contexts they navigate, and broader national educational policies. Focusing on these EFL instructors' narratives offers a unique contribution by bridging the macro-level influences of governmental policies, the meso-level impact of institutional traditions and practices, and the micro-level realities of their lived experiences in classrooms. Through in-depth exploration of their stories, I aim to move beyond a simple assessment of programme effectiveness, seeking instead to uncover the dynamic processes by which these EFL instructors develop their professional identities and navigate their careers within the Saudi Arabian

context. Ultimately, my research aims to contribute a nuanced understanding of EFL instructor learning experiences in Saudi Arabia, yielding insights that can inform policy, practice, and pedagogy to better support EFL instructors and advance English language education within Saudi Arabia.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I introduced the research context. At the beginning of the chapter, I provided an overview of the social and economic context. Then I explained the relevant HE context, including initiatives and the trending move toward internationalisation of HE. In Section 2.3, I discussed the Saudi EFL context, including English language status in the public sphere and the Saudi education system and, reviewed the factors that influenced English language education in Saudi Arabia and provided examples of initiatives that aimed at reforming the education system, enhancing the graduates' English language proficiency. The last section focused on SA scholarship in Saudi Arabia and, more precisely, on EFL instructors in the Saudi HE. The following chapter is a literature review of issues related to this study, including a review of the literature around teacher professional learning in general and teacher learning in overseas contexts.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature concerning teachers' professional learning (PL), which forms the main theme underlying the participants' stories. Firstly, I explore various definitions and terminologies related to professional learning, as well as different perspectives on teachers' professional learning and the factors that might influence it. The second part of the chapter shifts focus to students' international experiences. I examine diverse perspectives on this topic before delving into teachers' experiences in overseas contexts. Then I provide a brief review of studies that have explored teachers' experiences abroad.

3.2 Teachers' professional learning

In this section, I explore the definitions and terminologies related to professional development (PD) for teachers, different perspectives on teachers' professional learning, factors that influence teachers' professional learning, and finally, a review of the literature on EFL teachers' education in overseas contexts.

3.2.1 Professional learning (PL) or professional development (PD)?

The terms professional learning (PL) and professional development (PD) are often used interchangeably in the literature (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009). However, it is argued that the terms learning and development are underpinned by differences in the understanding of knowledge, scope, and approaches to teachers' learning. For example, Webster-Wright (2009) suggests that PD implies that some sort of knowledge is delivered to teachers in order to develop/improve a deficiency in teachers' practice. Timperley (2011) explains that PD is 'often seen as merely participation' (Timperley, 2011, p. 5) in formal organised events, and the development is assumed to be by the end of these events. PL, on the other hand, is seen as 'an internal process' through which teachers construct knowledge by interacting with information in 'a way that challenges previous assumptions and creates new meanings' (Timperley, 2011, p. 5). Groundwater-Smith & Mockler (2009) describe it as 'a process, which is highly reflexive and differentiated and which leads to deep pedagogical shifts and transformation of practice' (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler,

2009, p. 53). PL could occur in formal and informal settings throughout teachers' lives (Avalos, 2011; Postholm, 2012; Xu & Connelly, 2009).

Kelchtermans and Vandenberghe (1994) explain that professional learning can be both gradual and unexpected, arising from critical events and interactions with individuals. While formal professional development programmes provide structured opportunities for learning, it is crucial to recognise that professional learning encompasses a broader spectrum of experiences across different contexts. This thesis adopts the term 'professional learning' to reflect this expansive view and explore how EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia learn and grow throughout their careers. This exploration will encompass both their experiences within formal professional development initiatives and the influence of broader contextual factors, such as changing educational policies and societal shifts, on their learning journeys. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 will present narratives from EFL teachers, illustrating the diverse ways in which they experience professional learning at various stages of their careers.

3.2.2 Perspectives on teachers' professional learning

A fundamental element of promoting teachers' professional learning is to understand the process through which teachers learn and explore the conditions that might facilitate their learning. Russ, Sherin, and Sherin (2016) explain that teacher professional learning is generally approached through three perspectives: process-product, cognitive, and situative-sociocultural. The process-product perspectives posit that professional learning happens when teachers engage in learning activities. Teachers, through participation in learning activities, gain 'generic actions' that could be implemented across contexts. The process-product perspective conceptualizes the teacher process of change into observable actions and student performance as the product of this change (Russ et al., 2016). Opfer and Pedder (2011) assert that the process-product perspective that focuses on identifying inputs and outputs of professional development programmes is the dominant approach to studying teacher professional learning.

The cognitive perspective explicitly focuses on the 'teachers' mental life', an element that is absent in the process-product perspective. In the cognitive perspective, teaching is viewed as 'a way of thinking with a particular set of specialized knowledge and cognitive processes' (Russ et al., 2016, p. 396). Research

that is underpinned by this view focuses on teachers' knowledge and mental constructs such as perception, attitudes, and beliefs. Within the cognitive model, effective professional learning involves experiences that prompt teachers to either construct new knowledge or adjust existing beliefs based on the new insights gained from the learning experiences.

The third perspective is situative and sociocultural perspectives. For the situative and sociocultural perspectives, teachers' thinking and activities are not isolated or universal; rather, they are deeply rooted in and influenced by the specific contexts in which they take place. Moreover, these contexts are intricately tied to particular cultures with unique histories which shape the way individuals think and engage in various activities (Russ et al., 2016). For these perspectives, teaching is not seen as merely observable actions or as a 'mental life' of teachers but instead, proponents of this perspective assert that 'individual teachers must be understood as embedded in physical and social systems, spread over time and space' (Russ et al., 2016, p. 403). Teachers' learning within this perspective is complex. This complexity arises because teachers are embedded within various contexts and historical periods, take on different roles and experiences, encounter diverse norms and rules, and have access to different resources. Therefore, understanding teachers' learning experiences is possible only when they are situated within their contexts.

In this thesis, my understanding of teachers' professional learning resonates between the cognitive perspective and the situative/sociocultural perspectives. While I do not focus on specific mental constructs, the cognitive perspective idea of change resonates with my participants' narratives of learning. That is, the idea of experiences that challenged preconceptions is clear in their stories, especially about the influence of their overseas experiences. As for the situative and sociocultural perspectives, I believe the attempt to understand their experiences and practices could not be interrogated without reference to the sociohistorical contexts. The term 'context' here is perceived as encompassing several layers of influence. These layers include teachers' immediate work environment, such as classrooms, students, and their immediate colleagues; the social and institutional context, encompassing workplace norms, educational policies, and school leadership practices; and the broader milieu, which considers external factors like social trends, cultural values, often manifested in family expectations, and economic realities (Borg, 2015; K. Hayes, Preminger, &

Bae, 2023; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Recognising these interconnected layers of influence is essential for understanding the professional learning experiences of EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia. Their narratives, as presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, demonstrate how these contextual factors, from classroom dynamics to broader societal norms, shape their beliefs, practices, and ongoing development.

3.2.3 Influences on language teacher professional learning

The generally accepted view on language teacher learning is that it is primarily driven by the individual, it is an ongoing process, requires self-reflection and is influenced by a complex set of factors (Mann, 2005; Mockler, 2011; Richards & Farrell, 2005). While this may be the case, there are some influences that are frequently reported as having an impact on teachers' professional learning. One of the frequently reported challenges in teachers' education programmes is teachers' prior knowledge, more precisely, the knowledge accumulated through 'apprenticeship of observation' (henceforth AoO) (Lortie, 1975). The idea of AoO is that the thousands of hours that students spent observing the education system shaped their cognition as teachers. The memories of teachers or teaching methodologies they appreciated as students are likely to influence their teaching practices. Similarly, negative memories of activities the teacher considered ineffective for their own learning might be omitted from their practice or lead to an 'anti-apprenticeship of observation,' where they consciously adopt practices contrary to their own experiences (Moodie, 2016).

The influence of either the AoO or anti AoO is seen in Davin, Chavoshan, and Donato (2018)'s study, which investigated how an experienced language teacher was influenced by her past language learning experiences. Through examining her stories of language learning and observing her teaching practices, the authors note that positive moments (like her French classroom's warm atmosphere) were echoed in her own teaching style, while negative experiences (such as overly focused grammar instruction in German) also manifested as similar avoidance within her classroom.

Borg (2015) asserts that language teachers, EFL and ESL teachers particularly, 'possess conceptions of their work which are influenced by their own experiences of language learning' (Borg, 2015, p. 325). The idea is supported by Moodie's (2016) study. The author investigated how Korean teachers' prior experiences as English language learners influence their beliefs and practices. The

data were collected using narrative frames for reflective writing of 18 in-service teachers and follow-up interviews with four participants. The author concluded that nearly all teachers had negative experiences in their English classes. These negative experiences led teachers to develop an 'anti-apprenticeship of observation' approach. That is, the teachers wanted to create a more positive and communicative learning environment for their students, essentially doing the opposite of what they had experienced. However, these teachers lacked experience with the current communicative-focused curriculum reforms, which resulted in practices that may not have been very effective for language acquisition, such as focusing on fun activities that weren't communicative. The author concluded with calls for further research on the apprenticeship of observation in different EFL contexts.

Research, mostly in the field of teacher cognition, highlights differences between pre-service and in-service teachers in PD/education programmes. Borg (2003b) observes that pre-service teachers often enter programmes with limited practical experience, which may lead to idealized or unrealistic expectations about teaching. Moreover, pre-service teachers who enter the profession with no formal training are more likely to teach in accordance with their prior experiences as students (D. Hayes, 2005). On the contrary, in-service teachers view the PD programmes' content and training through the lens of their experience as they have a more developed understanding of the classroom challenges and pedagogical approaches. This experience makes them view PD with a critical eye, leading to a selective application of new concepts and approaches. Due to established perspectives, changing in-service teachers' beliefs and practices can be challenging to achieve (Borg, 2015).

3.3 Perspectives on international student experiences

According to Chowdhury and Le Ha (2014), the literature surrounding international students over the last 30 years has been approached through two polarising models: either a 'deficit model' or a 'surplus model'. The deficit model positions students, especially those from non-western nations, as 'the Other' and tends to associate them predominantly with negative traits such as being passive, lacking critical thinking, and reluctance to participate in classroom discussions. The 'surplus model', on the other hand, views international students as 'valuable resources for the Western academia to learn from' (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2014, p. 10).

The authors give an example of how the Chinese students' silence and non-participation from the surplus model perspective are 'interpreted as part of a process of active thinking and a form of participation' (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2014, p. 10). However, the authors note that 'surplus' model tends to oversimplify the identity of international students by focusing only on certain positive attributes associated with them. This approach does not delve deeper into the complexity of their identities and experiences. Moreover, the oversimplified view reduces international students to a set of generalized characteristics, which, although a form of stereotyping, is considered more socially acceptable.

Chowdhury and Le Ha (2014) explain that there has been a paradigm shift in how international students are perceived and portrayed. Instead of viewing them through either a deficit or surplus approach, recent works emphasize 'cosmopolitanism' and 'worldliness' as the defining characteristics of international students. These works argue that agency plays a crucial role in understanding international students' experiences and identities. By focusing on agency, the power dynamic shifts towards the students themselves, away from deterministic narratives imposed by stereotypical discourses. Nevertheless, the authors acknowledge a possible downside to this shift in perspective: it could unintentionally foster patronizing attitudes or serve as a guise for the surplus model. Chowdhury and Le Ha (2014) point out that these approaches to representing international students are not isolated from each other but rather interconnected. The authors assert that this 'interconnectedness' allows us to see 'ways that international students are portrayed as well as the ways in which they portray themselves' (Chowdhury & Le Ha, 2014, p. 11).

The discourse surrounding deficit and surplus models in understanding international students' experiences abroad resonates with the journey of EFL instructors studying abroad. EFL teachers, like international students, navigate through various perceptions and representations shaped by these models during their educational sojourns. The deficit model, which focuses on what EFL instructors supposedly lack compared to native speakers, can contribute to their 'Othering' (Palfreyman, 2005). This process, as defined by Palfreyman, creates an 'Us vs. Them' dichotomy, positioning EFL instructors as the 'Other' and reinforcing a potentially negative identity based on perceived deficiencies (Palfreyman, 2005, p. 213). In the

context of EFL pedagogy, the Othering discourse frequently depicts EFL education systems and non-native English learners and teachers as deficient compared to their native-speaker counterparts (Palfreyman, 2005; McKay, 2011). McKay (2011) argues that Othering discourse 'positions English learners and bilingual teachers as deficient in comparison to native speakers' (McKay, 2011, p. 135). McKay (2011) further explains that 'the Self–Other discourse' portrayed some groups as 'incapable of participating in “modern” methods of language learning' (McKay, 2011, p. 135). Consequently, this discourse has fostered an idealization of Western teaching methodologies while simultaneously marginalizing local teaching traditions that do not align with Western educational norms. The most common example of teaching methodology in which the discourses of Othering appear is Communicative language teaching (henceforth CLT). CLT is widely adopted in various EFL contexts, including Saudi Arabia, as part of educational reforms aimed at enhancing students' communicative competence (Moskovsky, 2018). The influence of the discourse of Othering becomes evident when CLT goals are not achieved. In such instances, non-native learners and instructors are often held responsible, being portrayed as deficient and unable to meet Western standards of teaching and learning. The awareness of discourses of Othering is important for educational reform mandators in EFL contexts such as Saudi Arabia. The awareness of such discourse is significant to avoid implementing educational practices that might clash with local cultures and adopt more culturally sensitive educational practices (Zheng, 2015).

On the other hand, the surplus model offers a different perspective, highlighting the unique insights and cultural richness that EFL teachers bring to their teaching practice from their experiences abroad. Just as international students are celebrated for their diversity and cosmopolitan outlook, EFL teachers returning home may find themselves positioned as agents of cross-cultural understanding and language proficiency. Nonetheless, similar to international students, this surplus model can also risk oversimplifying the complexities of their experiences and overlooking the challenges they may have encountered during and post their time abroad. Examples of challenges during SA may include difficulty adapting to new educational approaches, homesickness, and cultural shock (Gebhard, 2013; Milian, Birnbaum, Cardona, & Nicholson, 2015). Macalister (2023) observes that there is a substantial body of literature focusing on the positive impacts of SA; however, limited attention

has been given to the potential negative impact that SA may have on returning sojourners. An exception is Macalister, who cites Greenholtz (2003) describing Japanese students after they spent a year in Canada:

They mope around their home campus bewildered and bitter that their newly found ability to criticize and question is not considered praiseworthy in Japan.

(Greenholtz, 2003, as cited in Macalister, 2023, p. 67)

In line with the criticism of ‘surplus’ approach to SA education, Kubota (2016) challenges the widespread notion that study abroad programmes automatically deliver benefits like language skills, intercultural competence, personal growth, and career advancement. She argues that this oversimplified narrative, forming a ‘study-abroad social imaginary,’ fails to capture the diverse experiences and complex realities of participants. By examining various channels perpetuating this discourse, Kubota highlights the ‘highly complex and contradictory’ relationship between participation and alleged outcomes (Kubota, 2016, p. 355). While acknowledging potential positive outcomes, she emphasizes that SA is not a guaranteed remedy to individual or societal challenges. Kubota advocates for a more nuanced understanding that considers the intersectionality of individual identities, social contexts, and institutional structures. Echoing Kubota's call, this study aims to provide a balanced perspective that considers both the positive and negative experiences of EFL instructors studying locally and abroad. By acknowledging the interconnectedness of these approaches and the complexities of their experiences, this research examines the interplay of individual identities, social contexts, and institutional structures in shaping the professional learning journeys of Saudi EFL instructors.

3.3.1 Language teacher education in overseas contexts

In the introduction of the edited book *Language Teachers Studying abroad*, Barkhuizen (2022), while defining the scope of the book, highlights the divergences in the literature surrounding teachers’ SA experiences. These include variations in the duration of stay (ranging from long-term to short-term), the status of teachers’ experiences (whether they are preservice or in-service), the nature of SA programs (ranging from organized programs tailored for specific goals to mainstream programs), disparities in contexts (comparing home and destination contexts), modes

of knowledge exchange (from online education to physical travel for educational purposes), and the categorization of teachers as either independent sojourners or part of their institution's planned sojourn. This is in addition to different research focuses, methodologies, researchers' identities (Macalister, 2023). Given these differences, I have chosen to focus on the frequently reported themes related to what teachers have learned and how their practices have changed after their sojourn.

Research on teachers' SA educational experiences places emphasis on their potential to generate positive influences on teachers' professional learning. Mahon and Cushner (2002) note that SA experience 'can be the catalyst that starts teachers on a path of learning from others: their students, their colleagues, their community, and their world' (Mahon & Cushner, 2002, p. 7). Researchers argue that the dissonance created by the clash between a teacher's local context and the overseas context can lead to a transformative learning experience (Baecher & Chung, 2020; Wette & Barkhuizen, 2022).

Macalister (2016) asserts that the context of studying abroad offers contextual conditions for learning that are not available in local education programmes. He explains that in education within local contexts, the trainee teachers and educators share the same native language, have experience of the same education system, and usually belong to the same social group. These conditions create a comfortable environment that limits the extent to which dissonance could happen, thus exert limited change in teachers' beliefs and practices. Macalister (2016) support his view with reference to Wong (2010)'s study which explored the beliefs of 25 Malaysian pre-service teachers over the period of 14 months and concluded that the pre-service teachers' beliefs were largely unchanged.

Unlike teachers in other fields, EFL teachers must possess not only effective teaching methodologies but also a strong command of the English language. Opfer and Pedder (2011) argue that conventional PD programmes designed for language instructors at the local level may not adequately address the language proficiency needs of EFL teachers. This is particularly relevant because EFL instructors often have restricted opportunities for language immersion beyond their classroom or workspace. Consequently, engaging in study abroad experiences emerges as the most suitable avenue for EFL teachers to pursue professional development.

Studying abroad could promote increased teacher awareness and deeper reflection on instructional ideologies and practices (Harbon, 2007). This outcome was present in He, Lundgren, and Pynes' (2017) study in which they explored the impact of a four-week SA programme to China on in-service teachers' intercultural competence and pedagogical beliefs. The participants were 12 full-time in-service teachers from the United States. The data were collected using quantitative and qualitative methods. The study's analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data revealed no dramatic changes in teachers' intercultural competence or pedagogical beliefs in terms of learning and teaching. However, although it was not the focus of the study, the researchers noted that teachers' experience facilitated more reflections regarding their own learning preferences and teaching strategies that they could adopt in their home context. Similarly, in Jochum, Rawlings, and Tejada (2015) study, which explored the professional development of four US in-service language teachers in a Spanish summer language school in Costa Rica, the researchers concluded that teachers' SA experiences stimulated teachers' reflections on their language proficiency and language-teaching practice as well as reinforcing their self-commitment to improvement.

Teachers' exposure to different educational contexts might further stimulate teachers' reflections beyond personal awareness of their practice and language proficiency. A study by Nguyen and Walkinshaw (2018) examined the impact of TESOL programmes in countries such as the USA, the UK and Australia on returnee Vietnamese teachers' autonomy, revealing that overseas training triggered teachers' critical reflections on two aspects: (1) the limits of their autonomy in the Vietnamese context and (2) a comparison of teachers' status in the overseas context and Vietnamese context.

Developing empathy for students' language learning challenges is one of the benefits of studying abroad. Ellis (2016) explains that taking the language-learner seat again 'provokes an identity shift from teacher to learner, from expert to novice and from a subject position in control of the class to a subject with very little control' where the shift further 'refreshes [the] teacher's understanding of his or her own learning strategies and gives insights into the affective dimensions of classroom learning' (Ellis, 2016, p. 602). Harbon (2014) notes that language teachers' focus on learners' achievement might inhibit their awareness of the experiences language learners go

through (Harbon, 2014). Studying abroad offers language teachers the opportunity to experience this shift. Jochum, Rawlings, and Tejada (2017) study supports this claim. The researchers explored the impact of a Spanish summer school on four in-service teachers' self-efficacy through interviews, observation, and personal journals. The researchers reported that due to their overseas experience, the teachers became more aware of their language as they 'realised deficiencies in their language skills', which made them develop more understanding of their students (Jochum et al., 2017, p. 40).

Teachers' immersion in a new linguistic landscape could challenge their assumptions about language and communication. Mayumi and Hüttner (2020) investigated the impact of studying abroad on four Japanese in-service teachers who pursued MA studies in Applied Linguistics/ ELT/ TESOL in the UK. The researchers conducted a series of in-depth interviews over a period of 20 months. The findings revealed that the teachers initially struggled with feelings of deficiency in their English language skills while abroad, but exposure to multilingual communities helped them overcome negative emotions and challenge their pre-existing beliefs about 'standard native English'. The study identified two patterns of action in response to the teachers' newly reconstructed beliefs: some adjusted their instructional practices to prioritize successful communication over native-like proficiency, while others were still contemplating how to integrate their new beliefs into their teaching.

3.2.1.1 Post-sojourn experiences: A focus on teachers' practice

One of the early studies that focused on the post-sojourn phase is Cook (2010) in the context of Japan. This study examined the long-term effect of a Canadian university programme on the practice of five experienced Japanese teachers of English. The researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods to trace the long-term effects of the SA programme. The key data were collected post-programme over three stages: immediately, six months and one-year post-programme. The study revealed that teachers attempted to incorporate the strategies that they had learned in the SA programme into their teaching. In the immediate post-programme phase, all teachers used various strategies that they had learned in the SA programme. After six months, teachers abandoned some of the strategies and continued incorporating most of their strategies. In the one-year post-SA programme, disparities between

teachers surfaced. Teachers who worked in junior high schools continued incorporating most of the strategies into their teaching practice, while teachers working in high schools had abandoned most of the learned strategies. The researcher concluded that this result is due to the difference in constraints on teachers in this context. Unlike junior high school teachers, senior high school teachers are restricted by entrance examinations, prescribed textbooks, and factors related to traditional teachers-students' roles. Similar constraints were reported in earlier studies by Lamie (2002) and Kurihara and Samimy (2007).

In the Malaysian context, Macalister (2016) explored the impact of a transnational language teacher education programme on the language teaching practices of pre-service teachers in Malaysia. The participants were 11 pre-service language teachers who undertook a two-year practicum in New Zealand. The main data sources were interviews and document analysis for lesson plans and teaching materials. In addition, classroom observation was undertaken for seven of the participating teachers. The author found that the impact of a transnational language teacher education programme on the language teaching practices of pre-service teachers was limited, and the school context largely determined the lesson planning decisions made in the observed lessons. Macalister (2016) notes that in two of the observed lessons, the teachers used 'running dictation' as a more learner-centered approach, attributing their knowledge of this activity to both their experiences abroad and learning from school supervisors.

Although overseas trained EFL teachers might encounter contextual constraints to the implementation of Western pedagogies such as CLT and task-based language teaching (TBLT), some returnee teachers' efforts to integrate SA pedagogies into their existing practice were successful. This was noted in Li and Edwards (2013)'s study, which examined the impact of three months of a UK-based professional development programme on Chinese teachers within a knowledge-management framework. The researchers utilised questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations to collect data from returnee teachers, non-participant teachers, and administrators. The researchers concluded that there was evidence of knowledge creation and innovation at different levels. At the individual level, teachers experimented in their classroom teaching using ideas they had learned in their UK-based courses. The integration was present in the activities used to teach language

skills and aspects such as vocabulary and grammar. Further, teachers' efforts extended to improving the process of learning for students, for example, by encouraging learner autonomy or using various motivational strategies adopted from their UK course experience. Similar to Kurihara and Samimy (2007)'s study, teachers' attempts were present in the integration of the knowledge gained from their SA programme into the knowledge needed for entrance examinations. Such attempts were characterised as individual choices that were influenced by broader cultural and institutional factors as well as personal factors.

Macalister (2023) explored the influences on pedagogical decisions of two novice Malaysian English language teachers who had previously studied abroad for two years. The researcher interviewed the teachers and observed their classes. The findings are that teachers' decisions were influenced by multiple layers of context and community, including their apprenticeship of observation, the national and local context, their professional learning, and support networks. While studying abroad gave the teachers some advantages, it also created conflict for one teacher. Her ideas from New Zealand clashed with the expectations of the Malaysian education system. The author suggested that teacher education programmes that include study-abroad experiences should consider ways to mitigate such conflicts.

Saudi HE instructors' post-sojourn experiences

In this section, I focus more on the literature about Saudi HE instructors who had overseas education. As mentioned in chapter 2, the literature on EFL instructors' experience Saudi HE is limited. There are only two studies I know of that have explored EFL instructors' experiences and practice. To expand the understanding of Saudi HE faculty experiences, I include one study that explored Saudi academics from different fields.

Pikos-Sallie (2018) explored the personal and professional benefits that Saudi academics gain as a result of their study-abroad experiences. The author also extended his research to explore the challenges of the returnees in Saudi HE. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with nine Saudi academics. The research revealed many benefits for their study abroad experiences, personal and professional. The professional benefits include increased awareness of student-teacher relationships, adopting more student-centred pedagogies, and experimenting

with teaching approaches. Regarding challenges, the academics reported resistance to change on many levels, from institutional leadership, colleagues, and students. Similar challenges were reported in Alandejani (2013) study which explored Saudi female academic readjustment experiences after returning from studying abroad. Alandejani (2013) adds to the challenges a lack of support for returning academics in Saudi HE.

One of two recent studies in the Saudi Arabian context that focused on returnee EFL instructors is Alhuwaydi (2020). The study explored the influence of overseas professional learning experiences on the cognitions and practices of EFL teachers in two universities. The researcher conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews and classroom observation with ten EFL instructors and two supervisors. The researcher concluded that teachers reported significant developments in cognitive and emotional domains (pedagogical knowledge, professional identity, agency) that persisted years after their return. However, the researcher notes that the instructors presented varied implementation of communicative and learner-centred practices in classrooms due to individual and contextual factors.

Al-Samiri (2020) explored the experience of Saudi EFL instructors who studied in the USA and returned to their work in Saudi HE. The researcher collected the data using interviews with 10 participants and did four classroom observations. The researcher concluded that SA was projected as a transformative experience that helped the participants gain more independence, build resilience, and increase their cultural awareness. Further, their experiences led them to adopt a more humanistic approach to teaching, emphasizing student-teacher relationships and acknowledging students as whole individuals. As for their teaching practice, the researcher notes that the instructors have created a 'third Space' in their classrooms, blending teaching methods from both Saudi and American cultures. This introduced students to new learning experiences while maintaining local values. This finding resonates with the participants' narratives around teaching practice in this study, as we will see in Chapter 8.

3.3.2 Insights from previous research

The previous research has demonstrated the complexities and variations in the post-sojourn experiences of EFL instructors. These experiences are influenced by

contextual factors, personal choices, and the challenges faced in integrating new pedagogical approaches into their teaching practice. In this study, I adopt a subjectivist perspective and employ a narrative methodology. This approach focuses on the participants' stories and how they make sense of their experiences, as well as how these experiences may influence their teaching practice. The study looks at the study abroad experience as one dimension in their learning journey, taking into account various experiences as language learners, pre-service teachers, early career teachers, and teachers now at their employing institutions. By doing so, it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape teachers' professional learning.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, the literature pertaining to teachers' PL was reviewed, as it served as the central theme underlying the participants' narratives. The chapter began by exploring various definitions and terminologies associated with professional learning, as well as examining different perspectives on teachers' professional learning and the potential influencing factors. Subsequently, the focus of the chapter shifted towards students' international experiences, encompassing a diverse range of perspectives on this subject before delving into the specific experiences of teachers in overseas contexts. In addition, a themed review of relevant studies exploring teachers' experiences abroad was provided. The following chapter delves into the theoretical framework, where I introduce and elucidate the integrated model adopted in this study.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

This thesis explores the concept of agency in participants' narratives. I draw on two closely related understandings of agency: Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration and Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) concept of agency. I utilize Giddens' theory as an externalist model to explore the participants' agency navigation in the Saudi Arabian context and SA context. This theory provides a clear basis for understanding the interaction between an individual's agency and the structure. On the other hand, Emirbayer and Mische's conceptualization of agency is used as an internalist model to explore the decision-making process within the participants' narratives. Emirbayer and Mische's 'chordal triad' provides sub-components that allow for the exploration of agency as an analytical category. This helps to understand the factors that shape an individual's agency within a particular context.

4.2 Giddens's theory of structuration

Giddens' theory of structuration aimed to bridge the divide between two dominant perspectives: objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivists argue that societal structures exert an overwhelming influence, leaving individuals with little to no free will. On the contrary, subjectivists contend that individuals possess the agency to shape and change those very structures. Giddens's view seeks to offer a balance between individual agency and structure. Giddens (1984) defines agency as:

Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any given phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently. Whatever happened would not have happened if that individual had not intervened (Giddens, 1984, p. 9)

The concept of agency in Giddens's term manifests a sense of power in changing stable conditions. Agency in individuals' actions here is associated with the disruption of the pre-established flow that this intervention caused. However, Giddens regards individuals' actions as agentic only when these actions are intentional. He explains that intentionality constitutes a goal-oriented action that an individual has taken based on knowledge or belief and that will lead to a preconceived outcome (Giddens, 1984).

In terms of structure, Giddens critiques the structuralist view of structure as a set of relationships or 'presences' that exist in various institutional forms, such as policies or physical structures (Giddens, 1987, p.61). He argues that if we considered structure as a 'set of presences' then it would appear as a constraint which is 'external to action' (Giddens, 1987, p.61). For Giddens, this narrow conceptualization of structure would lead to attributing irrelevant structures as limiting to certain actions (Giddens, 1987). He argues that structure does not only manifest in the form of constraints nor is it 'external to human action', structure is both constraining and enabling (Giddens, 1987, p. 61). Giddens defines structure as the 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems' (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). The rules refer to expectations and norms that dictate one's behaviour in any given social context such as beliefs and values. Resources, on the other hand, refer to the material and symbolic means that enable and constrain human action. Examples of resources are educational qualification and access to the internet.

Giddens argues that the idea of the separate dichotomy between agency and structure is invalid and offers the term 'duality of structure' to highlight the interdependent nature of the two concepts (Giddens, 1987). He asserts that '[a]ll human action is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, but yet whose action is also conditioned or constrained by the very world of their creation' (Giddens, 1981, p. 54). That is, human action is carried out by agents who possess knowledge and understanding of the world around them, and that these agents construct the social world through their actions. However, at the same time, the very social world that agents have created also constrains and shapes their actions. In other words, individuals are both products of and contributors to the social world they inhabit.

While individuals are usually equipped with the ability to provide reasons for their actions, Giddens notes that not all actions can be articulated or communicated discursively. He divided the extent to which individuals can profess the rationale of their action into three levels: unconsciousness, practical consciousness, and discursive consciousness. The unconsciousness refers to thoughts, emotions, and motivations that individuals are unaware of, yet can still influence their behaviour and actions. Practical consciousness lies between unconsciousness and discursive consciousness. Giddens explains that 'a good deal of what we do is organized

knowledgeably in and through practical consciousness; it follows that the way in which we make sense of our own actions and the actions of others, and the ways in which we generate meaning in the world' (Giddens, 1986, p. 538). Practical consciousness, therefore, is the knowledge that individuals utilise daily to interpret certain tasks or others' behaviour, but which they do not usually articulate. The discursive consciousness is referred to as an 'awareness which has a discursive form' (Giddens, 1984, p. 374). More precisely, it refers to individuals' ability to provide reasons for their actions.

In sum, Giddens asserts that individuals' actions are not fully constrained or enabled; rather agency is in a constant dialectical relationship with the structure where there is no primacy of one over the other. Individuals are considered to be agentive actors when their actions change the flow of the existing structures, and this change should be intended when the actions are undertaken not as a consequence of their actions.

4.3 Emirbayer and Mische (1998) conceptualization of agency

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) built on the work of Giddens (1984)'s theory of structuration and extend to explain the concept of agency. They argue that there is a lack of a theoretically grounded conceptualization of agency that would allow us to thoroughly examine agency as an analytical category in its own right. They suggest a view in which agency is disaggregated into components that encompass the internal processes of agency. In their influential paper, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer a theoretical framing to study agency in which they define agency as:

'the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970).

The definition illuminates that agency is a phenomenon that is responsive to historical circumstances. It acknowledges that individuals do not have a static relationship with their contexts, but instead continuously develop and refine their understanding of their relationship with their contexts. This evolving understanding of their relationship can significantly impact their actions. The perception of one's ability

to take action, which is referred to as ‘agentic possibility’, is greatly impacted by the structures present in their specific time and context.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) proposed three temporally oriented dimensions through which we can understand agency. These dimensions are the *iterational*, the *practical evaluative*, and the *projective* elements, and together they referred to them as the *Chordal Triad* of agency (see Table 1). These three dimensions consecutively constitute the past, present, and future. Emirbayer and Mische clarified that each of these dimensions has its ‘own chordal structure’ and separating these elements and examining the internal structure of each element would allow us to know which is the dominant dimension that the actors draw on to achieve agency and how the composite of these dimension ‘change as actors respond to the diverse and shifting environments around them’ (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 972).

Past	Present	Future
Iterational element	Practical evaluative element	Projective element
The selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities, interactions, and institutions over time	The capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of the present	The imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future

Table 1: Chordal triad of agency (adapted from Emirbayer and Mische (1998))

Table 1 demonstrates how agency can be divided into three distinct parts and brief definition of each element is given. While each element could be recognized separately, it is essential to understand that these analytical differentiations should not be seen as completely independent of one another. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p. 971) note, ‘all three of these constitute dimensions of human agency that are to be found, in varying degrees, within any concrete empirical instance of action’. The authors’ reference to these elements as chordal triad suggests that these elements are similar to musical cords. That is, in each chord there are three or more notes that are combined in various ways. Similarly, within this model of agency, the

elements could be combined in different ways and varying degrees. The authors explain that in any given action there may be a leading 'tone' that reflects the individual overall disposition that is related to specific time and context. Nonetheless, the existence of a dominant 'tone' or agentic orientation does not necessarily exclude the simultaneous presence of the other elements. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) propose that every element of agency consists of several smaller analytical categories referred to as 'subtones'. They note that it is possible to identify 'subtones' from the other elements, even in the absence of a dominant agentic orientation. For example, in analysing the instructor's narrative, it is possible to observe a dominance of the iterative dimension, wherein the instructor draws on past experiences to make sense of or make decisions about the present. However, it is important to note that the narrative may also include 'subtones' from other dimensions. For instance, while reflecting on past experiences, the instructors may also engage in a 'hypothetical resolution,' a subtone in the projective dimension that involves hypothesizing about the potential outcomes of different actions. Therefore, analysing instructor' narratives through the lens of the chordal triad allows for a rich understanding of how they exercise agency across various temporal dimensions, drawing on past experiences, envisioning future possibilities, and making practical judgments in the present.

In the following subsections, I provide an explanation of each dimension, examining their distinct qualities and illustrating how they function both autonomously and interdependently within individual narratives.

4.4.1 *The iterative dimension*

This element of agency involves iterative action which is characterized as habitual behaviour, where an actor relies on past experiences or models of action to inform their decisions and actions in the present. The past experiences of actors serve as the foundation for their understanding of the available patterns of action, which consist of 'routines, dispositions, preconceptions, competences, schemas, patterns, typifications, and traditions' that define suitable actions in any given social context (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 975). For the iterative element, agency manifests 'in actors' abilities to recall, to select, and to appropriately apply the more or less tacit and taken-for-granted schemas of action that they have developed through past interactions' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p. 975).

Emirbayer and Mische argue that behaviour that relies on recognizing and repeating existing patterns of action are not necessarily un-agentic. They draw on Aristotle and Dewey's philosophy to support their argument. First, they cite Aristotle's concept of *hexis* which explains how 'settled disposition or state' leads to actions that are not based on stimuli but reflect individuals' desires and decisions. For instance, an EFL instructor might have a long-standing habit of structuring their lessons around a textbook, a habit that developed over years of experience which could be seen as a 'hexis'—a settled disposition shaped by their understanding of effective teaching. This does not mean they blindly follow the textbook without reflection. Instead, their choices within that structure, such as selecting specific activities, adapting materials, or emphasizing certain themes, reflect their pedagogical goals and their understanding of student needs.

Second, they cite Dewey's understanding of habits as 'standing predilections and aversions, rather than bare recurrence of specific acts' (Dewey 1922, pp. 26, 40–41, as cited in Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). This means that even when instructors make habitual choices about their professional development, such as consistently attending workshops on a particular methodology, these choices are not simply reactions to external pressures. Instead, they reflect a degree of intentionality. For example, an instructor might habitually prioritize professional development opportunities focused on learner-centered approaches. This habit, while iterative, stems from their belief in the value of student-centered learning and their desire to create more engaging learning experiences.

These examples highlight a central point in Emirbayer and Mische's argument about the iterational dimension: Rather than being a simple product of 'stimulus and response,' iteration/habit involves a significant degree of intentionality on the part of the individual. Instructors' past experiences, dispositions, and beliefs actively shape their habitual actions, demonstrating that even routine behaviors can be expressions of agency.

4.4.2 *Practical evaluation dimension*

The practical evaluative dimension is concerned with the present. It involves actors making a judgment about the current circumstances, which not only helps actors exercise their agency in their best interest but also acknowledges their ability

to modify the temporal and relational environments through their actions. Further, practical evaluation involves more than just making appropriate choices for personal interest; it also involves the capacity to understand one's social experiences as a reflection of a shared social reality. The locus of agency in this dimension is the ability to contextualize social experiences. That is, individuals with a strong practical-evaluative inclination not only make decisions for their own benefit but also acknowledge their position within a network of social relationships where they have the potential to inflect a mediating effect. Consequently, the practical-evaluative element of agency is considered to have the most potential to 'disrupt and transform the situational contexts of action' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994). In Brotherhood's (2023) study of students' education migration journeys, the author notes that the practical-evaluative dimension manifested in the participants' narrative in the form of problematizing and characterising their situations. It emerged as a form of a 'critical sensibility' that allowed the participants to understand their present (Brotherhood, 2023, p. 640).

4.4.3 *The projective dimension*

The projective dimension concerns how individuals hypothesise about future experiences by generating alternative responses to problematic situations. Projectivity reflects the ability to imagine new possibilities, influenced by but not limited by past experiences. This capacity requires innovation, enabling individuals to reconstruct traditions in alignment with their evolving desires and goals. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue, this aspect of agency is closely linked to identity and narrative formation. It enables individuals to reflect on their future selves while maintaining a connection to their past through the identification of potential trajectories. For example, an EFL instructor who experienced a traditional, grammar-focused approach in their own language education might envision becoming a more communicative and learner-centred instructor. This vision, while a departure from their past, is not entirely disconnected from it. They might recognise a trend in their field towards more interactive teaching methods and actively shape their professional development and classroom practices to align with this imagined future self. Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.988) contend that projection is not merely an individual effort in an unpredictable world; it has the potential to facilitate 'social

coordination, collaborative resolution of problems, and group efforts towards social change'.

4.4 External and Internal Model of Agency

This study proposes a theoretical model that unites two existing theories, namely Giddens' theory of structuration and Emirbayer and Mische's theory of agency. This decision was motivated by criticisms directed at both theories. One of the main criticisms of Giddens' theory of structuration is the conflation of agency and structure. Layder (2006) argues that this conflation makes it challenging to determine the extent to which either structure or agency is more influential. Moreover, Giddens' theory has been criticized for overstressing the significance of structure and underestimating the role of human imagination and creativity in shaping social life (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

From Emirbayer and Mische's perspective, agency extends beyond reproducing or adjusting established structures and encompasses the creation and alteration of social schemes. They contend that Giddens' theory does not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of social life since it places too much emphasis on the interplay between structure and agency. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) propose that social structures are not static entities but are continually constructed and reconstructed through ongoing social interactions. They further argue that agency involves actively generating new opportunities and transforming existing ones rather than making decisions within existing structural parameters.

Emirbayer and Mische's model of agency has received significant praise for providing analytical tools to recognize individuals' agentic orientations within specific contexts over time. The model's classification of iterative, practical evaluative, and projective dimensions helps to identify actors' dominant orientation and whether their responses are rooted in the past, present, or future. This classification enables exploration of the connections between individual orientations and situational context. However, some scholars have criticized the model for lacking a critical dimension concerning power and the role of norms in shaping agency. For example, Biesta and Tedder (2007) contend that the model overemphasizes the internal decision-making processes and neglects social structures that shape and constrain individuals'

actions. In particular, the model fails to address how power relations and social norms shape individuals' agency and limit their ability to exercise it in specific contexts.

As noted earlier, this project merges two models of agency, as illustrated in Figure 2. The integration of the two models addresses some of the criticisms levelled against each theory. Giddens' structuration theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the interplay between agency and structure, with a clear definition of the latter. In contrast, Emirbayer and Mische's model offers a useful analytical category for exploring agency in the context of participants' narratives. By combining the strengths of both theories, this integrated model provides a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between agency and structure in shaping social outcomes. Specifically, it offers a more nuanced understanding of how individuals exercise agency within specific structural contexts and how power relations and social norms shape and constrain their agency.

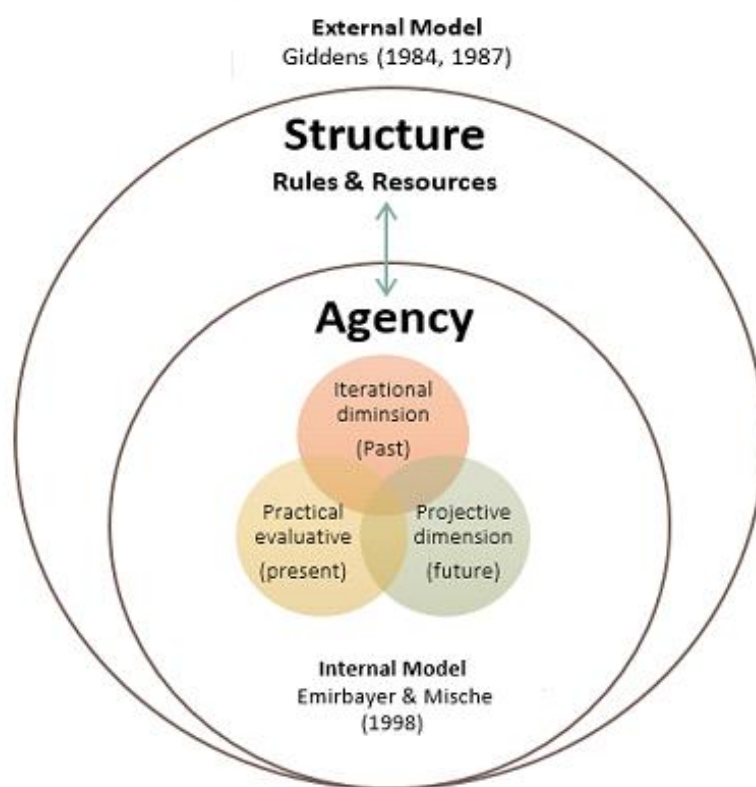


Figure 2: Integrated model of external and internal agency

4.5 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter provided an overview of Giddens' theory of structuration and Emirbayer and Mische's conceptualization of agency. While each theory offers valuable insights into the complex interplay between agency and structure in shaping social outcomes, they also face criticisms that limit their explanatory power. To overcome these limitations, this chapter proposed an integrated model of agency that combines the strengths of both theories. The integrated model recognizes the importance of both structure and agency in shaping social life and offers a more nuanced understanding of agency as manifested in the flow of time within relational contexts. Moreover, the model provides an analytical framework for exploring participants' narratives and understanding how they exercise agency within particular contexts. The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the research methodology used in this study. It includes the research design, data collection method, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This study explores the stories of Saudi female EFL instructors who have studied abroad, focusing on their learning and teaching experiences. In this chapter, I discuss the methodology and design employed and their suitability for the given inquiry. I start the chapter by explaining the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin this research. I then provide brief literature on the chosen research approach, 'narrative inquiry,' and the rationale for adopting this approach. The second part of this chapter focuses on the research design. It starts with an account of the pilot study and the findings that arose from it and which went on to inform the main study design. This is followed by the main study design and procedures, including participants' selection, recruitment, and interview design. In the last part of the chapter, I explain the transcription and translation processes. Further, I provide details on the data analysis steps. In the final section of the chapter, I review my positionality and the study's ethical considerations.

The overall orientation of this study can be described as an inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). That is, the theoretical framework was developed after the initial steps of the data analysis. I came to this topic with an interest in EFL instructors' professional learning, including their experiences with studying abroad. The initial focus of the pilot study was to explore EFL instructors' perspectives on their experiences with studying abroad. After the pilot, the focus shifted to exploring the landscape of their teaching and learning experiences, including study abroad. More precisely, the question was: What do EFL instructors/teachers ascribe as meaningful experiences in their English language learning and teaching journeys? This question guided my choice of narrative inquiry as a research approach as well as the overall research design. After the data collection and in the early steps of the data analysis, the research focus developed to explore the following research questions:

- Q1: How do the participants construct the influences on their educational choices?
- Q2: How do the participants construct their learning experiences?
- Q3: What are the experiences that informed the participants' current practice?

- Q4: What are the enabling and constraining factors that affect the achievement of desired teaching practices?

This study examines the narratives of Saudi EFL instructors to understand the factors influencing their educational choices and the experiences shaping their teaching practices. It highlights their agency in constructing their educational pathways and navigating their educational experiences. By exploring how these teachers engage with personal, cultural, and institutional contexts, the research addresses a gap in understanding EFL teacher education within the unique Saudi Arabian setting. The study investigates the influence of diverse learning experiences, including study abroad, on their professional development. It identifies both enabling and constraining factors that affect their ability to implement desired teaching practices. Through these inquiries, the research aims to inform policy and practice within the field of language teacher education, particularly concerning professional learning and study abroad initiatives for Saudi EFL instructors.

5.2 Research stance

Denzin and Lincoln state that ‘all qualitative researchers are philosophers’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 31). Philosophers, in a broad sense, are inevitably guided by ‘abstract ideas and beliefs’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 16), that shape their ontology, epistemology, and research methodology. Ontology refers to ‘the study of being’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 10) or, in Lincoln and Guba’s definition, ‘the nature of reality’ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). In realist ontology, for example, there is one measurable reality that exists ‘out there’. Relativist ontology, on the other hand, rejects the notion of one objective reality and contends that there is an infinite set of realities that are constructed within the human consciousness, which are relative to the individuals who uphold them. Once we define our ontological position to reality, we then must delineate what kind of knowledge is conceivable and what our relation to it is, hence define our epistemological position. More precisely, epistemology here refers to what constitutes knowledge and our relationship to it (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, 2011). Examples of contrasting epistemological stances are positivism and constructivism. Positivism, while acknowledging that complete neutrality is impossible, aims for objectivity in knowledge production. It emphasizes rigorous methods designed to minimize researcher bias and maximize the reliability and generalizability of findings. In contrast, constructivism views knowledge as inherently

co-constructed, acknowledging the researcher's active role in shaping how knowledge is generated and interpreted through their interactions with participants and data. Taken together, the researcher's ontological and epistemological stances would lead to the adoption of a particular research methodology. Research methodology is a research process (Creswell, 2013). It is concerned with procedures that the researcher carries to produce knowledge. The researcher's ontology, epistemology, and methodology form the research 'paradigm' or 'interpretive framework' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 31) through which the researcher views the researched phenomenon. Therefore, it is important for researchers to be explicit about the interpretive framework that underlies their research (Creswell, 2013).

5.2.1 Constructivist stance

As I read more about paradigms, I found myself leaning towards a constructivist approach. This world view recognizes the influence of the social, cultural, historical and political conditions as well as the conditions surrounding the data collection and interpretation (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2017), with which I concur. In this approach, the researcher professes a 'relativist ontology, a transactional [subjectivist] epistemology, and a hermeneutic, dialectal methodology' (Cannella & Lincoln, 2011, p. 191). A relativist ontology would view participants' narratives as constructed for a specific occasion; in the case of this research, participants' narratives are constructed for the interviews. These narratives do not represent a single reality; they are multiple, messy, and are told to me. Therefore, when analysing these narratives, my goal is not to seek the 'Truth' regarding the teachers' learning and teaching experiences; instead, I aim to understand the complexities of these meanings that teachers hold for their experiences and to understand why the participants have chosen to tell their stories to me in the way that they have.

A transactional [subjectivist] epistemology means that the researcher cannot be separated from the researched. My background, perspectives, and even the questions I pose during interviews will inevitably shape the narratives teachers share. Furthermore, the very act of sharing their experiences within the context of our research relationship will likely cause teachers to reflect on and potentially reframe their understanding of those experiences. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain, 'the

investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the "findings" are literally created as the investigation proceeds' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). This means that the knowledge we generate about teachers' learning and teaching experiences will be a product of our shared interaction and co-construction rather than a neutral reflection of some pre-existing reality.

A hermeneutic dialectal methodology means that the researcher considers multiple perspectives and contradictions in the data and actively engages with them to uncover deeper meanings. By doing this, I can understand the complex interplay between different viewpoints and contextual factors. This approach allows me to gain a richer understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by the EFL instructors, as well as the underlying dynamics within the educational system and the broader Saudi context. This approach moves beyond previous studies (Al-Samiri, 2020; Alhuwaydi, 2020) that might have treated EFL instructors' experiences in Saudi Arabia as homogenous, overlooking the nuances of individual perspectives and contextual influences. By embracing a hermeneutic and dialectical lens, this study aims to clarify those nuances and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and possibilities faced by EFL instructors within a specific educational and cultural landscape.

5.2.2 Narrative inquiry

In the search for a holistic approach to explore Saudi female EFL instructors' perspectives on teaching and learning experiences which acknowledges the individuality of human experience and recognises the role that culture and society play in how individuals perceive these experiences, I was drawn to narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is an 'umbrella term' for any research that involves stories (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, & Brown, 2013, p. 3). As in all qualitative research approaches, narrative inquiry shares some characteristics with other qualitative approaches. It is similar to ethnography in that there is 'the emphasis on the social' and to phenomenology in the 'use of story' (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 479). Narrative inquiry is distinct from other qualitative approaches in its emphasis on how stories unfold over time. While other methods might focus on capturing experiences or perspectives at a particular moment, narrative inquiry recognizes that meaning is created through the sequence of events, decisions, and reflections that make up a

person's lived experience (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). In this study, attending to the 'sequences of action' within Saudi female EFL instructors' narratives will be crucial to understanding how their teaching and learning experiences have evolved over time, influenced by personal choices, cultural shifts, and broader changes in the Saudi educational landscape.

It is important to note that the literature that engages with narrative in data collection and analysis used different terms to refer to their approach, including narrative analysis (Benson, 2018; Pavlenko, 2008; Riessman, 2008), narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013; Bell, 2002; Chase, 2005; Clandinin & Caine, 2013), and narrative research (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013; Josselson, 2007). Since there is no clear distinction for the usage of these various terms in the field, I use the term narrative inquiry since it is the most common in social sciences research and, more precisely, in applied linguistics research.

5.2.3.1 The narrative turn

While it is difficult to trace the origin of the turn to narrative –or narrative turn– in different disciplines (Bamberg, 2007), the narrative movement was inspired by scholars, such as Labov and Waletzky (1967) in the field of Sociolinguistics and Jerome Bruner in the field of Psychology, who took an anti-positivist stance in viewing individuals' narratives. In their canonical work, Labov and Waletzky (1967) explored individuals' stories of near-death experiences, discovering structural patterns across participants' narratives. This discovery challenged positivist assumptions that dismissed individual narratives as too abstract or messy for rigorous analysis. By revealing consistent structures and chronological elements within these stories, Labov and Waletzky demonstrated that narratives could indeed be subjected to systematic inquiry, allowing for deeper understanding beyond the content level (Riessman, 2008).

In the field of psychology, Jerome Bruner's ideas of the 'self' have also contributed to the narrative turn movement. Bruner professes that 'we constantly construct and reconstruct a self to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears of the future' (Bruner, 2003, p. 210). These contributions, among others, have started many research traditions that were guided by acknowledgement of the 'complexity,

multiplicity of perspectives and human centredness' (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 31).

Barkhuizen et al. (2013), while acknowledging that there are other explanations for the narrative turn, offer four main explanations in the field of social sciences. The first, which goes in line with the broader qualitative research shift, is the realization of the inadequacy of natural sciences approaches in exploring social and educational phenomena. Second, they note a rising interest in the 'self, identity, and individuality' (Barkhuizen et al., 2013, p. 2). Third, they suggest that there is a growing recognition of the significance of narrative as a site for exploring the construction of social identities and realities. Fourth, the narrative movement has become a way to empower research participants allowing a wide range of voices to be heard, especially those who belong to marginalized groups.

The given explanations resonate deeply with the aims of this research. I believe that qualitative methodologies, and particularly narrative inquiry, are essential for providing a platform for marginalized voices, particularly in contexts like Saudi Arabia where quantitative approaches often dominate (Almoaibed, 2020). Given the historical and social limitations on women's voices in Saudi Arabia (Hamdan & Mustafa, 2021), it is crucial to create spaces where female EFL instructors can share their experiences in their own words. The fact that this research is being conducted by a female researcher further enhances its potential to delve into the nuanced realities of these women's lives and careers, especially given the recent shifts in Saudi society that have allowed women greater autonomy, including the freedom to travel abroad for education.

5.2.3.2 Different strands in narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a vast research field. Many have attempted to classify the narrative movement in terms of the analytical focus (Riessman, 2008), theoretical assumptions (Bamberg, 2011), and data forms (Barkhuizen et al., 2013). In terms of theoretical assumptions, Bamberg (2007) explains that there are two overarching strands to narrative that arise from the attempt to answer the question, 'what is the value of narrative?' The first strand approaches narrative from individuals' subjective perspective, that is, how individuals' narratives of experiences are 'personal ways to impose order on an otherwise chaotic scenario of life and experience' (Bamberg,

2007, p. 2). The exploration of narratives within this strand will reveal the ways in which people attribute meaning to and organize their experiences. This strand, in their view of narrative, embraces the notions that 'people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives' (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). That is, narrative is a way through which people communicate their experiences and it is through the act of narration itself that people make sense of these experiences.

The second strand adopts the assumption that 'narratives are pre-existing meaningful templates that carry social, cultural, and communal currency for the process of identity formation' (Bamberg, 2007, p. 3). It focuses on master narratives, 'pre-existent sociocultural forms of interpretation' (Bamberg, 2005), which are assumed to guide members and their communities 'how to think, feel, and act.' (Bamberg, 2007, p. 3). These two overarching strands which emphasize either the individual or the social, are joined in many narrative studies. Bamberg (2007) notes the impetus to join the perspectives is due to the recognition of

'the active role of the subject as an agent in the construction of social practices on one hand, and on the other, the role of social practices as constitutive of ways of thinking, feeling, and acting at the level of individual choices' (Bamberg, 2007, p. 3).

My decision to take narrative inquiry as a research methodology resonates with both theoretical assumptions. That is, I recognise both the uniqueness of human experiences as well as role that culture and society play in shaping how individuals perceive these experiences. These are both uncovered in the analyses chapters (6,7, & 8).

This approach is in line with the constructivist way of thinking: as the participants engage in the narrative telling of their experiences, they are engaging in a process of reconfiguration/reconstruction of these experiences. This reconstruction is a result of their own interpretation and reinterpretation of their experiences to make sense of them. The participants' narratives always take place in relation to particular contexts. The context here attends to both the when/time and where/place of the narrative (Kelchtermans, 2009). The 'when' refers to specific period of time or moments. The 'where' refers not only physical space such work institution or hometown but also includes the social, cultural, and political aspects that are

embedded in the participants' narrative. All of these aspects are evident in the narratives that my participants tell.

5.2.3.4 What constitutes a narrative

What constitute a narrative is subject to much debate. Some follow the Labovian model where a narrative should have these elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation (Labov, 1997). Others adopt more open definition to narrative as having 'beginning, middle, and an end' (Riessman, 2008). In this study, I draw on Holstein and Gubrium (2012)'s definition of narrative:

'Narratives are not necessarily chronologically ordered, nor do they necessarily assert the speaker's perspective or standpoint. But narratives do supply more than simply what happened, expressing the narrator's emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and interpretations. If narrators are the key figures, their accounts are informed as much by extra-individual forces as they are by personal experience.' (Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 6)

I rely on this definition for several reasons. Firstly, it does not limit the narrative of participants to a strict chronological order, which I believe would overlook important aspects of their experiences. Neither does it require all the elements of Labovian narrative structure to be included. Additionally, it acknowledges the variability in participants' abilities to express their experiences. Secondly, it takes into account the narrators' emotions, attitudes, and beliefs, which are vital in understanding their experiences. Thirdly, it acknowledges the influence of broader structures and discourses that shape how they construct their realities.

I am aware that some scholars distinguish between the terms 'narrative' and 'story'. For instance, Smith (2016) explains that the term 'narratives' refers to the 'resources from which people construct their personal stories and understand the stories they hear', while 'stories' are 'a specific tale that people tell' (B. Smith, 2016, p. 204). When participants (storytellers) construct their experiences, they draw on the narratives available in their surroundings. However, in this research, I use the terms interchangeably because the distinction does not contribute to the research objective.

5.2.3.5 Research data form and analytical focus

The focus of the analysis in narrative inquiry studies varies. In their review of studies about language teaching and learning that used narrative inquiry, Benson et al. (2013) classified these studies' approaches to narrative into language memoirs, studies of language memories, autobiographical case studies, biographical case studies and studies of multiple narratives. The difference between these categories lies in the format of narratives (written or spoken), the status of the data (naturally occurring or elicited) and whether the research follows narrative analysis or the analysis of narratives. Within the narrative inquiry approach, the analysis of narrative refers to 'research in which stories are used as data', whereas narrative analysis refers to 'research in which storytelling is used as a means of analysing data and presenting findings' (Benson et al., 2013, p. 3). A recent addition to the classification of analysis is discourse analysis of narrative (Benson, 2018). This refers to the utilization of discourse analysis methods in analysing narrative data. The adoption of such an analytic approach came from criticism of the over-reliance on participants' accounts as objective representations of reality, neglecting the ways in which those accounts are produced and shaped through the interaction between researcher and participant during data collection (Mann, 2016; Pavlenko, 2007; Talmy, 2010). Within Benson et al.'s (2013) classification, my approach could be described as a mixture of analysis of narrative, narrative analysis, and a discourse analysis of narrative. The analysis approach will be discussed further in section 5.4 *Data Analysis*.

5.3 Research design

This section is divided into two stages: the pilot study and the main study designs. In the pilot study stage, I will present the lessons learned from the pilot study that led to adopting the current design. In the main study stage, I will present the research design. I will give details on participants' selection, recruitment procedures, and interview design, and finally, I will give reflections on the interview mode and process.

5.3.1 Stage one: The pilot study

I conducted a pilot study in the summer of 2018 with four female Saudi EFL teachers who were working at a Saudi Arabian university. The purpose of the pilot was to explore the influence of study abroad experiences on teachers through the use of interviews and classroom observation as data collection means. However, the

strike across UK universities delayed the ethics committee's approval of my proposed data collection timeline. By the time I received ethical clearance, the instructors had already finished their classes and begun their summer vacation, making classroom observations impossible. As a result, I conducted only semi-structured interviews with the participants. After doing the interviews, my perspective on my approach to data generation changed, consequently changing my approach to the research phenomenon. The change was due to an observation of participants' responses to questions about their experience with studying abroad. That is, although I asked direct questions about their Masters courses and in-classroom experiences, participants' responses constantly shifted from in-classroom experience to the overall study abroad context with references to their early education and teaching experiences prior to SA. The shift included personal, educational, and cultural experiences that I felt, to a certain extent, were interlinked and worthy to be considered in exploring teachers' experiences. Furthermore, upon exploring the literature in the Saudi context (Al-Samiri, 2020; Alhuwaydi, 2020), as mentioned in chapter 3, the studies were focused on the EFL instructors' study abroad experiences and current teaching practices. To my knowledge, no known study has considered these broader learning experiences, including SA, in the Saudi context. These observations changed my perspective from seeking to understand the influence of study abroad experiences on teachers to exploring participants' narratives of teaching and learning experiences.

Practical changes that were made based on the pilot study

The language

The interviews in the pilot study were conducted in English. Although the participants were given the choice to speak either English or Arabic, all four interviewees spoke mostly in English. I felt this made the interview more formal, and some participants struggled to express their thoughts adequately in English. The following (extract 5.1) is an example from one of the interviews:

Extract 5.1 Nora's interview (Pilot study)

Budur What did you find most difficult when you started teaching?

Nora You know convince the students with something يعني كيف اشرح لك [How to explain it to you].. yeah, how to.. for example, give him a new rules or for example grammar. How to convince, how to make students understand, how to make the information easy for the students, it's very difficult to simplify. Sometimes we need to complicate and sometimes you need to make it simple. It is very difficult to let the students understand. ا يعني [mean] the point of the information very difficult.

Interviewing the participants in their weaker language might lead to misrepresenting their views or leaving out information (Pavlenko, 2008). Therefore, considering that 'interviewing in L2 is often limiting for the interviewee' (Mann, 2016, p. 64) and that 'communication is inherently cultural and this brings with it different priorities when it comes to content and context' (Mann, 2016, p. 65), I decided to conduct my main study interviews in Arabic, the interviewees' mother tongue. This decision was especially important in the context of narrative inquiry, which focuses on participants' stories of experience. Pavlenko points out that 'in reality the presentation of events may vary greatly with the language of the telling' (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 172); that is, teachers' narratives of experience might not be reflected in the same way when speaking English as opposed to Arabic. However, as I will discuss later, this decision was difficult to maintain in the actual interview process.

The interview type

In the pilot study, I opted for a semi-structured interview. I had a set of questions to ask the interviewees which the interviewees answered. However, I felt that the questions were limiting, in the sense that the participants wanted to say more about their experiences but were not within the scope of the questions. At other times, the participants talked further about their experiences, and when I asked them about them, I felt that I was interrupting the flow. These instances made me reconsider the type of interview used to approach this topic. Therefore, in the main study, I opted for narrative interviews (Riessman, 2008). (More on interview type in section 5.3.3.3.)

The degree of acquaintance

In the pilot study, I interviewed four teachers whom I know and have worked with and most likely will work with in the future. I felt that the level of acquaintance (Garton and Copland, 2010) with my interviewees might have influenced the pilot study in two ways. Firstly, the ethical issues around the consent and anonymity of

participants are much higher when interviewing someone you know and work with on a daily basis. In terms of consent, the participants might feel the obligation to participate because of this level of acquaintance, in this case, a colleague. This also extends to the other ethical issue, which is ensuring the anonymity of my participants. Although the participants' information could be anonymised, there is no guarantee that they might not be identified because of the small department in which we all work.

Secondly, my status as a colleague influenced the degree to which they expressed personal experiences. I noticed this with one participant whose answers were very brief. The professional relationship between me and this set of participants might also have prevented them from giving more details about their past and current experiences. They might not have felt at ease revealing experiences that involved their teaching practice or work-related incidents. A related issue was my fear that my own judgments and understandings, which I had already developed about the participants and the work context, might interfere with the interviewing process and data analysis.

Interviewing someone who is an acquaintance or undertaking an 'acquaintance interview' will inevitably reveal itself in the data generation (Garton & Copland, 2010). Therefore, in the main study, I consciously chose to interview teachers who are not personal acquaintances, and my contact with them started a little before the start of the data collection phase. By this choice, I knew that I might miss the level of trust and rapport that I might have with acquaintance participants; nonetheless, I attempted from the start of contact to develop this trust through sharing my personal story as, my professional background, and my motives for doing this research when I felt it was needed or when I was invited to by the participants. I will discuss this further under *Interview Procedures and Reflections* (section 5.3.3.8).

5.3.2 Stage Two: The main study

In this section (5.3.2), I outline the procedures employed for the main study concerning participant selection, recruitment, and the provision of general information about each participant.

5.3.2.1 Participants' Selection

This research focuses on a discrete group of female Saudi nationals: EFL instructors working for Saudi Arabian HE institutions who have undertaken a master's

degree programme in TESOL in a Western country. The decision to limit the study participants to female EFL instructors was made for three main reasons. The first reason is motivated by the limited research that explores Saudi female educational experiences (Song, 2019). The second reason is the sense gained from my pilot study participants' stories, which suggested that their gender had a role in the status ascribed to them by their families, work context, and scholarship sponsors. For example, some participants' families were discouraged from seeking overseas study, and Mahram (male guardian) was required by the scholarship sponsors. Therefore, comparing female experiences may be more reliable and offer more in-depth insights than with male and female participants. The third reason is related to my identity as a Muslim and a Saudi and my chosen methodology, narrative inquiry. This study involves a prolonged engagement with the participants through several interviews (see section 5.3.3). As a Muslim Saudi female, establishing relationships through interviews with individuals of the opposite sex may pose challenges due to Islamic teachings and cultural norms that set expectations and limitations of the interaction between opposite genders. For the reasons given, I have decided to limit the participants to female EFL instructors.

5.3.2.2 Participants' recruitment

Prior to the start of the recruitment phase, I received ethical clearance from Stirling University's General University Ethical Panel (GUEP) in November 2018 (Appendix 1). The first step was then to recruit participants for this study by designing an advertisement that stated the general criteria and purpose for this study (Appendix 2). This advertisement was distributed through my personal media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram. However, the response rate to this advertisement was not as high as I thought it would be. A few contacted me, but only one met the participants' criteria. I had to resort to my second plan which was searching through social media channels (e.g. Twitter and Telegram) for those whom the study conditions may apply and asking them if they were interested in participating in the study. On one occasion, I contacted one possible participant, and she stated that she did not meet the study criteria. However, I forwarded my message to others who might meet the study conditions. I also contacted many through their institutional emails and those who expressed interest were then sent the full research details, the information sheet, and the consent forms. Initially, nine participants agreed to participate in this

study. However, shortly after receiving the participants' consent and prior to the start of the first interview, one participant withdrew from the study. Later, after conducting the first interview, two other participants withdrew due to their busy schedules. In total, the data were collected from six participants who completed the interview phases in this study.

5.3.2.3 Participants' information

All the participants had a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from Saudi universities. Further, all the participants are MA TESOL graduates from either UK or USA institutions. Prior to commencing their MA programme, all participants (except Layla) were enrolled in pre-sessional English language courses. The participants are within a close age range. That is, the participants graduated from high school between 2005 and 2008 and finished their bachelor's degrees between 2009 and 2012. Having a close age range was not considered during the recruitment process; however, it became apparent during the interview phase. While this study does not seek to map out the variables, the historical time of their education and employment is relevant considering the phases of change that occurred in the Saudi Arabian education system and overall economy during the time and which were present in their narratives. For example, some of the bachelor's degree programmes that some participants were enrolled in no longer exist in Saudi Arabia. In the previous chapters, I refer to the participants as in-service teachers, and this refers to their status as working for an HE institution. However, as we see in the table below, the participants' teaching experiences before studying abroad classify them as novice teachers since they were in their career entry years (Farrell, 2012).

Before presenting the participants' information (Table 2), it's important to note that pseudonyms were assigned to protect their anonymity. The chosen pseudonyms aimed to serve two purposes: (1) ensuring anonymity by using names common in the Saudi Arabian context and (2) reflecting the participants' cultural background by selecting culturally relevant Saudi names. Table 2 provides details about the six participants:

Pseudonym	Post BA work experience	SA destination/duration	Post study abroad work exp.
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Yasmine	4 months as EL adult education 2 ½ years as a TA/EL at university	UK 2 years	4 years as EL lecturer at a public university
Layla	1 year at a private school 1 year as an EL at university	UK 1 year + one month CELTA	4 years as EL lecturer at a public university
Rawan	1 year as an EL in private school	USA 3 years	2 months at private institute 9 months at private university 3 years as lecturer at public university
Danah	3 months as an EL in private school	USA 5 years	4 months in private institute 4 years as EL lecturer a public university
Noor	1 year as a EL in university	UK 1 year	2 years as EL lecturer a public university
Hana	2 months as a EL in private school	USA 3 years	2 years as EL instructor a public university

*EL= English language teacher/instructor, SA= Study abroad.

Table 2: Participants' information

5.3.3. Interview design

In this research, I collected data through multiple unstructured narrative interviews with the research participants. In the following subsections, I explain the rationale behind the interview choice and design.

5.3.3.1 Interviews as data collection method

Since this study aims at understanding Saudi EFL teachers' perspectives on their experiences, the interview is seen as the most appropriate method. Interviews are widely used in qualitative research in general and a commonly used method by narrative researchers. Interviews as a method have 'primacy' over other qualitative research methods, especially when exploring 'how an individual experiences some phenomenon' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 47). Interviews provide researchers with 'an emic perspective' on a research phenomenon (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 29). This is particularly the case when experiences are 'difficult to observe directly and are best understood from the perspectives of those who experience them' (Benson et al., 2013, p. 8). Seidman (2006) contends that interviews are 'a powerful way to gain

insights into educational experiences of the individuals whose lives reflect those issues' (Seidman, 2006, p. 14).

5.3.3.2 The conceptualization of the interview

While there is an agreement on the benefits that interviews could bring to understanding the researched phenomenon, qualitative researchers who opt for the interview method in their research hold divergent conceptualizations of interviews. Talmy (2010) divided the common conceptualization of interviews into two categories: interviews as a research instrument and research interviews as a social practice. The differences between the two lie in the status of interview and interview data, the issue of voice and bias, and the analytical focus and procedures. From the perspective of the interview as a research instrument, interviewing is seen as a tool for excavating information; the data are treated as reports, and the interviewer strives to give voice to the participants. Moreover, this perspective takes the position that the interviewer's interference in the process might lead to contaminating the data. For this reason, interviewers are urged to minimize their interference involvement in the process. The data analysis, from this perspective, focuses on the content or the 'what' of the data through thematic or content analysis. Within the narrative, this approach to data could be classified as *analysis of narratives* (Benson et al., 2013).

On the other hand, the interviews, as a social practice perspective, 'treat[s] the interview not as a resource for extracting data held within a univocal respondent, but as a site for investigation itself' (Talmy, 2010, p. 139). The interview is seen as a dialogical exchange between the interviewer and interviewees. The dialogical exchange here is affected by both the interviewer and interviewee, and this effect can be a focus of analysis in addition to the content of the interview. This perspective further differs in its treatment of interview data as 'accounts' rather than 'reports'. Viewing interview data as reports means that the interviewer believes that the interviewees' responses will reveal the truth and relies on the interviewees' ability to self-disclose. On the other hand, viewing data as accounts means understanding the interview as '(more or less) reflecting a reality jointly constructed by the interviewee and interviewer' (Rapley, 2001, p. 304). Interviewer interference is not seen as a possible threat to data validity but rather as part and parcel of the interviewing process. In this approach, the researcher is encouraged to display 'a heighten[ed] reflexivity' in the joint collaboration with the interviewees that led to the data

production. The analysis in this perspective takes two focuses: the 'what' and the 'how' of the data (Talmy, 2010). In relation to narrative, this approach to data analysis could be classified as *discourse analysis of narrative* (Benson, 2018).

Following Talmy's classification and argument for the need of explicit theorization of interview status in qualitative studies that use interviews as primary means of data, I see interviews in this research as *social practice*. In approaching this research, I see interviews as a site in which the interviewees could deeply reflect on their experiences, which is accomplished through the ongoing dialogue during the interviewing process. What the interviewees reflect on is not necessarily seen as a factual account of what actually happened; instead, participants' narratives here 'constitute, rather than reflect, reality' (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 180).

As noted, the data produced in the process are co-constructed between the research participants and me. While I attempted to maintain an active listener stance in the interview, rather than a conversationalist, this was not due to the fear of 'contaminating the data'; rather, it was in keeping with the procedures of the proposed design, i.e. unstructured narrative interview, which the pilot had suggested would provide the best approach to allowing space for the teachers to tell their stories in their own ways. Therefore, I regard my probing and questions not as possible threats to the legitimacy of data but rather as attempts to facilitate the ongoing dialogue between me and the participants throughout the interviewing process. However, this process certainly requires taking a reflexive stance on my part on how the data were generated, more precisely, under what circumstances the participants produced certain narratives. This theorization of interview 'centers on how meaning is negotiated, knowledge is co-constructed, and interview is locally accomplished' (Talmy, 2010, p. 132).

5.3.3.3 Interview type

Qualitative interviewing is commonly classified into three broad categories: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Brinkmann, 2013). These categories could be viewed on a 'continuum ranging from relatively structured to relatively unstructured formats' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 19). Each interview type has its advantages and disadvantages. In structured interviews, the interviewer has a list of questions that invite direct answers from the interviewees. This type of interviewing

could be described as ‘spoken questionnaire’ (Mann, 2016) or ‘standardized survey interviewing’ (Brinkmann, 2013). This type of interview is often adopted when the main aim is to generate ordered answers that can be compared across a large number of participants. However, this type of interview has its drawbacks. While aiming to maintain ‘objectivity and maximal neutrality’ (De Fina, 2019, p. 155), this type is criticized for the possibility of overlooking ‘the meanings and interpretive frames’ that occur beyond the questions’ structures and the risk that the interviewer might miss out ‘what goes on in the interaction’ (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 19). This type of interview is often associated with positivist research approaches. Therefore, it was not considered for this study.

In qualitative research, semi-structured and unstructured interviews are mostly used (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018; De Fina, 2019; Mann, 2016). These types of interviews are often referred to as ‘qualitative interviewing’ or ‘in-depth interviewing’ (Bryman, 2016, p. 471). For semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a set of questions that guides the interview, but unlike the structured interview, there is ‘room for deviation’ from these questions (Mann, 2016, p. 91). The interviewer role is more visible than in structured interviews and compared to unstructured interviews, the interviewer has ‘a greater saying in focusing the conversation’ to the research aim (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 21). This type of interviewing was considered at first for its structure, flexibility, and interviewer role but due to the nature of the initial research question (What do teachers ascribe as meaningful experiences in their learning and teaching journeys?) the idea for adopting this interview type was abandoned.

For the unstructured (open) interview, there are no set pre-defined set questions to be covered. The interviewer's role is to be a facilitator of the conversation rather than a guide (Brinkmann, 2013). In this form of interviewing, the researcher learns about the researched phenomenon throughout the course of inquiry (Gubrium, Holstein, Marvasti, & McKinney, 2012). Nonetheless, unstructured interviews are not fully unstructured since ‘the interviewer always has an idea about what should take place in the conversation’ (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 18). These ideas could be a set of themes to cover around the main research topic. These themes are usually broad to ‘allow a wide periphery for the freedom of individuality and creativity in the selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these ‘remembered facts’ (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 8). The role of the interviewer is minimal compared

to the other types of interviews. The interviewer here has 'to remain a listener, withholding desires to interrupt and sporadically asking questions that may clarify the story' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 20).

Within the unstructured interviewing classification, a form of an interview that is characterized as having the least structure among qualitative interviews is the narrative interview (Kartch, 2017). The main purpose of the narrative interview is to elicit narratives from participants in the form of stories (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). While the aim of narrative interview types is broadly similar, the utilization of this form varies in terms of interviewing procedures and implicit assumptions that are associated with the procedures. For example, Wengraf (2001)'s Biographic Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) requires a 'minimalist interviewer intervention' to produce a pure narrative that is not 'tainted' by the interviewer's interference (Wengraf, 2001, p. 113). This approach was criticized for staging an 'unnatural situation' that is different from the conditions in which stories are usually told in everyday encounters (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 142). Moreover, this approach conveys an implicit assumption 'that people carry their life stories around in their heads as if being asked to tell one's life story in an interview is something people are primed to do' (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 142). Others adopt a different view of narrative elicitation in the interview context. For example, Riessman (2008) perceives narrative generation as a 'discursive accomplishment' between the interviewer and interviewees in which narrative unfolds as the dialogue continues (Riessman, 2008, p. 22). Further, it requires the interviewer to give up on control and follow the 'participants down their trails'(Riessman, 2008, p. 24). Riessman's theorization of the narrative interview resonates with how I see the interviewing process and data in this research.

For this study, I opted for using narrative interviews. The reason for opting for this type of interviews is due to the nature and aim of the research. This research project is broadly centred on the teachers' narratives of their past and present learning and teaching experiences. This research can be described as an inductive exploratory research approach which could be described as 'allow[ing] research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies' (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). Therefore, given the nature of this topic, it was necessary to adopt an open interview

format in approaching this research topic to ‘allow the narrator to produce stories of their lives which would otherwise be curtailed using more structured interviewing methods’ (Holt, 2010, p. 113). My hope was that the narrative interview design would give participants space to ‘freely present their life situations in their own words’ (Kvale, 2006, p. 481), allowing them to ascribe meaning to their experiences within their own time and context, and in relation to their past and present realities.

5.3.3.4 Interviews focus and frequency

In this study, the teachers were asked to recall their experiences within a timeframe. This framing of interviews around different stages of individuals’ life and conducted over multiple times are similar in purpose to biographical interviews or oral history interviews (Prior, 2018). The interviews’ focus is inspired by Benson et al.’s (2013) study of participants’ language learning experiences in which they structured interviews around participants’ pre-study abroad language learning experiences, abroad language learning experiences, and post-study abroad experiences.

Figure 3 illustrates the focus of each of the interview stages. In the first interview, the focus was on participants’ early language learning and teaching experiences. The second interview was concerned with study abroad experiences either in the pre-sessional English courses or the TESOL programme. The third interview was about their post-study abroad experiences, and in the fourth interview, the participants talked about their current experiences as EFL instructors/lectures at their employing universities.

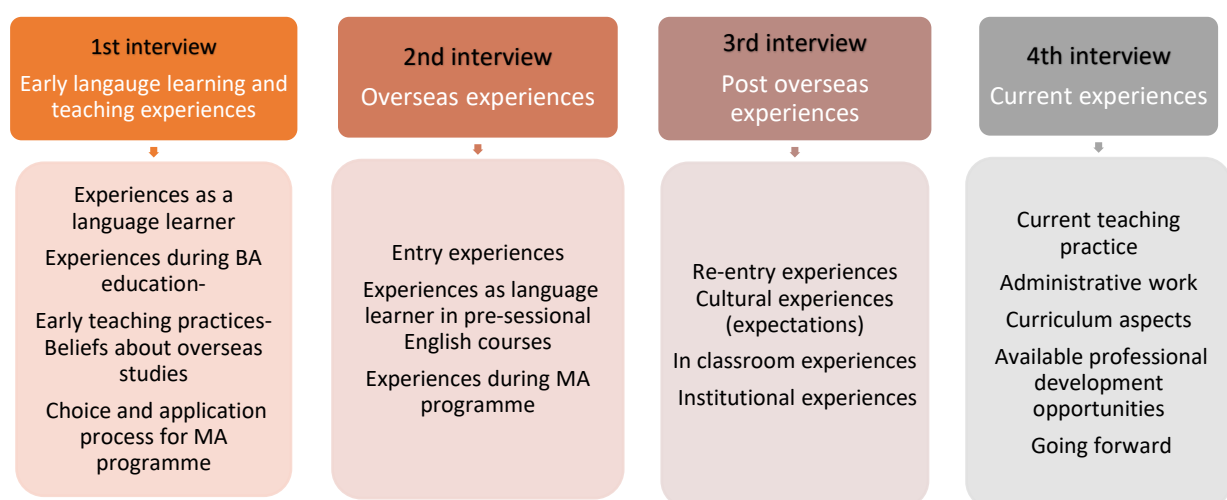


Figure 3: Interviews’ focus

For this study, the framing differs from Benson et al. (2013) in terms of the research sample and the complete retrospectivity of teachers' accounts. That is, as the teachers now are working in employing institutions, they were asked to recall their early language learning and teaching experiences until their current state. Since these experiences were over a lengthy period, the interviews were divided into topics organized chronologically to cover this period. The study aims, by following focus-based interviews, to explore the landscape of participants' teaching and learning experiences and to develop 'an accumulation of detail that is assembled into a "fuller" picture of the individual or group' (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). The framing also allows participants to expand on their experiences within the given frame, as 'respondents are likely to find it easier to talk about specific times and situations rather than being asked about a very wide time frame' (Elliott, 2005, p. 31).

To further facilitate the generation of stories within the given focus, the participants were primed in advance about the focus of the interview. Also, at the beginning of each interview, I reminded the participants about the interview focus by saying 'today's interview is about *مقابله اليوم عن*'. This practice is meant to highlight the focus of the interview and thus trigger the participants to recall events and experiences related to the interview phase.

Multiple interviews with the same participants have further practical advantages. The advantages are summarised in the following points:

- *Develop rapport*: Conducting multiple interviews with the same individuals might help establish trust and rapport between the interviewer and interviewees (Berger, 2013).
- *Maintain ethics in the process*: For the interviewees, the idea of having multiple interviews gives them more space to stop the interview since they know that the conversation will continue at another time (Earthy, Cuncev, & Cronin, 2016)
- *Lessen the burden*: As the interview covers a long period of participants learning and teaching experiences, covering this period in one or two sessions might be exhausting for both the interviewer and the interviewee (Elliott, 2012).

In this project, each teacher was interviewed four times over a period of sixteen weeks, except for one who was interviewed three times due to personal reasons. In

the interviews, the teachers were asked to tell their storied experiences at different stages of their language teaching/learning careers. In Table 3, details of the interviews' dates and their length are given:

Pseudonym		1 st interview	2 nd interview	3 rd interview	4 th interview	Total
Danah	Date	February 12 , 2019	March 5, 2019	April 2, 2019	April 23, 2019	5½ hours
	Duration	60 min	125 min	35 min	115 min	
Rawan	Date	February 12, 2019	March 9, 2019	March 31, 2019	April 20, 2019	4½ hours
	Duration	70 min	65 min	35 min	95 min	
Yasmine	Date	February 23, 2019	March 8, 2019	March 25, 2019	April 15, 2019	3 hours
	Duration	50 min	45 min	35 min	50 min	
Layla	Date	February 10, 2019	March 10, 2019	March 20, 2019	April 14, 2019	3 hours
	Duration	35 min	60 min	30 min	55 min	
Noor	Date	February 16, 2019	March 4, 2019	March 29, 2019	-	2 hours
	Duration	35 min	45 min	45 min	-	
Hana	Date	February 10, 2019	February 27, 2019	March 18, 2019	April 3, 2019	4½ hours
	Duration	55 min	90 min	35 min	90 min	

Table 3: Interviews' information

5.3.3.5 Interview mode

The interview mode of this study is through online interviewing. Online interviewing has become more acceptable in research in the recent years. Online means of interviewing have many advantages such as access to participants, ease of recording, and reduced costs. However, James and Busher (2012), in their discussion of internet interviewing, caution that the choice of online means over face-to-face interviews should not be out of convenience but rather research conditions that invite such methodological decisions. They further argue that the '[t]he effectiveness of online research interviews of all sorts depends on who is being researched, what is being researched, and why' (James & Busher, 2012, p. 188). That being noted, in this study, the decision to opt for internet telecommunication mode is based both on the study's conditions and the chosen research approach. For the conditions of this study, the participants are located across dispersed geographical areas, which makes it difficult to reach them. The issues of access and reaching the participants were resolved by conducting online interviews. It also

lessens the 'intrusiveness' (Mann, 2016, p. 76) on participants' lives. As the participants in this study are full-time lecturers/instructors at university with work and family commitments, online interviews provide a logical option, especially with the proposed interview frequency.

While online interviewing has its advantages, it also has some shortcomings when compared to face-to-face interviewing. That is, face-to-face interviewing is the closest to the natural mode of communication that humans do in their daily interactions. In face-to-face interviewing, both the interviewer and interviewee can attend to non-linguistic cues such as facial expressions and body language to maintain a line of communication. Also, the presence of the interviewer and interviewee in the same location can build 'a personal connection' (Seitz, 2016) and thus could facilitate the development of rapport. In addition to these shortcomings, online interviewing risk some practical issues. For example, internet interruption, and the interviewees must have a level of digital literacy in order to set up the connection. In this research, I tried to mitigate these issues by the study design i.e. multiple interviews which helped in building rapport. Digital literacy and internet connectivity were not an issue with the participants since they are instructors at universities and had been used to online means of communication in their workplace.

5.3.3.6 Level of reflection

The research approach, narrative inquiry, requires a high level of reflection on the part on the interviewees on their experiences on different stages of their life. These reflections include various aspects of their experiences such as personal, emotional, or professional encounters in the workplace. The location of the interview becomes important in this regard. I found Skype to be ideal because it allowed the participants to narrate their experiences from a place where they feel 'comfortable and secure' (Seidman, 2006, p. 49). In the case of my interviewees, this was in their study space, their living room, their kitchen, and their bedrooms. Talking in these safe spaces, I believe, allowed the interviewees to recall various emotional experiences thoughtfully, which might not have been possible in a public place, for example, a café or in their workplace (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna, 2012). This is the case in Jenner and Myers's (2019) study in which they found that privacy has more influence than the medium of the interview. In regards to their study, they note that interviews in private spaces 'result in more sharing of deeply personal and potentially

stigmatizing experiences whereas interviews conducted in public spaces produce 'politically correct' hedging and less detailed answers among participants' (Jenner & Myers, 2019, p. 175).

5.3.3.7 Power hierarchy

In the context of the interview, the power hierarchy between the interviewer and the interviewee is 'never equal' (Riessman, 2008; Seidman, 2006). Nonetheless, the interviewer should aim to reduce the power asymmetry throughout the research process. Besides the previously mentioned benefits of adopting unstructured narrative interviews, the type of interviewing could be seen as a power-balancing tool as the interviewees take charge of the information they want to highlight and the direction of the interview. This, in turn, lessens the power hierarchy of the interviewer over the interviewees. The interview mode via Skype might also work as a power-balancing medium in the interviewing process. That is, unlike face-to-face interviews, where the physical presence of the interviewer might impede the interviewee from answering certain inquiries or even cause the interviewee to withdraw from the interview, being in their comfort space along with the physical distance from the interviewer might give more power to the interviewee in terms of control over the interview. The option of withdrawal, for example, requires less effort in the interviewees to end the interview at the push of a button (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

5.3.3.8 Interviews procedures and reflections

Brinkmann (2013) stresses that 'as it is crucial in quantitative and experimental research to have an adequate understanding of the technologies of experimentation, it is crucial in qualitative interviewing to understand the intricacies of this quite specific knowledge-producing practice' (Brinkmann, 2013, p. 6). In the following section, I will detail the procedures that I followed to set up and conduct the interviews, integrated with reflections on the process.

The first step in data collection was setting the interview time and date with each participant. I contacted each participant and asked about the preferred time and date for interviews. Then, I tested the Skype connection to make sure it was not interrupted during the interviewing process. Once we agreed on the time and date, I started the data collection phase. Initially, I planned to interview all the participants phase by phase. That is, all the interviews are finished in one phase (for example,

pre-study abroad) before starting the next phase. This plan was set to keep a similar track of probing and focus across participants and to help me reflect on each phase before moving to the next one. However, this arrangement did not go as planned. With some participants changing the interview time, it was difficult to maintain. Therefore, some interviews were conducted one phase in advance compared to the others, but not more than one phase.

At the time of the interview, I started with a *briefing* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018) about the interview purpose, the audio recording, and the overall interviewing process. This includes language preference, the frequency of the interviews, and their right to refrain from answering certain questions or to withdraw at any stage of the data collection. I invited the participants if they had any questions or comments before the start of the interview. Since this was the first interview with the participants, it took a longer time compared to the following interviews. The participants' inquiry was mainly about my professional and personal background and what led me to explore this topic. These kinds of inquiries mostly occurred prior to the first interview. However, some participants also asked during the interviews. I allowed these kinds of inquiries as I felt it was part of establishing rapport and trust. Also, it lessens the power dynamic in interviews, allowing for more dialogue between the participants and me. Some of these inquiries lasted for less than one minute; others continued for more than ten minutes during the interview.

After answering the interviewees' inquiries before the start of the first interview, the interview started. My interviewing strategy started with open questions and then chronological probing to expand to the events in their narrative. I attempted to remain an active listener and let them lead the conversation in whatever direction they wanted (Riessman, 2008). At the beginning of the first interview, I intended to follow what Chase (2003) suggested to elicit narrative data in which she states that it is preferable to reiterate 'the invitation to tell a story' (Chase, 2003, p. 289). Since this study followed a narrative interview format, the interviews initially were guided by one main question: *can you tell me your story when...?* to elicit narrative data. Then, I followed up by probing the research themes. That was the initial plan. However, when I started the interviewing process, I faced a few dilemmas. First, when I asked my first two participants in Arabic (*tell me your story? ممكن تحكي لي قصتك من ...?*) it generated confusion as one asked me *what you mean?* And others responded *do you mean like mini-CV*

about me? I felt that the literal translation of the trigger question (i.e. tell me your story...?) from English to Arabic might not be a proper way to elicit data in this context. Eco (2004) explains that ‘a text can evoke a personal experience with a single word, this word does not have the same evocative impact every time, in every culture or country’ (Eco, 2004, p.107). Therefore, the word *story* ‘قصة’ might not be interpreted in the same way in English and Arabic. Although the word *story* ‘قصة’ in Arabic shares a similar semantic meaning to English that is ‘a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events’ (Cambridge dictionary), it also carries culture-related meanings. In this context, asking ‘what’s your story?’ is sometimes equated with ‘what’s your issue/problem?’ This might be the cause of confusion since the participants interpreted it as a question of negative experiences. Considering the possibility of this in my later interviews, I adopted a term that one of the first participants used, which is ‘*mini CV* نبيذه مصغره عنك’ as a starter for the participants in the first interview (pre-study abroad experiences) and probe into each of their experiences.

Although the phrase ‘*mini CV* نبيذه مصغره’ might differ in purpose from the word ‘*story* قصة’, I felt that using it was appropriate in the case of this set of participants. This was due to two reasons. First, the conditions of this research phenomenon are that the focus is on aspects of teachers’ career history. As I’m looking at the participants’ stories of learning and teaching, I felt the phrase ‘*mini CV* نبيذه مصغره’, more precisely the word CV, was more appropriate at the start of the interviewing phase to envisage the layout of their career experiences. The second reason is related to the first: since I did not know the participants long before the data collection phase, this phrase serves as an official invite to introduce themselves in the interview context. Later in the interview and the other interview phases (i.e during SA, immediate post-SA, and current experiences), I used the word *experience* (تجربة) instead of a *story* (قصة). For example, in the study abroad interview I started the interview with *can you tell me about your study abroad experiences?* I attempted consciously to avoid the use of the word *story* قصة in my questions and probing.

The interviewees were left to narrate their experiences without interruption. Once they signalled an end, I would then probe into their narrative. The following extract 5.2 is an example of this.

Extract 5.2 An example of probing from Danah's interview

1	Danah	I said to myself education is better	دانه: فقلت ال education افضل اللي اخذت فيه
2		the one I took	مواد ال education و نظريات ال education
3		the education courses and theories	غير التيسول اللي يكون based on art
4		not like TESOL	ورايح أكثر لل cultural studies و هاذي النواحي
5		not the one based on Art and tends more towards	بدور: ذكرتي لي انه في برنامج البكالوريوس كان فيه
6		cultural studies	تدريب ميداني او field work
7		and these aspects (...)	دانه: ايوه او تدريب عملي
8	Budur	you mentioned you had some practicum	بدور: إذا ممكن تتكلمين عن تجربتك في التدريب
9		or fieldwork =	العملي؟
10	Danah	yeah or practical training	دانه: التجربة كانت حلوه
11	Budur	if you could tell me about your practical training	هو التي عارفه لما الوحده توصل تقريبا ل هالمرحله و
12		experience?	تبغي تصير استاذة و لا معلمة و لا في المجال اللي هي
13	Danah	the experience was nice	تعطي و تقابل الجمهور
14		you know when one reach this stage	راح تكون هاذي النقطة بالنسبة لها هي التوب
15		and want to be an instructor	
16		or a teacher or in the field that she can give in	
17		and meet the audience	
18		this stage is the top stage	

Throughout the interviews, I kept a reflective journal on the side and jotted down notes on aspects that I found interesting and needed to probe into later in the interview.

5.3.5 Reflections on the interviews

While this study is guided by the assumption that people communicate their experiences in narrative form, it does not overlook the fact that people's capacity to articulate and communicate their experiences varies from one individual to the other (Barkhuizen & Benson, 2008; Benson, 2011; Elliott, 2012). Some participants provided short narratives (that is, 30 minutes) and needed more prompts to elicit narratives; others were triggered by a single question and gave a long narrative. The variability is not only in the length of narrative but also in the type of narrative. That is, some participants' narrative of personal experience is longer compared with professional ones; others focused mainly on their professional experiences and provided minimal personal experiences. This challenged my expectations and I was reminded again by Riessman (2008) that 'narratives come in many forms and sizes, ranging from brief, tightly bounded stories told in answer to single question, to long narratives that build over the course of several interviews' (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). Variability was mainly apparent in the first interview; as the interviews went on, I felt that participants were more expressive in their narrative, and I didn't need to make the same effort as in the early interviews. This might be due to reasons such as the unfamiliarity with the interviewer or the nature of the open interview format or because

the interviewees find it difficult to move away from their understanding of what an interview should be. That is, the participants might understand the interview as a balanced exchange between the interviewer and interviewees where the interviewer asks the questions and the interviewee answers the posed questions. This is not the case with narrative interviews, where the expectation is that the interviewer asks a question and the interviewees are expected to provide an extended narrative about their experiences.

Another issue I encountered was maintaining the flow of communication between my participants and me. As noted earlier in section 5.3.1, after the pilot study, I committed to interviewing my participants in Arabic; however, this was difficult in actual practice. During the interviews, I encountered a dilemma that made maintaining this commitment troublesome. All the interviewees spoke mostly Arabic except for one who spoke mostly in English. In the first interview, I asked the trigger question and attempted to maintain probing in Arabic. Nonetheless, the probing was difficult to maintain in one language since it is mostly derived from the participants' own words to expand on certain aspects in their narrative. I felt that probing in one language is rather limiting for me and the participants. While it is difficult to tell precisely why the language shift happened, it might be due to the understanding that both I and the interviewee understand the two languages thus, the focus was on communication rather than the language itself, which resulted in instances of 'translanguaging' (Vogel & García, 2017). Also, it could be due to the terminologies associated with English language learning and teaching. Teachers learn these terminologies in English, and they use them frequently in their work; therefore, they might shift to English to express them.

The degree of formality of the interviews, from formal to informal, changed over the interview phases. In the early interviews, I felt the instructors were more formal in answering the questions. As the interviews went on, they became more at ease discussing their experiences. The changes were not entirely in the participants' narratives but also in their doings during the interviews. For example, one interviewee in the second interview was ironing clothes while talking about her experience, and another interviewee was having dinner. This made it difficult to attend to facial expressions and maintain eye contact (Mann, 2016). While it could be a sign of relaxed participants' engagement with the interview situation, I was not prepared

mentally for such interview situations. These kinds of events are out of my interview frame (Roberts & Sarangi, 2005), which made me question how these events might influence how I approach the data analysis.

The participants' narratives of their experiences somewhat reminded me of my own. Throughout the interview process, my feelings fluctuated between understanding how they felt, confusion, and disagreement. Mostly, I kept my feelings and views to myself. However, sometimes I found myself engaging with these feelings in the interviews, which I mostly realized when I started transcribing my data. There were times when I questioned my responses to interviewees. After finishing the first interview phase, I recorded this in my reflective journal:

Being someone who went through similar experiences I found it difficult not agree or comment when any participants shared her experience that resembles mine. At many times I wondered if it was ok for me to say (I know how you feel) or (I've been there). Thinking about that now made me wonder if I said such comments, I might actually prevent the participants from explaining further their experience. I became aware of this before finishing the first phase interviews. Becoming aware of this, I will try not to give evaluative comments and ask further what they mean although this might put a certain pressure on participants to explain the obvious especially being from the same context, working in a similar educational institution and been through similar experiences. But thinking again, if I took this position of not knowing what are they talking about will that create a certain distance between me and my participants? Is that even ethical? (26 March 2019)

The uncertainty about in-situ moments like this was present throughout the interviews. In this part, the shared experiences and familiarity of the context at different levels, such as the Saudi Arabian context and work context, might have impacted the interviews in away similar to 'acquaintance interviews' (Garton & Copland, 2010). Nonetheless, I tried to maintain responsive transparency and listen carefully to what they say/imply.

5.4 Data analysis

This section outlines the procedures undertaken to prepare the data for analysis, including transcription, translation, and thematic organization, and provides an overview of the analytical framework employed across the chapters.

5.4.1 Transcription

The transcription process is ‘a translation from one narrative mode – oral discourse – into another narrative mode – written discourse’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 204). The act of transcription is implicated with issues of power in which the transcriber has to decide the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of transcribing the data (Bucholtz, 2000). I listened to the audio recording several times before starting the transcription process. I transcribed all the interviews from the start of the audio recording to the end to record all the interactions that may contribute to the data analysis and conclusion. Since the research focus and analysis are determined by the data themselves, the participants’ narratives were initially transcribed following verbatim transcription, that is, word-by-word transcription. The word-by-word transcriptions included language shifts, colloquial words, and maintaining the pronunciation of the interviewee’s dialect. According to Riessman (2008), the analytical focus of narrative research determines the details of the transcription. The analytical focus of this study is both the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the narrative data. The choice of opting for a detailed transcription might, as Sullivan (2011) argues, detract the readers from the language. Further, opting for a verbatim transcription would cause the tone of the speakers to be lost, along with the meaning. Therefore, I opted for a simplified version of transcription. That is, I added minimum paralinguistic features such as pause and stress. I also added what Rampton (2006) refers to as ‘stage directions’ to convey aspects of ways of talking that are not clear using verbatim translation and that are essential in understanding the participants’ perspectives such as mimicking others’ voices and laughter. Here is a table of the transcription conventions:

Symbol	Meaning
[text]	Anonymized information
‘text’	Constructed dialogue (Reported speech)
(.)	Short pause
(...)	Long pause
((text:))	‘Stage directions’
Bold	stress
(text)	Transcriber comment
<i>Italic</i>	In text translation

Table 4: Transcription conventions

The presentation of the transcripts follows what Blommaert referred to as ‘ethnopoetics’ (Blommaert, 2006). Ethnopoetics refers to the organization of narrative not as ‘sentences and paragraphs’ but ‘in terms of lines and groups of lines’ (Blommaert & Dong, 2010, p 73). Each line starts with ‘units of meaning’, which is called ‘equivalence’ (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 193). The ‘equivalence’ could be any characteristic of language, such as pauses, intonation, and stress (Blommaert & Dong, 2010). The purpose of presenting the participants' narrative through ethnopoetics is to represent the shared meaning achieved in the narrative exchange that is easily lost during the transcription process. This is because individuals do not speak in order of full comprehensible sentences, nor do they speak in clauses; they ‘speak in small spurts or idea units—shaped by tone, pitch, rhythm, and pause—clustered together in stanzas’ (Carver & Atkinson, 2020, p. 62). Thus, representing the narrative in this form is a step closer to the participants' narrative in real-time. The following extract (5.3) is an example of ethnopoetic presentation of the narrative.

Extract 5.3 An example from Yasmine’s 3rd interview

1	Yasmine	You don't feel that you are sitting with a stranger	ما تحسبن انك قاعد مع شخص غريب كثر ما انه هو كمتدق
2		more like a friend	و طريقة المحاضرة ما هو تلقين
3		and the lecturing style was not indoctrination (.)	او بلقي عليك محاضرة لا
4		that they would give a lecture (.) no	أكثره او يكون فيها discussion
5		more of (.) it includes discussion	الطالب هو passive لازم فيه شيء حتى
6		the student is not passive there has to be something	لازم يكون active
7		he/she should be active	لازم حتى يشاركه
8		he/she should participate	لازم يحط رأيه
9		he/she should give his opinion	ال critical thinking كان مرة عندنا مسموح
10		the critical thinking was totally wiped for us	ما كان عندنا ايو..
11		we didn't have (.)	يكون فيه مجال تقولين رأيك
12		that you have a space to say your opinion	او انك تسمعين آراء طلاب
13		or that you listen to students' opinions	او انك ممكن تتغيرين فكر
14		or that you change a way of thinking	الاستدلال دايما هو على حق
15		the teacher is always right	

5.4.2 Translation

Since this study draws on data that were collected mainly in Arabic, translation considerations become an important aspect of this study. Pavlenko recommends that ‘all narratives should be analysed in the language in which they were told and not in translation’ (Pavlenko, 2007, p. 173). This is because meaning is culturally and socially bounded and can be lost when translated to another language. This is especially the case when the focus of the analysis is not only on the ‘what’ of data but the ‘how’. The translation process was delayed to the last stage. That is, the data

were translated when I wanted to include the analysed extracts in the thesis (except for one case where I translated the whole interviews of one participant in order to share with my supervisors to help me understand how to approach the data analysis). Since I am not a professional translator, I have cross-checked some of the anonymised translated extracts with Arabic-speaking friends to ensure that the translation is as close as possible to the original texts. Since the participants shifted between Arabic and English in their narrative, the presentation of the narrative extracts is in both languages. Further, the presentation is in both languages so that readers who might speak the language can see what the participants said in the original language (Pavlenko, 2007).

5.4.3 Data management

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this research is classified as an inductive, exploratory research approach (Thomas, 2006). Further, the interviews were narrative interviews, which required more systematic ways to delve into the data. To grasp the data fully, I followed two ways to sort the data: unmotivated looking (Psathas, 1995) and events mapping. In the following sections, I explain these ways.

5.4.3.1 Unmotivated looking

As an 'entry point' to the collected data, I approached the data with what is referred to as 'unmotivated looking' (Psathas, 1995). Unmotivated looking can be described as 'a process of listening to the data and/or reading through the transcribed text to obtain a feel for the data' (Liddicoat, 2021, p. 64). The main impetus for this approach is to maintain openness and let that data guide the research. In relation to this research, it means approaching the data without imposing pre-formulated concepts of what the participants' learning and teaching experiences encompass and how these experiences are communicated. It is a process of immersing oneself in the data and letting the data decide the direction and focus of the research. While I approached the data with 'unmotivated looking' approach, I acknowledge that researchers approach the researched topic with an interest in mind. This interest could be a result of personal experiences or reading the literature. Nonetheless, I attempted to maintain an open stance towards the data throughout my readings.

5.4.3.2 Mapping events in interviews

Since each interview transcript is lengthy and contains many actions and events, I had to find a way to map out all the events in each interview. This step was inspired by Wortham (2001)'s table for mapping events and characters in participants' autobiographical narratives. Wortham (2001) explored the voicing and interactional positioning in the participants' narrative, which required going beyond providing a description of the narrated event. In this research, I created a modified version of Wortham's table (see Figure 4). The overall purpose is to 'preserve sequence and the wealth of detail contained in long sequences' (Riessman, 2008, p. 74) and hence avoid fragmenting the participants' stories. Also, mapping the events in this way helped in envisaging the layout of each individual interview, which allowed me to see the aspects that the participants talked in length about, which aspects they were brief about, and what aspects they didn't address when compared with the other participants. This was especially important since my initial interest was to explore what EFL instructors ascribe as meaningful experiences in their English language learning and teaching journeys.

The following is an explanation for each category in the adapted table:

- *Trigger*: it refers to the occasion that led to the production of the narrated event, in this case, my questions and prompts. The addition of this category, as mentioned in section 5.2.1, is part of my ontological and epistemological perspective in this research to account for the co-construction of the narrative.
- *Event*: it refers to a themed story or an encounter that the interviewee narrates to deliver a purpose (explain, describe, give an example, etc.).
- *Characters in the event*: it refer to any figures, either individuals or structures, that played a role in the narrated event.
- *Evaluation*: it refers to the participants' evaluation of their own experiences within the given event. The part highlights the participants' perspective on the given event.

Jasmine 1st interview

Order	Trigger	Event	Characters in event	Evaluation	My notes
1	Mini CV	Introduction of career history	-	-	
2	Why English Q	Choosing major	Family Friends Registration employee sister	Hesitant Settled for Liked	<i>narrative (Identity - agency - Muslim narrative) (Expectations - Job demands) Female - family (Reality)</i>
3	Can you tell me about your...	First year college experience	Used the collected voice (we)	Lost Difficult Passed	<i>Teaching evaluating teaching in BA (Bad) Realization - Presently</i>
4	Did you had practicum	Practicum experience First class taught <i>Teaching as I was taught</i>	Friends Teachers The system	Liked the exp	She shift in time to talk about what she know now looking back at her teaching She talk about the system change after she became a TA
5	Did you had a teaching experience after BA	Teaching post BA (adult learners)	The university The regions' edu. Admin The student One student with learning disabilities	Liked Simple education	Introduce how she came to this job Expectation of students age on adult learning schools
6	And afterward you started teaching at university	Work in university Teaching	The students Colleague	Very Difficult	Not sure if she is talking about now or back then She said 'then later' which make me lean towards assuming that is was in the past (I shifted to now by asking) She talked about the system before and after she went abroad She shifted to now to talked about the foundation course

Teach as I was taught

Figure 4: Events mapping adapted from Wortham (2001)

5.4.3.3 Searching for themes

Having immersed myself in the data through repeated listening, transcription, unmotivated looking, and event mapping, the next stage involved a systematic search for themes. This phase marked a transition from engaging with the data holistically to identifying and analysing significant patterns and meanings within the participants' narratives. While the previous steps allowed for a broad understanding of the data's landscape, searching for themes enabled a more focused examination of the recurring ideas, experiences, and perspectives that shed light on Saudi EFL instructors' professional journeys and the factors shaping their teaching practices.

Initially, I planned to use NVivo for data coding and mapping, uploading the interviews to the qualitative data analysis software package. However, the frequent shifts between Arabic and English within the data presented a challenge. NVivo does not support modifying text alignment once uploaded, and its automatic left-to-right alignment proved unsuitable for the Arabic language. This resulted in disjointed text, particularly in sentences containing both Arabic and English words. Consequently, I sought an alternative programme to manage the data effectively.

Microsoft Excel emerged as a suitable option, offering greater control over text alignment and preserving the correct order of English and Arabic utterances. For coding, I utilised Excel's filter feature, which allows for the assigning of characteristics such as colour to data extracts and the filtering of them accordingly. I uploaded the transcripts to Microsoft Excel and conducted a thorough reading of each interview, colour-labelling the excerpts as I progressed. The filter feature proved instrumental in locating extracts linked to specific colours (Figure 5). Initially, I assigned colours based on the events marked in the previous step (Figure 4), using main colours to represent the overarching theme of each event/story and gradient colours for related sub-themes within each story and individual interview.

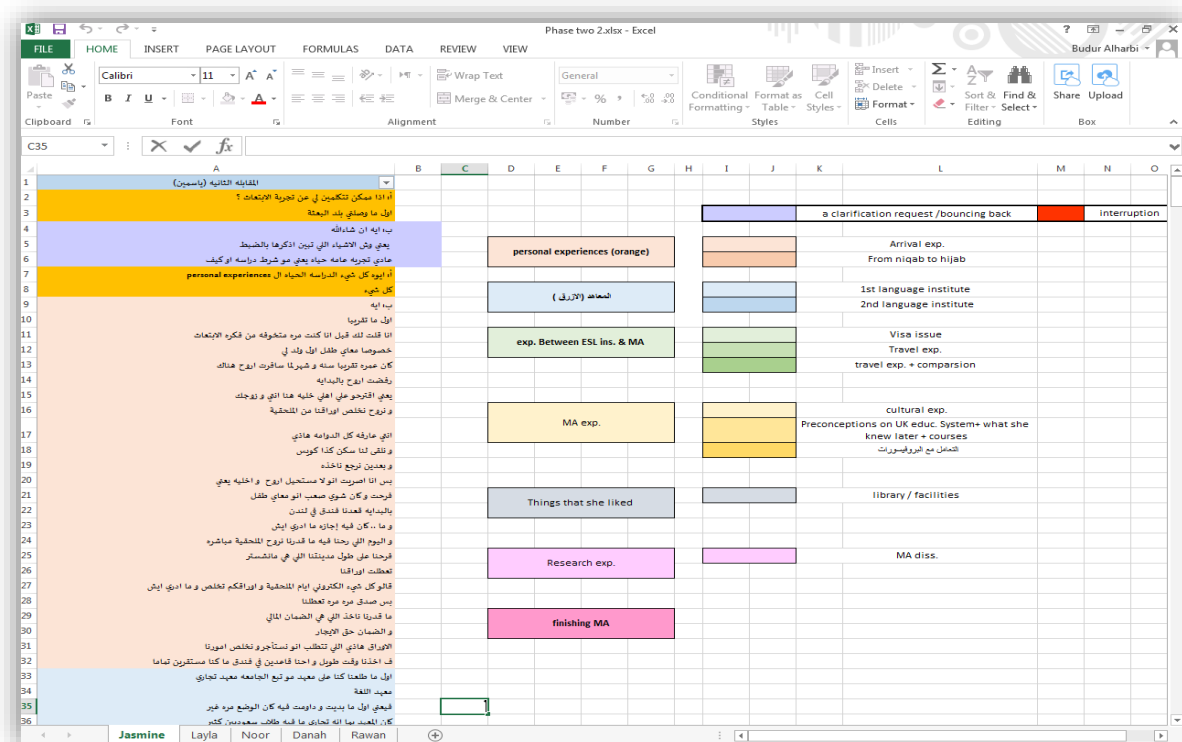


Figure 5: Data coding using Microsoft Excel

As I coded the interview transcripts in Excel, distinct colour-coded clusters began to emerge, signalling potential themes. These clusters often involved extended narratives rather than isolated snippets. For instance, stories about navigating family expectations when choosing a university major and the ongoing pursuit of professional development, often coded in blue, combined around the broader theme of 'Educational Choices'. Similarly, accounts of influential teachers, transformative classroom experiences during their BA education, and study abroad programmes on

their teaching perspectives, frequently coded in green, pointed towards the theme of 'Learning Experiences'. Finally, narratives about their current teaching experiences in the Saudi HE, managing student dynamics, and reflecting on personal pedagogical growth, often coded in yellow, solidified into the theme of 'Teaching Practice'.

To refine these themes, I transferred the colour-coded clusters from Excel into a Word document. I carefully reviewed each narrative cluster, paying close attention to the storylines, turning points, and recurring motifs within them. This process involved clarifying the scope of each theme, merging smaller clusters into larger, more encompassing ones, and discarding codes that lacked sufficient narrative depth or is not relevant to the research focus. For example, one participant's story about defying her family's traditional expectations to pursue her preference of enrolling in an English language programme resonated strongly with the theme of 'Educational Choices.' Similarly, participants' accounts of learning, encompassing their experiences as language learners, early experiences as language teachers, and professional learning opportunities, are aligned with the theme of 'Learning Experiences.' Finally, a recurring narrative thread across several interviews concerning the challenges and accomplishments of adapting teaching practices to align with both the Saudi HE curriculum and the instructors' evolving beliefs was categorized under the broader theme of 'Teaching Practice.'

5.4.3.4 Analytical framework

As I embarked on this qualitative inquiry, I grappled with selecting an analytical framework that would effectively capture the holistic nature of participants' experiences while also providing nuanced insights into their narratives. This undertaking required an approach that acknowledged the subjective nature of storytelling and the ways in which individuals construct meaning through language. Therefore, I sought a framework compatible with the theorisation of interview data 'as discursive constructions rather than as factual statements' (Pavlenko, 2002). My initial thematic analysis yielded three prominent foci that now shape the structure of this thesis: educational choices, learning experiences, and teaching practice. While these three themes provide a broad framework for the analysis, my analytical approach evolves within each chapter to best illuminate the specific dimensions of the participants' stories and the research questions addressed.

For the analysis of narratives of educational choice presented in Chapter 6, I opted for a fine-grained approach informed by the field of discourse analysis. While my approach can broadly be categorised as discourse analysis, I did not align with a specific strand within this field. Instead, I adopted what Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2010) terms an 'eclectic approach to discourse', in which I relied on 'the use of tools coming from different paradigms' (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010, p. 72). This approach was particularly well-suited to analysing narratives of educational choice, as it enabled me to engage with the multifaceted nature of these decisions and the diverse ways in which individuals construct educational choices.

Furthermore, my analysis drew upon the distinction made by Wortham and Reyes (2015) between 'narrated events' and 'narrating events'. The narrated event refers to the content of what is being said, while the narrating event refers to the act of storytelling itself and the discursive choices made in its construction (Wortham & Reyes, 2015). This distinction was crucial for understanding how both the content and the act of narration contribute to the construction of meaning (Prior & Talmy, 2021). Specifically, attending to both narrated and narrating events within the narratives of Saudi female EFL instructors allowed me to explore the interwoven professional and personal motivations and gendered experiences within their stories. By analysing not just what they said but how they said it, I aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of their experiences navigating the EFL field in the Saudi Arabian context.

When analysing the selected extracts, I paid close attention to the discursive strategies employed by participants, drawing on existing literature to understand how these strategies contribute to the construction of meaning. One such strategy I focused on is 'constructed dialogue' which refers to state in which 'the speaker animates another's voice' (Tannen, 2007, p. 22). The focus on constructed dialogue provides a useful tool in exploring agency. For example, Miller (2014) showed how immigrant language learners used constructed dialogue to demonstrate responsibility for their language learning and counter negative perceptions. Similarly, Fernandez, McGregor, and Yuldashev (2021) examined how American undergraduate students who initially applied but later withdrew from study abroad programmes negotiated their decision-making process. Their study highlighted how students, by drawing on constructed dialogue, revealed shifts and contradictions in their narratives over time,

emphasizing the evolving nature of their agency as they struggled with internal and external influences.

In addition to constructed dialogue, I also examined instances of repetition and pronominal choices, which proved to be valuable tools in exploring the concept of agency. The work of Tannen (2007), Bamberg (2006), Miller (2014), and others offered valuable insights into understanding how these strategies function within narratives.

Chapter 7 shifts the focus to the participants' learning experiences. In this chapter, I configured their narratives into stories (Barkhuizen, 2011), organised chronologically to maintain a holistic overview of their learning journeys across historical time and differing contexts. This reconfiguration process followed Riessman's (2008) approach to thematic narrative analysis, which prioritises developing understanding from individual experiences before making connections across cases. In other words, I sought to understand the unique trajectory of each participant's learning journey in its entirety before considering potential commonalities/differences across the data set. The primary focus in this chapter is, therefore, on the narrated event, with minimal instances of references to the 'narrating event'.

Chapter 8 shifts the focus to the participants' teaching practices, examining how their past learning experiences inform and shape their current pedagogical approaches. This chapter centres on the moments within the participants' narratives where participants discuss their teaching practice, paying close attention to the connections they draw between their past and present experiences. The analysis draws upon both the narrated event to explore the specific teaching practices and beliefs and the narrating event to uncover the underlying assumptions and motivations. Similar to Chapter 6, this analysis also considers the discursive strategies employed within their narratives of teaching practice, such as constructed dialogue, repetition, and pronominal choices.

5.5 Positionality

Since this research is located within the interpretive paradigm, the researcher's social and historical background becomes crucial in understanding his/her influence on the research process, analysis, and conclusion. In engaging with research 'we

draw from understandings deep within us, understandings whose derivation may be some hidden mix of personal experience, scholarship, assertions of other researchers' (Stake, 1995, p. 12). These understandings, indeed, affect our decisions throughout the research. However, it is important to note that this conviction does not recognize researcher influence as 'a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding' (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Therefore, researchers working within the interpretive paradigm are encouraged to be explicit about their position in relation to their research projects. The researcher's position or positionality refers to 'the stance or positioning of the researcher in relation to the social and political context of the study the community, the organization or the participant group' (Rowe, 2014, p. 628).

In this study, I approach the researched phenomenon with an insider status. I fall under the same criteria as my research participants, i.e. Saudi, female, EFL instructor. I am linguistically, culturally, nationality-wise, and professionally (from the same work system) an insider and these categories lend themselves to this research project. This has implications for the recruitment process, interview process, and data interpretation. For the recruitment, I believe that being a female facilitated the access and recruitment of my participants. As I mentioned in chapter 2, one of the long-held characteristics of the Saudi context is gender segregation, which is reflected in all aspects of the society, from gender-segregated spaces to gender norms. Within this context, Islamic teachings and cultural norms discourage interaction between unrelated men and women unless it is necessary. This understanding gave me an advantage in accessing and recruiting female participants for my study. Additionally, I believe that this understanding helped to expand the conversation, as female EFL instructors were more likely to feel comfortable and open with me than they would have been with a male researcher.

I believe being 'culturally literate' (Trowler, 2011) is evident in the interviews. That is, being from the same context, the participants didn't have to explain local politics, cultural norms, and context-relevant issues that are either shared or known to those who are from Saudi Arabia. Further, I believe being from a similar working context, i.e. higher education and being an EFL instructor myself, helped in expanding the dialogue on the local issues that are understood by those who belong to the same community of practice, either issues like university policies or English language

courses in the Saudi HE. However, I am aware that being an insider could carry with it a 'stigma'. This stigma is often related to the researcher's bias or subjectivity (Greene, 2014). For example, being from the same context and sharing similar experiences might develop preconceived thoughts about the instructors' experiences, which can influence the interview prompts and data interpretation. Another potential drawback is that the participants might leave some information out due to the expectation that I understand what they are referring to (Berger, 2015). While it is difficult to eliminate these drawbacks, I tried to mitigate these possibilities by being explicit about my own journey (Chapter 1) and by taking a reflexive stance (see section 5.3.3.8) throughout the interview process and the data analysis process.

5.6 Ethical considerations

Kubanyiova (2008) asserts that researchers should reflect on macroethics and microethics when conducting their research (Kubanyiova, 2008). Macroethics refers to the procedural ethics that an institution's ethics committee board adhere to, which are rooted in fundamental principles and echoed in professional codes of conduct. (Kubanyiova, 2008, p. 504). Microethics, on the other hand, refers to 'everyday ethical dilemmas that arise from the specific roles and responsibilities that researchers and research participants adopt in specific research contexts' (Kubanyiova, 2008, p. 504). In terms of macroethics, the initial data collection phase (pilot study) and the main study were approved by the University of Stirling's General University Ethical Panel (GUEP) (Appendix 1). The ethical guidelines covered issues of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality. After I received the ethical clearance, I started the recruitment process (section 4.3.2.2 Participants' recruitment). Those who agreed to participate in the study were sent the informed consent (Appendix 4) to sign. After receiving the signed informed consent forms, I scheduled the interviews, accommodating participants' work and family commitments by adjusting some dates and times. Before each interview, I reminded participants of their right to withdraw at any point. In regard to anonymity and confidentiality, the participants were given pseudonyms in interview transcripts and in the research. Only minimum personal information was required such as years of teaching experience and number of years since their last qualification. When participants mentioned any traceable information, it was either modified or omitted from the transcripts. The mentioned references to locations, cities, or institutions were assigned random letters to maintain

confidentiality. To ensure the confidentiality of the data obtained, the audio recordings and transcripts were uploaded to a secured online drive.

While my data collection via online interviews did not present any overt ethical dilemmas, I remained mindful of the ongoing need for microethical reflection in the online research environment. There were instances in the interviews where I needed to rethink the interview flow. For example, I had a vision of how the interview procedures should go based on the literature (Chase, 2003) that I read, which did not go as planned. I had planned to conduct the interviews in Arabic, but the interviewees switched between Arabic and English, and one spoke mostly in English. I left the choice of language up to the interviewees and did not dictate it. The participants were free to communicate in the language they felt most comfortable with.

Part of my ethical stance is to remain open to the participants' inquiry as much as possible. I was responsive to the interviewee's questions about my experiences professionally and personally. At the same time, I was aware that the openness to dialogue might bring changes in their perspectives (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) about teaching practice. For example, I had one participant who talked about her teaching practice and when she finished explaining her practice, she asked me if it was the right way to do it. I responded with honesty that my experience does not qualify me to evaluate whether it is a good practice or not. Microethical moments like this, where power dynamics and researcher positionality came into play, were present throughout the interviews. I was cautious about how I engaged with these moments, and I kept the participants' interests a priority at all the stages. Further, part of my ethical commitment in this research is maintaining a reflexive stance at all stages in the research process (see section 5.3.3). Overall, I believe the participants were engaged and comfortable throughout the interviews, which was evident in some cases. As mentioned in section 5.3.3.8, one participant was having her dinner, and in another interview, another participant was ironing her clothes. These moments, I would argue, signal the extent to which the participants were comfortable during the interviews.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the research methodology and design. I briefly explained the underlying assumptions that permeate this research. I explained the decision behind choosing narrative inquiry as a research approach. I

described the design process that led to the main study design implicated with reflection on the whole process. I described how I approached the data: transcription, translation processes, data organization, and analysis. Finally, I provided a reflection on this study's ethical considerations. The next chapter is the first analysis chapter about the participants' narratives of educational choice, which focuses on one broad theme, which is the participants' narratives of educational choice.

CHAPTER 6: NARRATIVES OF EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present one theme that emerged as salient to all participants: educational choice. The narratives in this theme reveal that choosing undergraduate and post graduate programmes are not straight forward for these women in this context. Rather they must navigate and overcome a range of structures (Giddens, 1984) in order to move forward in their careers. As will be seen, the narratives reveal the complex interplay between structure and agency, as well as the authorial stance with which the women imbue their stories, with some suggesting they have more control than others over the ways their lives unfold.

The analysis of the participants' narratives is over two main events in their professional learning careers. These events are choosing a BA programme major and the decision to seek overseas studies. As I was conducting the 'unmotivated looking' analysis, the issue of choice emerged as salient in the data. Although I introduced the topic in my questions (Chapter 5, section 5.3.3.4), the length of time the teachers devoted to its discussion and the detail they provided demonstrated the centrality of educational choice to their career and personal trajectories. The analysis attends to how the participants construct their educational choices. The narrative extracts are intertwined with their extended narrative over the course of the interviews, and links between their narrative and dominant discourses are explored.

6.2 Narratives of educational choice: Bachelor's degree major

The narrative in this section is located in Saudi Arabia. The participants narrated their stories about what happened after they finished their high school studies. More precisely, the participants are narrating what made them decide to enrol in the English language programme.

6.2.1 Yasmine

The extract below is taken from Yasmine's first interview. Yasmine is now working as a university lecturer in her hometown, where she did her K-12 education and undergraduate studies. Her hometown is a relatively small town in the northern part of Saudi Arabia. The following extract is Yasmine's story of what made her decide to study English language as a bachelor's degree major. More precisely, Yasmine is

recalling a time when she graduated from high school and had to make a decision about what university major she wanted to study. In the interaction before this extract, Yasmine had answered a general question that invites briefly recalling her education and career history.

Extract 6.2.1.1 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

- | | | | |
|----|---------|--|---|
| 1 | Budur | If it is ok I want to return a little bit = | بدور : اذا ممكن ارجع معاك شيه وراء = |
| 2 | Yasmine | yeah | ياسمين: ايوه |
| 3 | Budur | and ask you why you chose English? | بدور: و اسألك ليش انجليزي؟ |
| 4 | Yasmine | see I will be honest with you | ياسمين: والله شوفي يكون صريحه معك |
| 5 | | I will not philosophize and say that English is an | ما راح اتفلسف و اقول الانجليزي لغة عالمية و ما ادري |
| 6 | | international language and whatever and I love it | ايش و انا احبها |
| 7 | | I am from [M] city | انا من مدينة [م] ما ادري اذا تعرفين عنها او لا |
| 8 | | I don't know if you know it or not | مدينه صغيره و ما فيه خيارات كثيره في الجامعة |
| 9 | | a small town with few options in the university | حتى لما بدأت ادرس كانت كليه تربيه |
| 10 | | when I started studying it was an Education | و كليه آداب و كليه علوم موجود |
| 11 | | college and Arts college and Science college | ما كانت فيه مسمى جامعة [م] الموجوده حاليا |
| 12 | | there was no [M] university like now | و الاقسام المتاحة كثير |
| 13 | | with a lot of available departments | بدور: اوكي |
| 14 | Budur | Ok | ف انا كان تخصصي علمي |
| 15 | Yasmine | I was in the science track ((in high school)) | و كنت تقريبا من الاوائل على منطقتي |
| 16 | | I was one of the top students in my region | و كنت ابغى طب صدق |
| 17 | | I wanted the Medicine field | يعني مره كان في نفسي طب |
| 18 | | I really wanted to study Medicine | بس ما كان موجود عندي في [م] |
| 19 | | but it was not available in [M] city | كان صعبه اني اروح و اتغرب |
| 20 | | It was difficult to go and experience 'alienation' | في الفتره هذيك كانوا اهلي مو مره مع فكره انو اطلع لحالي |
| 21 | | at that time my family were not with the idea that I | فكان المجال الوحيد في الوقت ذاك |
| 22 | | go alone | يقولون لي انه له مستقبل |
| 23 | | so it was the only choice at that time | يعني كان الانجليزي |
| 24 | | they told me it has a future ((meaning English)) | ما كنت حابه ادخل و لا قسم |
| 25 | | I didn't want to enter any department | عندنا رياضيات و فيزياء |
| 26 | | we had Mathematics and Physics | مع اني كنت مره احبهم و شاطره فهم |
| 27 | | although I really liked and I was good at | بس ما كنت مفكره اني اكون مدرسه لهاذي المواد في يوم من |
| 28 | | but I didn't like the idea that I would be a teacher | الايام |
| 29 | | for these subjects one day | فدخلت الانجليزي |
| 30 | | I entered the English Language department | انو يعني كان الافضل بوقته |
| 31 | | It was the best option at that time | بس لما دخلته اول سنه |
| 32 | | when I tried it in the first year | شفت نفسي قدرت انجح فيه حبيته |
| 33 | | I saw that I could succeed in it | مع انه فتحت الترم اللي بعده على طول عندنا كلية الهندسة |
| 34 | | I liked it | و كان فيه كثير صديقاتي غيرو بس انا لا |
| 35 | | although directly the following semester | فكرت فيه و قلت اني اكل فيه لاني حبيته صدق |
| 36 | | they opened an Engineering college | |
| 37 | | many of my friends changed major but not me | |
| 38 | | I thought about it | |
| 39 | | and said I want to continue | |
| 40 | | because I honestly liked it | |

Yasmine's opening phrase, '*I will be honest with you*' (line 4) suggests she anticipates her response might deviate from my expectations. In the proceeding lines 4-6, Yasmine outlines the assumed expectations regarding the response to my question into the English language choice. These expectations are, first, a response that draws on a master narrative around English as an international language

(Kubota, 2019) and second, a personal motive of 'love' of English language that would lead to the English language choice. By initiating her narrative with a departure from my assumed expectations, Yasmine rules out the possibility that the English programme choice was her own, hence introducing the constraints on her agency. Yasmine then moves on to tell her story (lines 7-31) in which she explains how she came to study English. Yasmine orients to my knowledge of her context '*I am from [M] city I don't know if you know it or not*' (lines 7-8), and sets the scene for her story by explaining the limits on her educational choices that arise from the nature of the context, that is, the small town that she lives in. In lines 4-13, Yasmine foregrounds the context as the main constraint on her agency.

In lines 15-18, Yasmine professes that she was a science track in high school, a high achieving student, and her wish was to study Medicine. Yasmine's awareness of her capabilities creates a sense of lack of agency in making choices in her narrative. For example, her statement, '*I was one of the top students in my region*' which implies the expectations that are frequently associated with top students; that is, top students are expected to enrol in highly regarded majors such as Medicine.

On a broader level, Yasmine's agency was constrained by the unavailability of the major that she wanted in her hometown and her inability to leave and study in other places where Medicine major is available. However, on the local level, Yasmine has more affordances to exercise her agency by choosing from the available options. Within the available options, Yasmine chose the English language major. She based her choice on two reasons. The first is the instrumental motive, such as having a job in the future (line 24). This was supplemented in the following extract (6.2.1.2) by stating that English is '*in demand and has a promising future*' (line 16). The future is based on the prospect of achieving English language proficiency, which is a required skill for most of the jobs in the Saudi context. Thus, earning a degree in English would widen the scope of job possibilities.

Yasmine used constructed dialogue in '*they told me it has a future*' (line 24) to justify her choice. The purpose of constructed dialogue here might serve as a strategy to downplay her agency in this situation. The performance of constructed dialogue came after a sequence of first-person pronouns 'أنا / كنت' (lines 15-18) to assert her wishes followed by 'لكن' (line 19) to negate that her wishes were not possible. The

introduction of the pronoun ‘they’ *يقولون* marks a change in her agentive status in her narrative. She does not clarify to whom ‘they’ refers, but the fact that Yasemin acts on the advice given suggests they are a powerful force (given their proximity in the dialogue, ‘they’ may refer to her family). Yasemin’s use of ‘they’ might be a strategy to avoid assigning higher agentive powers to a specific group of people. This means she is able to distribute agency and avoiding direct responsibility of other subjects as the cause of her choice (Kockelman, 2007). This way Yasmine maintains some agency on her choice.

Yasmine attributes her choice of studying locally to personal preference presented in ‘*experience alienation* *غربه*’ (lines 20-21) and also to her family’s reservation ‘*my family were not with the idea that I go alone*’ (lines 22-23). The English translation for the word ‘alienation *غربه*’ does not adequately represent the meaning in Arabic as the Arabic word carries several meanings. Here Yasmine’s usage refers to feelings of estrangement and being in an unfamiliar place which relate to both being away from her family and the familiar context which is her hometown.

In the same interview (1st interview), Yasmine supplements her narrative by referring to her sister when she spoke about being a science track student who chose to enrol in an Art track major i.e. English language programme (extract 6.2.1.2).

Extract 6.2.1.2 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

1	Yasmine	my sister, let me tell you	اخوتي خلييني اقولك
2		see my older sister was an outstanding student	لان اخوتي اللي اكبر مني شاطرة
3		and she specialized in Mathematics	و تخصصت رياضيات
4		and became a Math teacher	و صارت مدرسة رياضيات
5		however, that field was not my ambition.	بس ماكان طموحي في المجال هذا
6		you know that the available majors were limited.	يعني تعرفين اللي كانت التخصصات مره محدودة
7		we had mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology -	يعني كانت عندنا رياضيات فيزياء كيمياء احياء
8		these were the scientific fields.	هناهي المجالات العلمية
9		and, of course, there was the literary tracks	والادبي طبعا
10		I wasn't interested in the other departments	الاقسام الثانية ماكانت تعينيني
11		English was the only option available to me at the	بس كان طبعا الانجليزي وقتها هو اللي متاح لي
12		time	فمستقبلا كانوا يفكرون عشان الوظيفة وكذا
13		they were thinking about job prospects	فانصحوني الانجليزي كويس مطلوب وله مستقبل
14		and such for the future	فقلت خل ادخل شيء احبه
15		so they advised me that English is a good choice	
16		in demand and has a promising future	
17		so, I thought, let me pursue something I like	

Yasmine provides a second reason for choosing English language programme. In extract 6.2.1.2, Yasmine professes that she could not envision being a teacher of other subjects, such as Math or Physics. She provides a background for this

statement through her sister's story. The reference to her sister was not to set a model that she wants to follow; rather, Yasmine draws on the iteration dimension to express her disfavour of one of the possible pathways. This was constructed towards the future. In line (15), Yasmine refers to 'they' again which emphasizes the presence of external voices shaping her decision-making process. While Yasmine might not explicitly challenge this structure, her narrative reveals a subtle form of agency as she strives to find a balance between external expectations and personal aspirations.

Yasmine's choice was based on a logical process that draws on what Emirbayer and Mische (1998) called *projective dimension* (see Chapter 4 section 4.2.2). Yasmine, with no prior experience of this sort and needs to make a decision about a new situation, draws on available models, as exemplified in her sister's story, to predict the outcome of the available majors in the future. This allowed her to eliminate one possible pathway.

Although throughout most of her narrative Yasmine projected comparatively less agency in her choices, a strong shift occurs in the latter part when she describes what happened after enrolling in the English language programme. A year after Yasmine joined the English language programme, the university opened an engineering programme. Her previous comments on her being one of the top students set the expectation that she will change major to the engineering programme. However, Yasmine remained in the English language programme. The strong shift to claiming agency is clear in lines 38 & 39 where she says, '*I thought about it and said I want to continue*'. This statement represents her inner dialogue ('*I thought*' and '*I said*') on making a decision about the new possibilities. Yasmine constructs her agency in this situation in two ways. First, by indicating the availability of a more highly regarded programme (i.e. engineering). Second, by referring to her friends who unlike her changed to the engineering programme. Yasmine's statement of choice was followed by expression of likeness of the English language programme. This was indexed through the repetition of saying 'I liked it حبيته' (lines 35 & 40). The reference to her 'liking' as reason for her choice in this situation asserts her agentic position.

Throughout, Yasmine positions herself as different from others: first, at the start of the narrative she presents a response that goes against two master narratives for English language study choice. Second, in stating her decision to stay in the English

language major compared to others who changed, Yasmine simultaneously positions herself as honest - as opposed to the others who might 'philosophize' in response to English language programme choice question - and as a person who is not influenced by others' actions and expectations, exemplified in the engineering programme narrative.

Yasmine's narrative moves gradually from orienting to a limited agency resulting from the broader context, to engaging in agentive decision-making processes on a local level to claiming an agentive stance after enrolling in the English language programme. Yasmine's narrative of programme choice meets the broader historical structure of educational opportunities available for women in small towns in the Saudi Arabian context. Yasmine enrolled in the English language programme between 2006/2007 where, as she noted, there was no official university as there is now. At that time, the large universities that had a wide variety of programmes were located mainly in large cities, while in the remote areas and small towns, the government opened education colleges to encourage the acceptance of female education and accommodate cultural boundaries on female mobility (Jamjoom & Kelly, 2013) and the local view of the appropriate career for females (more details in chapter 2). Although this gave females more affordances to study locally, it restricted the option to one career, that is, teaching. This is similar to Yasmine's situation, in which she explored the local options in regard to teaching, as exemplified in her envisaging the outcome of the available majors. Yasmine also draws on local socio-economic discourse around the need for English language skills in the job market, which mirrors a global discourse facilitated by neoliberal ideology around the usefulness of English Language skills in climbing the social and economic ladder (Kubota, 2011).

6.2.1.3 Summary

Yasmine's decision to study English is a direct result of navigating various social structures that both limit and guide her choices. The lack of diverse university options in her hometown, particularly the absence of a medical programme, immediately hinders her ambition. Additionally, familial expectations of her remaining close to home, coupled with their prioritizing of career practicality, further narrow her

field of choices. These familial structures interact with broader market perceptions about the strong job prospects associated with English as a language of study.

Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) model helps illuminate Yasmine's path within these restrictions. Her past experiences influence her present choices; observing her sister's success in mathematics clarifies that a similar trajectory does not hold the same appeal for her. Projections of the future also play a crucial role - while she initially envisions a medical career, external pressures emphasize the potential rewards of studying English. Yasmine's ultimate decision-making hinges on the 'practical-evaluative' dimension, in which she seeks a solution within currently available options. Finding no other department she likes, she logically embraces English. She believes in a trajectory offering both job security and a potential for developing genuine interest in the subject.

While Yasmine does not outright resist the structures surrounding her, she demonstrates agency through adaptation. Within the existing constraints, she carves out a viable path balancing externally projected futures with her individual preferences. Her choice demonstrates a continuous negotiation constrained by limited options yet focused on identifying a route she sees as potentially fulfilling.

6.2.2 Danah

The following extract is from the first interview with Danah. This extract is part of a longer narrative that came in response to my question; *why did you choose English and why education?* In this extract, Danah narrates her story of the shift between two programmes: from Home Economics to the English language programme. She starts her narrative by explaining that when she graduated from high school she did not have a certain programme in mind and she enrolled in Home Economics. Despite having no issues with Home Economics, Danah explains that she was not motivated to continue. Danah clarifies that she went to the Education College to register in the English programme but they told her that if she wanted to register as a full-time student she would have to do the Art track courses and achieve a certain GPA to enrol, which may take up to a year. To immediately enrol in the English language program, the only option available was for her to register as a part-time student, which she did. Danah's family did not support her decision to change programs and her studying status. Nevertheless, Danah's asserted her stance and

continued with her plans. While Danah narrates her experience, I didn't interfere and only provided acknowledgement tokens such as *yeah um, which were not included in the following extract as these events were concurrent with the background of her talk.*

Extract 6.2.2.1 (Danah - 1st interview)

1	Danah	I graduated from high school like any other	اتخرجت من الثانوي عادي
2		I was uncertain about the programmes	فكنت محتارة بين التخصصات ايش ادخل ايش ادخل
3		'what to enrol in what to enrol in'	علمي و لا ادبي ادبي و لا علمي
4		'Science track or Art track? Art track or Science track?'	الخيرة العادية ما اقول لك اناو خياري كان مبني على
5		the usual uncertainty	معرفة و لا على حاجه انا ابغاها
6		I wouldn't say that my choice was based on knowledge	هو كنا by default او بطبيعة الحال
7		or something that I wanted	دخلت اقتصاد منزلي
8		It is like this	سواق خالتي على اساس نروح مع بعض مشوارينا و
9		naturally by default I entered Home Economics	نقضي مع بعض
10		my aunt had a chauffeur so we can go together	و بعدين ما قدرت اكمل مع انه كان مقعدي جامعي و
11		and finish our work together	وضعي منتظم و كانت اموري حلوه
12		then later I couldn't continue	و كان تخصص اللي هو اقتصاد منزلي fun
13		although I had a university place	كان عبارة عن رسم و تريكو و الوان و ما ادري ايش
14		and my situation was regular	اشياء مره سهله
15		and everything was fine	موزي الدراسة الاكاديمية ما فيه theories و ما فيه
16		and the major (.) the Home Economic was fun	شغل كثير و مافيه (.)
17		It was about painting and knitting and colours	يعني زي بقية التخصصات
18		very easy things	بس انا حسيت اني اروح و احي ..
19		It was not like academic study	قبل نهاية الترم
20		there were no theories and a lot of work and there was no	رحت للجامعة الثانية ال campus الثاني اللي فيه
21		like the other majors	التخصصات الادبية و كان عندهم حاجه الالتساب
22		but I felt that I go and return (.)	الالتساب لسه مفتوح الين نهاية الترم
23		before the end of the semester	قلت لهم لو انا بغير تخصصي من هنا ل هنا
24		I went to the other university the other campus	قالو لي " انتي علمي عشان تنقلين ادبي
25		the one that had art majors	لازم تكملين
26		and they had part-time	و لازم تجيبين معدل و زي كنا
27		the part-time enrolment was still open until the end of the	و تنقلين بنهاية السنة ما راح تقدرين تنقلين الآن "
28		semester	فقلت no I'm not gonna waste a whole
29		I told them 'if I want to change major from here to here'	year to do this
30		they told me 'you are science track	قررت اني اروح اسحب ملني
31		if you want to change to Art major you had to continue	و اسجل منتسبه يعني بصرف النظر
32		and have this GPA and the like	يعني انتي تغيرين من جامعة لكلية
33		and move by the end of the year	طبعا الكلية كانت هذيك الايام يعني شويه اشد
34		you will not be able to change now'	ف انتي لما تقولين جامعة it sounds more
35		I said no I'm not gonna waste a whole year to do this	academic than a college
36		I decided to go and withdraw my file	السعودية
37		and register as a part-timer regardless	فكانت صدمة للأهل
38		when you change from a university to a college	"كيف تخلين الجامعة و تروحين لكلية كانك مدرسة"
39		of course the college at that time was little more stricter	"تركتي مثلا مكافأتك المنتظمة
40		when you say university it sounds more academic than a	"شهادتك راح تطلع منتسبه"
41		college here in Saudi Arabia	هذا كله ما فكرت فيه
42		It was a shock to the family	لاني كنت حايه آخذ تخصص انا ابغاها
43		'how could you leave the university	و اللي انا حاسته كويس
44		and go to a college as if you were in school'	
45		'you left your fulltime student stipend'	
46		'your degree will be part-timer'	
47		I didn't think about all of that	
48		I just wanted to study a major that I want	
49		the major that I felt it is good	

In lines 1-20, Danah sets the scene for her narrative by establishing her early choice of the Home Economics programme. She professes that she was not sure which programme she wanted to enroll in. Danah presents her hesitant situation in the form of inner dialogue (lines 3-4, 'what to enrol in') to reinforce her position at that time. Simultaneously, she sets up a wide agentive space in which she could make a decision on her education. Danah goes on (line 5) to construct her position as 'usual uncertainty الحيره العادية' by which she aligns herself with others who are in a similar situation. She continues to reject that her choice was a result of awareness or personal aspiration '*I wouldn't say that my choice was based on knowledge or something that I wanted*' (lines 6-7). Danah ratifies her position by stating '*by default*' (line 9) she enrolled in Home Economic programme, asserting the unintentionality of her action. While Danah did not provide a clear motive for her choice, she mentioned the availability of transportation (lines 10-11), which might suggest convenience as one possible motive.

Danah then professes that she couldn't continue in the programme (line 12). This does not seem to be about the programme itself, which she describes as fun and easy and that she seemed to be doing well at. Rather it was about her engagement with it. Danah professes that she felt that she '*go and return اروح و اجي*' which seems to indicate a lack of motivation.

The tension in her narrative starts when she went to the Education College to change her major from Home Economics in university to the English Language programme in the Education College, which was considered a lower-status institution. In lines 29-35, Danah presents her situation in the form of constructed dialogue, ventriloquising her own voice and the employees who responded to her inquiry.

Excerpt 6.2.2.1 (1)

29	I told them 'if I want to change major from here to here'
30	they told me 'you are science track
31	if you want to change to an Art major you had to continue
32	and have this GPA and the like
33	and move by the end of the year
34	you will not be able to change now'
35	I said no I'm not gonna waste a whole year to do this

Danah, as an agentive actor, approached the employee and inquired about the prospect of changing from one programme to the other. The employee informed Danah that shifting programmes would require her to follow lengthy procedures. This created a hindrance to Danah's pursuit. In line (32), Danah's phrases her decision via voicing her 'internal evaluation' (Tannen, 2007) of the situation (*'I'm not gonna waste a whole year to do this'*), contributing to her actions as 'having been undertaken rationally and deliberately at the time' (Couper-Kuhlen, 2006, p. 103). In line 36, Danah exits her constructed dialogue and moves to state her actions *'I decided'* to mark her decision to withdraw her file and register as a part-time student. She uses the word *'regardless'* (line 37) to assert her agentive position against the interferences which she professes in the following lines.

Danah backs up the story of her agentive self by indicating her awareness of what she did in regard to the perceived hierarchy of studying in a university as compared to a college in the Saudi Arabian context. In lines 40-41, Danah states *'when you say university it sounds more academic than a college here in Saudi Arabia'*. The usage of the generic 'you انت' might be a way to establish a general understanding regarding the status of the university over college. The idea was further supported by animating her family's reaction to her decision (lines 43-46).

Excerpt 6.2.2.1 (2)

-
- | | |
|----|---|
| 43 | 'how could you leave the university |
| 44 | and go to a college as if you were in school' |
| 45 | 'you left your fulltime student stipend' |
| 46 | 'your degree will be part-timer' |
-

Danah reinforced the idea of perceived education status through her family's discontent with her decision. The family's discontent is voiced through constructed dialogue (lines 43-46). The family's disagreement with her decision projected three concerns: the previously mentioned status between university and college, the loss of entitlement of monthly student stipend (due to the change from fulltime student status to part-time), and the prospect of graduating with a part-time status degree which implies being undervalued later in the job market. Nonetheless, Danah asserts her position in regard to all the seeming obstacles that may deviate her from

continuing with her decision by affirming here what she wants and what she believes is good (lines 47-49).

6.2.2.2 Summary

Danah's narrative illuminates a dynamic process of decision-making shaped by existing social structures that both enable and restrict her educational path. The initial lack of passion for Home Economics hints at how pre-existing options and external factors create a 'default' direction for some individuals. This lack of clear motivation also influences future choices, which demonstrate the iterative aspect of Emirbayer and Mische's model, where past experiences guide new trajectories.

Navigating her path, Danah encounters structural limitations. Educational policies create barriers with transfer requirements and track divisions, limiting her immediate agency. Familial expectations around university status and financial security create opposing pressures which highlight how social structures shape projections of an ideal future (for herself and for her family).

Despite these obstacles, Danah demonstrates agency. She takes action to find options within existing structures, actively exploring alternatives. In addition, the decision to prioritize a preferred major, even part-time, aligns with Emirbayer and Mische's practical-evaluative dimension. It reflects an in-the-moment assessment which balance long-term goals with current limitations. Her willingness to defy familial expectations exemplifies her internal drive and personal conviction, which play a central role in determining her actions.

Danah's choices reveal the complexity inherent in individual action within societal constraints. Danah draws on her dissatisfaction (iteration), envisions a fulfilling academic future (projection), and strategically balances pressures (practical-evaluative) to create progress towards her goals, both within and sometimes against established educational and societal structures.

6.2.3 Layla

The following extract is from Layla's first interview. Layla answers a direct question that invites explaining her decision to enrol in the English language programme. It is important to note that Layla spoke English with occasional shifts to Arabic throughout her interviews. The interaction before this was Layla answering the

first question in the interview to narrate briefly her career history. After that, I asked her a question that generated the following narrative.

Extract 6.2.3.1 (Layla – 1st interview)

- 1 Budur *can you tell me about your BA experience(.) umm before we get into that*
2 *what made you go for the English Field?*
3 Layla *of course honestly frankly speaking*
4 *okay of course as a science student I was planning to study Medicine*
5 *and that year masha'allah ((**God willed**)) the GPA of most of the student were so high*
6 *so I wasn't accepted*
7 *and I studied Biochemistry for one semester*
8 *but then I found that it's not my field*
9 *and the only option I had English Literature*
10 *it's kind of family major*
11 *my father and my two sisters are English Literature graduates*
12 *so I went there*

**Italic* text: Translation from Arabic

In this extract, Layla's bases her choice of English literature programme on a personal condition rather than structural constraints. That is, she sought to study Medicine but she wasn't accepted, she enrolled in Biochemistry programme and changed when she realized it wasn't her field, and then she enrolled in the English Language and Literature programme. The English literature programme was not presented as an outcome of her own endeavour but rather unintended option. The reason that Layla provides is that English literature is a '*family major*' (line 10). While constructing her choice, Layla does not mention other characters that directly influenced her choice. The only character mentioned is her family and they were used as close exemplar of English programme graduates. Later in the interview I posed the question of programme choice again which resulted in the following brief exchange:

Extract 6.2.3.2 (Layla – 1st interview)

- 1 Budur *I want to ask you again why you chose English teaching career*
2 *and why English language?*
3 Layla *did I have another choice? ((Laughter))*
4 *I didn't have another option*
5 *Umm well I know that English language is needed*
6 *but the year after I graduated (.)*
7 *before that if you have English language you can work anywhere*
8 *in a bank*
9 *in a company*
10 *the year I graduated we had a lot of majors*
11 *if you want to work in a bank you have to study financial ((Finance))*

Layla explains that she hadn't another choice in her career although she is an English Literature graduate, teaching was not her aim when she enrolled in the

programme. For her, the programme would give her more opportunities in the labour market because of the understanding that English language is a requirement in many jobs across sectors ('I know that English language is needed') (line 5). However, she explains, when she graduated, many sectors elevated their requirements to a degree in their field, such as a financing degree if she wants to work in a bank, for instance. In a later extract, she explains that although later she made efforts in finding a job in sectors like hospitals and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these attempts were hindered by either rejection of employing sectors or her family reservation on the nature of her work such as traveling. Thus, for her, teaching was the easiest job that did not require 'application procedures'.

6.2.3.3 Summary

Layla's educational and career trajectory highlights how social structures constantly shape and constrain individual agency, highlighting the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative decision-making process (Emirbayer & Mische). Initially barred from studying medicine by structural limitations in the education system, Layla's dissatisfaction with biochemistry reveals an iterative aspect – past experience negatively shapes her present choices. Her decision to pursue English Literature is influenced by familial structures and seems largely circumstance-driven rather than reflecting strong internal ambition, thus limited in its projective element.

Shifts in the job market become another limiting structural force, disrupting Layla's initially positive projection for studying English. This unforeseen factor directly forces her towards a teaching career she apparently hadn't prioritized. These market dynamics undermine anticipated futures for both individuals and those advising them on major choices. Layla's constrained agency leads to practical-evaluative decisions where perceived options outweigh personal desires.

Layla's experience showcases adaptability in manoeuvring through limitations. However, her actions indicate the influence of external factors pushing her into available spaces rather than the actual pursuit of internal ambitions.

6.2.4 Rawan

This section is from Rawan's first interview. It is a section of a longer narrative about her educational experiences. It was generated from my direct question into her

post secondly school education. As mentioned before, Rawan is a graduate of Quranic secondary school where her education was mostly focused on Islamic subjects.

Extract 6.2.4.1 (Rawan - 1st interview)

1	Rawan	To be honest when I graduated	للأمانة ما كان لما اتخرجت ما كان في بالي الإنجليزي
2		English major wasn't in my mind	كنت أحب الإنجليزي
3		I loved English	وكانت فيه مادة شرعية ثانية اسمها فرائض
4		and there was another subject called Jurisprudence	وموارث
5		of Inheritance	هاذي المادة كنت ادرسها برضو
6		I used to study this subject and I really liked it	كنت جدا أحبها
7		I used to say	فكنت اقول يا أني راح ادرس فرائض وموارث
8		'either I will study Jurisprudence of Inheritance	يا أني راح ادرس الإنجليزي
9		or I will study English'	كان فرائض ما فيه غير في (م) في جامعة (ل)
10		The Jurisprudence was only available in [M] city in	وصعبه اني اطلع (م) كل يوم و انزل و انا اهلي في
11		[L] university	(ي)
12		It was difficult to travel every day to [M] city and my	وكان الخيار الثاني اللي هو اني ادرس الإنجليزي
13		family in [H] city	وقدمت على جامعة (ي) و الحمد لله اتقبلت فيها
14		The second option was that I study English	
15		and I applied to [K] university and got accepted.	
16			

In this brief extract, Rawan professes that her English language choice was a result of mobility constraints. That is, although she liked English as a language skill it was not constructed as a major that she purposefully wanted to study. Instead, she wants to study Jurisprudence of Inheritance, a major that is related to her previous education in the Quranic schools. However, due to the availability of this major in a different city she opted for the English language programme in her local city. Although Rawan already stated her preferences (lines 1-6), she presented them again in the form of constructed dialogue '*either I will study Jurisprudence of Inheritance or I will study English*' (line 8-9). The usage of constructed dialogue here might be a strategy to project her actions as thorough and conscious actions. Further, it places her as in charge of taking a decision about her education. However, similar to Yasmine, the issue of mobility for education was problematic. For Rawan, the sources of the troubles were the idea of travelling every day and the distance from her family, which are deemed challenging. Therefore, she applied the 'second option' (line 15) English language programme.

6.2.4.2 Summary

Rawan's choice of an English major exemplifies the complex interplay between personal preferences and the limitations imposed by existing structures. Initially

drawn to both English and the Jurisprudence of Inheritance, she faced geographic barriers, making her desired pathway impractical. The absence of the Jurisprudence programme locally and the difficulty of daily travel represent educational and geographical constraints.

Rawan's decision to pursue English showcases her adaptable agency within these limitations. While exhibiting preferences, she demonstrates flexibility as her ideal future paths face external barriers. Navigating through Emirbayer and Mische's model, her past (what subjects she dislikes) influences her initial goals (projection). Ultimately, her selection of English represents a pragmatic, practical-evaluative decision shaped by accessibility and potential pre-existing interest in the field.

6.3 Narratives of educational choice: Study abroad education

This section analyses the participants' narratives, focusing on their decisions to study abroad. It spotlights three participants - Yasmine, Rawan and Layla - who provided in-depth narratives about their choices to study overseas. This section explores the moments they decided to pursue their studies abroad and the factors that influenced their decisions. It is important to note that Danah's experiences are not included in this section as she did not provide a narrative about her choice to study abroad.

6.3.1 Yasmine

The following extract is regarding Yasmine's choice to study abroad. This part of the interview came after Yasmine spoke about her first teaching experience at university where she worked as a teaching assistant for two years. Recalling Yasmine's earlier statements, I asked her to elaborate on her decision to pursue further education abroad. The interaction generated the following narrative (extract 6.3.1.1)

Extract 6.3.1.1 (Yasmine – 1st interview)

1	Budur	You told me when you talked about your mini CV	بدور: قلتي لي لما كنتي تتكلمين عن ال mini cv انو قدمتي
2		that you applied abroad because you had to=	برا لأنه لازم=
3	Yasmine	Yeah	ياسمين: ايه
4	Budur	Why abroad?	بدور: ليش برى؟
5	Yasmine	Honestly I am an English major	ياسمين: صراحة انا تخصصي انجليزي
6		If I would think about continuing my studies the	ف لو يفكر اكمل دراستي احسن شيء اكمل دراستي بدوله
7		best thing is to do it in an English-speaking country	ناطقة باللغة الانجليزية
8		this is the first reason	هذا السبب الاول
9		the second reason is that the university was	السبب الثاني انو الجامعة كانت تشجع الدراسة برا
10		encouraging to study abroad	كانت تبي خبرات
11		They want expertise	صراحة انا ما فهمت ليش كانت مصره انه ندرس برى
12		Honestly I didn't understand why they insisted that	الا لما رحنا و درست برى
13		we study abroad until I went and studied abroad	في البداية (.) اول ما اتعينت
14		at the beginning (.) when I was first hired	كنت احس انه ضغط علي أكثر منه رغبة اني بروح ادرس
15		I felt that it was a pressure more than a personal	انو كانوا ضاغطين (.)
16		willingness that I go and study	صح قبل لا اكمل نسيت اقول لك نقطة مهمه
17		that they pressure (.)	حاولت اقدم داخلي
18		yeah before I continue I forgot to mention an	قدمت داخلي قدمت على جامعة (ن) و ما حصل لي فرصه
19		important point	و قدمت على (.) يا ربي نسيت
20		I tried to apply ((for study)) locally	الظاهر اني قدمت بس ما حصلت لي فرصه
21		I applied to [N] university and I didn't get a chance	بس حسيته فعلا اني مجبره اروح برا
22		and I applied to (.) oh I forgot	لأنه الجامعة كانت تبي انو نطلع برى أكثر من تبييننا نكمل داخل
23		I think I applied but I didn't have a chance	انا ما فهمت ليش صراحة كانوا مصرين على الدراسة في الخارج
24		but I really felt that I was compelled that I go	لمن رحنا جريت هناك بنفسني
25		abroad	
26		because the university want us to go abroad more	
27		than continuing ((education)) locally	
28		I didn't understand honestly why they insisted on	
29		studying abroad until I went there and tried it myself	

Yasmine's narrative context is her work institution. Yasmine is recalling why she went abroad to continue her master's study. Yasmine responded that it is best for English language major teachers/instructors to continue their education in English speaking countries (lines 5-7). She presented her belief through a hypothetical 'if' statement, with that, Yasmine elevates her first reason to a 'common sense' discourse (Miller, 2009). That is, the 'common discourse' is that language learners achieve competency by learning the language within its spoken context. Yasmine then moves to restate that this is her first reason (line 8), asserting the foregrounding of her personal belief over the following reason. My question might trigger the chronological order of Yasmine's response. That is, fronting the question about studying abroad with the phrase 'because you had to' (Line 2) might presuppose a lack of agency in her choice. However, Yasmine resists my directed inquiry implication by explicitly stating 'this is the first reason' (line 8) and 'the second reason' (line 9) to reinforce the chronological order of the reasons that she is professing to the interlocutor and thus proclaiming her agentic status. The second reason that Yasmine recalled is the university's encouragement to study abroad. In the following lines (12-13), Yasmine uses the pronominal 'we' to indicate that the university policy was instigated over all the faculty. Yasmine established that her situation was not unique as everyone had

to go through the same policy, which distributed agency constraints over the faculty in the institution. Yasmine expresses that, at that time, she did not understand the university's insistence on studying abroad; however, a shift in perspective occurred when she went and studied abroad.

In lines 14-15, Yasmine recounts feeling compelled to study abroad early on her job at the university. Yasmine sought admission to higher studies at a local university, but she was not successful (lines 18 -23). In lines (24-30), Yasmine repeated the same ideas that were introduced earlier: the university wishes, her feelings about it, and the resolution that arises after she undertook the study abroad experience. At the discursive level, Yasmine, through manoeuvring across utterances, resists assigning the university policy as a constraint by emphasizing her own belief about education and her own understanding of the benefits at the end. At the same time, Yasmine professes that she felt compelled to continue her studies, so she sought other alternatives by applying locally. Yasmine talks about the university's stance on their faculty education, stating that the university encourages education abroad because of the need for expertise and their preference for overseas education over local programmes. In both statements, the university is positioned with higher agentive power but as a logical stance exemplified in 'they want expertise'. The logic of the university policy was further supported by Yasmine's reported change of attitude after studying abroad.

In extract 6.3.1.1, Yasmine resists the position that was set by my question, that is, a limited agency in her choice to go abroad. Yasmine accomplished that by aligning her personal belief with the university policy and supporting this position with the realization after studying abroad. Yasmine's professed belief is based on a master narrative that Kubota (2016) calls 'study abroad imaginary'. This term is derived from the idea of 'social imaginary', which refers to 'a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, the common understandings that make everyday practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy' (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010 as cited in Kubota, 2016, p. 348). In regards to study abroad, it refers to the benefits that sojourners reap from their studies abroad, such as developing linguistic competence and intercultural skills, that became a common discourse and which is frequently linked to overseas study (Kubota, 2016).

In both extracts of choice, Yasmine's professes taking agentive stances after gaining experience. In extract 6.2.1.1, Yasmine was unsure about which programme to enroll in at the local level. However, a stronger agentive stance was taken after she experienced the programme. Similarly, in extract 6.3.1.1, Yasmine recalled feeling compelled to study abroad rather than wanting to, but after experiencing studying abroad, she understood why the university instigated this policy. Yasmine's agentive status in her narrative is associated with her experience and understanding.

6.3.1.2 Summary

Yasmine's initial decision to study abroad seems more influenced by external factors than a well-defined internal passion. The dominant structure shaping her path is her university's emphasis on overseas education. Limited local graduate opportunities within the educational system further restrict her choices. As an English major, seeking further development in an English-speaking country offers a potentially beneficial alignment, which influenced her practical-evaluative choice. However, despite these influences, her decision also draws on the iterative aspect of agency; awareness of better growth opportunities for those in her field might arise from past understandings.

Within these constraints, Yasmine balances her personal ambitions with the available opportunities. The need to align with her university's pleas, along with the reality of limited local options and her field of study in English, strongly influenced her decision. Initially, this leaves her feeling like external structures are primarily dictating her course, leaving less space for a path purely driven by internal desires.

At the end of her narrative, Yasmine understands the motivation behind her university's strong emphasis on studying abroad. Initially viewed as a pressure, her experience reveals how studying abroad aligns with the university's goal of developing specialized expertise. This highlights the potential misalignment between initial personal priorities and institutional priorities, which were resolved through the lived experience.

6.3.2 Rawan

The following extract is taken from when Rawan spoke about her post-bachelor's degree studies experiences. After she talked about her early experiences,

I posited the question of what made her decide to take an overseas study, which generated the following narrative.

Extract 6.3.2.1 (Rawan – 1st interview)

1	Budur	What made you decide to continue your studies abroad?	بدور: ايش خلاك تقرر ينكملين برى؟
2	Rawan	This is a beautiful question	روان: هذا سؤال جميل كانت عندي قناعه شخصية
3		I had a personal conviction	فاكره لما كنت اقولك انو انا ايام الجامعة ما كنت اتكلم
4		do you remember when I told you that when I was in	انجليزي وكنت احفظ
5		university ((referring to her BA studies))	بدور: ايوه
6		I didn't speak English and I only memorise	روان: فكانت عندي قناعه انو انا ما راح اقدر اتكلم
7	Budur	Yeah	انجليزي مضبوط بطلاقة الا اذا سافرت و اتعلمت
8	Rawan	I had the conviction that I will not be able to speak English	برى
9		accurately and fluently unless I studied it abroad	بالرغم انو كانت ظروف عائلتي وقتها ابد ابد ما
10		Although my family's circumstances at the time would	تسمح
11		never never never allow it	ما كانت تسمح و لا خمسة بالمية
12		It wouldn't allow even five percent	لما التخرجت و قدمت قدمت انو زي اللي كذا ان
13		When I graduated, I applied	صابت صابت و ان خابت خابت
14		I applied like this if it worked it worked if not then not.	لش ما كانت تسمح الظروف
15		why wouldn't the circumstances allow it?	وقتها كان الوالد بيني بيت العمر فكان كل ريال
16		At that time, the father was building the house of a	يدخل له على البيت عشان يكمل البناء
17		lifetime, so every riyal ((Saudi currency)) entered the	و ما كان عندي محرم وقتها كبير ما كان عندي غير
18		house was for completing the house construction	الوالد
19		And I did not have a mahram ((male companion))	اخويا كان لاساتو دويو ثانية ثانوي ما يقدر يسحب
20		at that time I only had my father	المدرسة و يحي معايا بحكم انا الكبيرة
21		My brother was still a high school student	فكانت فيه صعوبات غير الصعوبات العائلية
22		He could not leave school and come with me because I	كان بابا معايا موافق يكون معايا في البيت و يكلمني
23		am the eldest	و يقول خلاص طيب بس يا بنتي
24		There were difficulties other than family difficulties.	انه انا كنت اول وحده اطلع من عائلة امي و عائلته
25		my father would agree with me and say 'Okay daughter'	ابويا اطلع ابتعاه فكان احد قبلي محرم
26		((suggesting agreement))	كان غموض الموضوع بالنسبة لهم
27		I was the first one from my mother's side and father's side	فكان بابا يتكلم معايا انه في العصر ايوه طيب رينا
28		who studied abroad	يسهل و انشاء الله
29		so no one before me had this experience	بروح يتقابل مع اصحابه مع اخوانه مع اعمامي يرجع
30		this issue was ambiguous to them	يغير رايه يقول اللي لا تقدي
31		my father would say in the afternoon 'yeah okay may god	مختار كان مو عارف ايش يسوي
32		make it easy, inshallah'	يوافق؟ ما يوافق؟
33		Then he meets his friends, brothers, my uncles	مين حيروح معايا؟
34		and would change his mind and say 'cancel don't apply'	ايش اللي حيصير في الموضوع؟
35		he was hesitant	
36		he didn't know what to do	
37		will he approve? Not approve?	
38		who will go with me?	
39		what will happen in this situation?	

At the start of her narrative, Rawan (line 2) responds to my inquiry by giving an evaluation comment 'this is a beautiful question'. The evaluative comment might be a signal of Rawan's acceptance of her role as an interviewee and suggest that she has a story to tell. The second overt instance (line 4) is when Rawan addresses me directly by referring to a previous part in the interview. This might be an attempt to establish coherence in her narrative, which might could work towards establishing more credibility to her account.

Rawan answers the question directly by professing a personal belief in regard to learning the English language within a language-speaking context, a belief that meets the master narrative about the benefits of language learning and study abroad (Freed, 1998; Ryan & Mercer, 2011; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). It is noteworthy that Rawan extended her response beyond my question's scope. That is, she answered the posited question (lines 2-9); however, she continued to explain why this was difficult to achieve which constituted the larger part of this narrative extract (lines 10-39). This might be an important part of Rawan's experience and might build towards her learning journey which was not free of obstacles.

In lines 10-23, Rawan negates the possibility of her family paying for her to study abroad due to her family circumstances. This was constructed by repeating the word 'never' (line 11) three times consecutively to narrow the scope of possibilities. It was followed by giving a possibility percentage as a metaphor to assert the unlikelihood of it happening. The structural constraints that Rawan identified are the financial issue related to her family building a house and the inability to meet Mehram's criteria of her scholarship programme. That is, the likely male companions in her family are her young brother and her father, who were not available either.

In line 24, Rawan introduces a new issue and separates it from her family circumstances. This issue is regarding her father's uncertainty. While her family's financial burden and unavailability of *Mehram* are out of her control, her father's hesitation is depicted as unsettling and inconsistent. Instead of reporting directly, Rawan used the discursive strategy of constructed dialogue (Tannen, 2007) to report the issue. This was present in two instances shown below.

Excerpt 6.3.2.1 (1)

31-32	my father would say in the afternoon 'yeah okay may god make it easy, inshallah'
34	and would change his mind and say 'cancel don't apply'

Rawan's constructing dialogue of her father here works on two levels. First, it pulls the listener into the narrating event, making them feel like they are almost living the experience as she did. Second, it imbues the narrated event with a sense of her helplessness and a lack of control.

In lines 27-28, Rawan professes that '*she was the first*' to consider study abroad which suggests the uniqueness of her experience. This was reinforced by describing it as 'ambiguous غامض' (line 30). The source of ambiguity stems from being the 'first' and thus there is no available past experiences, either to her or someone she knows similar to her current situation, on which to draw. The absence of experience on this makes it difficult for her family (line 30) and father (line 32-37) to make a decision without clear projected outcomes (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). The projection of uncertainty continues in lines (37-39) through a series of unresolved questions. These questions seem to be a projection of Rawan's inner thoughts; '*will he approve? Not approve?*' (line 37) referring to her father, '*who will go with me?*' (line 38) the issue of the *Mehram*, and '*what will happen in this situation?*' (line 39) referring to the overall dilemma.

6.3.2.2 Summary

Rawan's desire to study abroad exposes the struggle between individual ambition and the local constraints. Her personal dissatisfaction with past English learning (iteration) acts as a catalyst for a different future vision (projection). Initially, she demonstrated agency by applying for a scholarship despite being aware of family finances and the programme's *Mehram* (male guardian) requirement. As the narrative unfolds, her agency becomes overshadowed by the weight of these structures. Decision-making pivots to her father navigating these external factors. At the end of her narrative, Rawan doesn't provide a resolution even though she has succeeded in studying abroad. The lack of resolution in this situation might underscore the influence of existing structures on her aspirations, overshadowing her personal ambition. This highlights how studying abroad, in this instance, appears to be a matter of circumstance rather than a manifestation of self-directed agency.

6.3.3 Layla

This extract is from Layla's first interview. Prior to this, Layla was narrating her post-BA experiences as a language learner and a teacher. In this extract, Layla is talking about a time when she was a language instructor at a Saudi Arabian university. This narrative was generated by posing a direct question to Layla about her decision to undertake an overseas study route.

Extract 6.3.3.1 (Layla – 1st interview)

- 1 Budur And after this experience what made you decide to go abroad?
2 Layla Of course the need for permanent job and because I wasn't improved in my field
3 Because ما شاء الله *mashallah* I had a lot of PhD teachers and MA's
4 Some of them have masters and PhD and they went for CELTA course
5 So my CV was blank
6 I thought I need to start by going for MA

As remarked earlier, Layla's narrative of experience seems to address the interlocutor directly. That is, she does not engage in storytelling where she provides a lengthy account of what happened and where other characters are explicitly positioned in relation to her. Instead, Layla's narrative is more focused on addressing my questions with few instances in which she went beyond the question scope.

At the start of her narrative, Layla responds to the 'why abroad?' with 'of course' followed by two reasons (line 2). The start of her narrative with 'of course' elevates her response to a 'common sense' discourse (Miller, 2009). That is, by introducing her reasons with an assertive account exemplified in 'of course' framed the following into a rational and logical reason for seeking to study abroad. These reasons are linked to the broader structure of job market status in Saudi Arabia and to her own professional development. First, the need to secure a permanent job in Saudi Arabia is tied to having a degree from overseas institutions (Barnawi, 2018). Permanent jobs in the Saudi Arabian university sector mean being on regular full-time employment compared to her status at the time, i.e. fixed-term contract. Layla here is grounding her reason in a master narrative about the value of overseas degrees over local ones. The second reason is seeking further education as a means for professional development. In line (3-4), Layla professes that she is familiar with colleagues who have higher degrees and professional teaching courses. This suggests a motive to seek further learning that draws on the *projective dimension* (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). That is, she witnessed successful models in her work that enabled her to envision the outcome if she undertook similar routes.

Layla's short narrative projects a wide agentic space through which she can make decisions about her professional learning. She constructs an agentic self by evaluating her work situation where she was on a contract-basis rather than having a permanent job as an English language teacher and by recognizing her need for professional development 'I wasn't improving in my field' (line 2). Layla, while

providing reasons for her choice, didn't construct any barriers or facilitators to her endeavour. Her decision was constructed as the natural outcome of her professional needs.

The following extract adds to Layla's narrative of educational choice in regard to overseas education. Prior to the following extract, Layla talked about her experience applying to UK universities and why she chose a particular university over others. This was not an intended inquiry but rather a flow from the previous extract. In the following extract, I posited the question of why Layla opted for the international education route over the local ones, which generated the following:

Extract 6.3.3.2 (Layla -1st interview)

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Budur | let's go back a little bit (.) why abroad why not Saudi Arabia? |
| 2 | Layla | to be honest I tried to apply to [K] university |
| 3 | | but in 2015 they said 'we only have 12 places only for the programme and it's occupied by |
| 4 | | our staff' |
| 5 | Budur | yeah (.) they call them teaching assistants I think |
| 6 | Layla | yeah |
| 7 | | yes there was no place for me |
| 8 | | my family here were a bit concerned about me going abroad |
| 9 | | I tried several ways to study here <i>praise to god</i> الحمد لله none of them worked for me |
| 10 | | then I came up with the plan of UK |
| 11 | | I chose UK because it is only one year |
| 12 | | and it is closer to Saudi Arabia than other countries |

Extract 6.3.3.2 projects a different perspective on Layla's agency. In the previous extract (6.3.3.1), Layla constructed her action as strongly agentic in relation to her decision to seek overseas education. However, in the background of the narrative, Layla's attempts to seek to study locally were not successful. Layla encoded her agentic attempts in two parts: 'I tried' (line 2) to refer to a specific occasion and 'I tried' (line 9) to augment her efforts with no reference to a specific attempt. The repetition of 'I tried' (lines 2 & 8) creates a sense of futility of her efforts. In Layla's first attempt (lines 3-6), I affirmed her reasoning that some Saudi Arabian universities give priority to the available postgraduate programmes' seats, such as master's and PhD, to their own teaching staff. It's important to note that Layla refers to a period when Saudi HE institutions offered limited postgraduate programs, thus restricting seat availability for applicants.

Although not within the scope of the question, Layla interrupts (line 7) her narrative by referring to her family's concerns about her going abroad. Layla didn't

expand on this in the given extract. However, later I asked about her family concerns. She explained that the concerns were around the idea of her father leaving the family over the duration of her study to accompany her as *Mehram*.

In line (9), Layla explained the order of her agentic actions. That is, she first attempted to study locally, but since it was not fruitful, she decided to seek overseas education. In lines (10-11), Layla professed her reasoning for opting for UK education. The reference to her UK choice might be related to her family concerns. That is, the length of study and distance from Saudi Arabia are contributing to mitigating her family concerns.

6.3.3.3 Summary

Layla's decision to pursue an MA abroad reveals how structural limitations can both define and obstruct individual ambitions. Initially hindered by a lack of local programme availability and familial concerns, she demonstrates adaptive agency when choosing an overseas path. The practical necessity of career advancement within a competitive market (iteration) becomes a powerful driver, leading her to seek alternatives proactively despite these obstacles. Choosing the UK highlights her practical-evaluative thinking in finding a middle ground for balancing her goals with familial expectations. Her ambition demonstrates resilience yet also highlights a degree of compromise. External constraints necessitate navigating a revised path which moves away from self-defined career goals.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter's analysis of participants' narratives underscores the profound complexities inherent in educational decision-making for women at the time in Saudi Arabia. Across experiences, a multi-dimensional interplay exists between individual agency and the structural constraints imposed by social, familial, educational, and market forces. Aspirations often begin with an internal drive derived from past experiences (iteration), shaping initial projections for the future. However, external realities significantly influence this process, leading to constant re-evaluation. Structural limitations within educational systems, societal norms, and the demands of competitive job markets often force individuals to deviate from idealized pathways. Specifically, agency's manifestation cannot be judged in absolutes. Danah's defiance and Rawan's early conviction show strong initiative against prevailing structures.

Conversely, Yasmine's structural pressures reveal an initial conformity followed by an evolving internal drive. Each narrative reveals unique agency navigation by drawing on either past experience (iteration), defining goals and future possibilities (projection), and making decisions that are based on their social realities (practical evaluation). The following chapter is the second analysis chapter. The focus of this chapter is the participants' narratives of learning. It takes the scope of all learning experiences, either local or SA experiences.

CHAPTER 7 NARRATIVES OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

7.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into the learning and teaching experiences of four participants, both in Saudi Arabia and abroad. By presenting individual case studies, I offer a re-storying of each participant's unique journey, followed by a chronological exploration of key themes that emerge within their narratives. This approach directly addresses the third research question: How do the participants construct their learning experiences? This focus on the construction of learning experiences is crucial because it moves beyond simply describing what happened to understanding how these experiences were perceived and interpreted by the participants. This exploration of meaning-making sheds light on the diverse ways individuals navigate educational contexts and how those experiences shape their identities as both learners and EFL instructors.

7.2 Analysis of Yasmine's story

The following sections analyze the experiences of Yasmine, an English language professional who has navigated diverse contexts and encountered significant challenges within the field. Through a close examination of her journey, from early experiences as a student and teacher in Saudi Arabia to her pursuit of postgraduate studies abroad, this analysis will illuminate key moments, influences, and challenges that have shaped her perspectives on the teaching profession.

7.2.1 BA experience

In this section, I focus on Yasmine's experiences in the BA programme. The following extract (7.1.1) illustrates her experience when she first enrolled in the English language programme.

Extract 7.2.1.1 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

1	Yasmine	I don't know if you were in the same situation or not	ما ادري انتو نفس وضعنا و لا
2		our programme plan in the College of Education was	او خطتنا ايام كلية التربية كانت خطة قديمه
3		the old plan	ماكان عندنا سنه إعداد
4		we didn't have a preparatory year	و لا فيه عندنا
5		and we didn't have (.)	يعني تقدرين تختارين مسار ترجمه او مسار لغويات او
6		I mean, you can choose either a translation track, a	مسار ادب لا
7		linguistics track, or a literature track	يعني كانت في السنه الاولى
8		in the first year	تقريباً الادب كله تاخذينه
9		you take all literature and skills courses	و مواد ال skills كلها تاخذينها
10		in addition to non-major courses	زائد انه فيه مواد تربويه معنا
11		the courses load was very heavy	كانت المواد مره كثيره
12		and directly we went for drama courses	

13	and the plays	و على طول دخلنا في الدراما
14	it was really difficult	و بدينا مسرحيات
15	our teaching system was bad	كان والله مره صعب
16	you know the system before	و نظام التدريس عندنا كان سيء
17	those who lecture you	تعرفين نظام قبل اللي يس يرددون لك
18	and you are passive in class	و انتي وجودك في الكلاس passive
19	I mean that there was no participation	يعني ما فيه مشاركته ما فيه شيء
20	nothing	و القاعة كان عدد الطالبات كثير
21	the lecture halls had a large number of students	فكنت احس اني ضايعة
22	I felt lost at the beginning	ما عرفت نفسي الا لما قربت ال midterms في البدايه
23	I didn't know myself until I approached the midterms	بدت اعرف المواد و اقرأ و اشوف
24	I started to know the courses, read and see	يعني حسيت بعد الاختبارات فهمت ايش المواد اللي انا
25	I mean, I felt after the exams that I understood what	قاعده ادرسها
26	courses are about	

In this extract (7.1.1), Yasmine reflects on her first-year experience in the university's College of Education. She discusses how the programme plan, characterized as the 'old plan' without a preparatory year, lays the foundation for her educational journey. She suggests that the absence of a preparatory year resulted in a lack of foundational knowledge and support for students entering the programme. In addition, Yasmine highlights the heavy course load and the challenging nature of specialized courses like Drama. Yasmine further critiques the teaching system by noting the lack of participation and the passive role of students in the classroom. These structural aspects contribute to her feeling of being lost and disconnected, especially in the crowded lecture halls.

Despite these challenges, Yasmine demonstrates her agency by describing her personal growth and improved understanding of the courses after the midterms. This suggests that she took the initiative to adapt and engage with the materials. Her self-directed actions, such as reading and actively seeking understanding (lines 24-25), reflect her agency in taking control of her learning journey.

In the final year of her BA programme, Yasmine did a teaching practicum in public schools. Yasmine did not provide many details about her teacher training experience. The following extract (7.1.2) is when she commented briefly on her BA teaching practicum.

Extract 7.2.1.2 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

1	Yasmine	the same experience I received as a student	يعني كنت نفس التجربة اللي اتلقيتها كطالبة ابي اوصلها للبنات
2		I delivered to the girls	بس بعدين
3		then later (.)	ما ابي اسبق الاحداث و اتكلم عن تجربتي
4		I don't want to move forward and tell my	بس عرفت انه طريقة التدريس انو لا
5		experience	الي كنا نأخذها غلط
6		that what we were taught was wrong	كنا نلقن الطالبات
7			

Yasmine highlights the replication of teaching methods that she experienced as a student; this suggests the presence of a structured educational system that perpetuates traditional teaching approaches, an observation echoing Lortie's notion of the AoO. Looking back at her teaching experience, Yasmine evaluates her past practices and recognizes their flaws. While she doesn't explicitly detail specific points of realization at this stage of the interview, her reflection demonstrates a newly critical perspective on her earlier approaches to teaching.

7.2.2 Early teaching experiences

After completing her university studies, Yasmine embarked on a teaching career, focusing on adult learners in two different schools. Her weekly teaching load amounted to approximately 14 hours, but despite the workload, Yasmine found immense joy and fulfilment in this role. Yasmine, initially, expected to teach individuals in their thirties or forties, and she assumed that her students would be older adults. However, to her surprise, she discovered that most of her class was below the age of twenty. Yasmine learned that many of her students had grown up in rural areas, where opportunities for formal education were limited. It was not until their teenage years that they were finally able to access formal education. At the time Yasmine began her teaching career, the English language subject had recently been introduced to the adult learners' school curriculum. Yasmine believed that this, along with the limited educational opportunities her students had, were the two primary reasons why her students were so enthusiastic and eager to learn the language.

While Yasmine liked her job as a teacher for adult learners, she received a job offer as a graduate assistant at the university with a permanent contract, which she accepted. The following extract (7.1.3) reflects Yasmine's first experience working as a teaching assistant at the university.

Extract 7.2.2.1 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

1	Yasmine	the experience working as a teaching assistant in the	و الله كانت تجربه مره صعبه صراحه
2		university was quite challenging, to be honest.	يعني انتي بتنتقلين فجاء من طالبه قبل كم شهر بنفس
3		It was a sudden transition from being a student just a	الجامعة
4		few months ago	و تجين تدرسين..
5		to now being the one teaching in the same university	يعني كان تدرسي في نحو الامية مره بسيط
6			

7	teaching adult learners was very simple	تحسين فيه فرق بالمستوى بينك و بين اللي تدرسيهم
8	you feel there's a difference in the level between you	فعادي يصير
9	and the students you are teaching	ما حسيت فيه رهيه زي لمن درست في الجامعة
10	I didn't feel anxious (referring to adult education) as I	في الجامعة اعمارهم متقاربة مع عمرك
11	did when I taught at the university	مستواهم الدراسي تقريبا قريب منك
12	the students (in university) were around the same	انتي مالك..
13	age as me	يعني انا كنت لسه متخرجه في 2009 و درست في
14	our academic level was relatively similar	2010
15	I graduated in 2009 and started teaching in 2010	يعني نفس الطالبات كنت اشوفهم السنه اللي فاتت
16	the students I had known as peers now as my	كريميله
17	students	البحر اشوفهم كاستاذة
18	the system when I started teaching (.)	يعني كان نظامنا ايام ما بديت ادرس
19	before the halls became smaller	قبل ما تصير القاعات اصغر و الاعداد اقل
20	and student numbers became less	كنت ادرس اعداد بالمئات
21	I used to teach hundreds in a single section	كنت ادرس section واحد فيه و شوي من الطالبات
22	it was truly exhausting	بني قاعة وحده تحيلي
23	and difficult to maintain control over such a large	فكان صراحه مره الموضوع متعب
24	group	و صعب انه يكون فيه control
25	It was challenging to capture their attention	و صعب تجذير انتباههم انو يسمعون معك
26	and make them listen to you	

Yasmine's experience teaching university students was challenging, as she faced unexpected difficulties despite her four months of experience teaching adult learners. The transition from being a student to an instructor was sudden, and she found herself struggling to adapt to the new role and responsibilities. Her BA practicum in public schools and her initial teaching experience had not prepared her for the differences in academic level and teaching environment she encountered at the university. The university setting presented a more formal and structured environment, requiring her to adjust her teaching approach and expectations. She had to navigate the challenges of teaching students who were similar in age and academic level, which added to her feelings of inadequacy. She faced challenges in managing a large group of students, maintaining control, and capturing their attention, aspects of teaching that her prior experiences had not addressed.

Extract 7.2.2.2 (Yasmine - 1st interview)

1	Yasmine	there were no workshops for example	ما فيه workshops مثلا تأهل للتدريس
2		to prepare you to teach college level	انهم يدرسون مستوى جامعي
3		it could've made it easier	كانت ممكن تسهل الشيء هنا
4		but for us just go	اما حنا لا انت و حظك و نصيبك روحي و خلاص
5		its only you and your luck	
6			

In extract 7.1.4, Yasmine emphasizes the absence of workshops or training programs to prepare her for teaching at the university level. This lack of preparation and support made it difficult for her to transition into her new role as an instructor.

Yasmine's phrase, 'it's only you and your luck' (line 6), suggests that new instructors are left to learn for themselves and rely on their individual effort and luck to succeed.

In general, Yasmine's account centres on the theme of feeling underprepared and unsupported as she enters this new stage of university teaching. Her narrative underscores the difficult adjustments, isolation, and challenges of navigating new classroom dynamics and demands independently. Her construction highlights a transitional experience defined more by its difficulties and learning curve rather than any structured guidance or developmental support.

Yasmine's narrative reveals the interplay of agency and structure within the context of a traditional educational system. While the university's lack of support acts as a structural constraint, limiting her ability to enact her desired pedagogy, Yasmine's perseverance and reflection signal her individual agency in navigating these challenges.

7.2.3 SA education

A year after her work as a language instructor at university, Yasmine decided to undertake to continue her postgraduate studies in the UK. Yasmine started her SA education journey in an English language institute. Yasmine expressed that it was her first time going abroad. In the following extract (7.2.3.1), Yasmine talks about her initial experiences in the English language institute.

Extract 7.2.3.1 (Yasmine – 2nd interview)

1	Yasmine	the teaching method was shocking to me	طريقه التدريس اصدمت فيها
2		I felt like a stranger	حسيت اني غريبه
3		I mean, I didn't know what I was doing.	يعني ما ادري ما كنت
4		we were used to before (.)	حنا متعودين قبل
5		when I compare between the work here	لما اقارن بين الشغل هنا و الشغل هناك
6		and the work there,	الشغل كله اني يعني الشغل فردي
7		here (<i>referring to Saudi context</i>), it's all on you, I mean,	يعني مثلا يطلبون منك task معين اني
8		the work is individual.	تنفذه لخالك
9		for example, they ask you for a specific task	تحلين واجباتك لخالك
10		you execute it on your own.	تنسألين سؤال و اني تجاوبينه لخالك
11		you solve your assignments on your own.	هناك لا كانوا يجيروننا لا
12		they ask a question and you answer it on your own	يعني يصير فيه تمرين exercise كله مع بعض
13		there (<i>referring to SA context</i>), they didn't force us, no.	اني و اللي جنبك
14		I mean, there are exercises we do all together,	اذا صار فيه مثلا اي activity او شيء
15		you and the one next to you	يصير فيها ال group work و لا ال
16		If there's, for example, any activity or something	teamwork
17		it becomes group work or teamwork.	هاذي الاشياء كلها مختا متعودين عليها
18		all these things, we're not used to them	فكنت مره حاسه اني ضايعه شوي
19		so, I felt a bit lost	و ماني متقبله الفكره مره
20		and I couldn't accept the idea at first	مو شرط انه
21		It's not necessary that I hated it	ماكنت كارهتها بس ما كنت متعوده عليها
22		but I wasn't used to it	حسيت شوي صعبه
23		I felt it was a bit difficult	
24			

*(Transcriber comment)

Yasmine's account of transitioning to study in the UK conveys her struggles to adapt to unfamiliar pedagogical approaches as she moved from the Saudi education system to a Western learning context. Her narrative suggests she initially perceived this academic transition as an impediment diminishing her agency and independence as a learner indexed by expressions such as 'stranger' (line 2) and 'lost' (line 20). Yasmine makes an explicit contrast between the educational contexts as indexed 'here' (line 7) and 'there' (line 14). While Yasmine was accustomed to a learning environment in the Saudi context that emphasized individual responsibility and independent problem-solving, the SA context presented her with a greater emphasis on active collaborative learning. Yasmine explicitly states that adapting to these unfamiliar practices was deeply challenging precisely because she 'wasn't used to' (lines 22-23) this shift to active and collaborative learning norms. While this shift was a challenge, Yasmine didn't construct it as entirely negative. Yasmine, despite finding it 'a bit difficult' (line 24), didn't 'hate[d] it' (line 22), which suggests that these challenges were manageable rather than overwhelming.

Later in the interview, Yasmine expressed that although the first few months in the language institute were difficult, it became normal 'I got used to the situation, and, on the contrary, I liked the idea.' [Yasmine – 2nd interview]. The statement conveys

a shift from perceiving the SA education style as an impediment to appreciating some of its merits after experiencing it.

After six months in the language institute, Yasmine undertook the IELTS exam to fulfil the English language requirements to apply for the MA programme. She achieved a good score; however, she did not yet meet the language requirement for the MA programme. Yasmine decided to change to a more academic language institute at the university where she planned to do her MA studies. In the following extract (7.2.3.2), Yasmine provides a reason for her decision to shift to a different language institute.

Extract 7.2.3.2 (Yasmine – 2nd interview)

- | | | | |
|---|---------|---|--|
| 1 | Yasmine | They teach communication more than they | هم يدرسون ال communication أكثر من انه |
| 2 | | would teach something academic | هم يدرسون شيء أكاديمي |
| 3 | | I wanted something more academic | ابغى شيء أكاديمي أكثر |
| 4 | | like academic writing and those kinds of things | يعني ال academic writing والأشياء هاذي |

Yasmine's decision to transfer from one language institute to another, which she perceived as more rigorously academic, provides salient insight into her evolving sense of agency and academic identity during her transitional period of studying in the UK. As evidenced by her statements 'academic writing' over general 'communication,' Yasmine positions herself as an ambitious learner seeking greater intellectual challenges befitting her academic aspirations (lines 1-3). This contrasts with her previous framing as a passive recipient of unfamiliar teaching methods. Her choice to switch institutes enables Yasmine to assert her agency and independence in directing her learning path.

After transitioning to the academic language institute, Yasmine expressed feeling that her educational experience had changed, and she found what she was looking for in terms of academic learning.

Extract 7.2.3.3 (Yasmine – 2nd interview)

1	Yasmine	the first institute I was in	المعهد الذي كنت فيه الأول التجاري
2		I wasn't comfortable there	ما كنت مأخذه راحتي فيه
3		the atmosphere wasn't just about studying	جوه ما ان جو دراسته كان جو صداقات و كذا
4		it was about friendships and all that	تعرفين حنا متحفظين شوي
5		you know, we're a bit conservative	فكنت ما اقدر ادخل معاهم مره
6		so I couldn't really socialize with them much	بس بالمعهد الثاني اللي تبع الجامعة
7		but in the second institute, the university one	صحيح فيه جنسيات مختلفه من الصين
8		there were different nationalities	وكازاخستان
9		like from China, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Libya	العراق و من ليبيا
10		and of course, there were Saudi students	وفيه طبعاً طلاب من السعودية
11		I really felt there was a lot of cultural exchange	حسيت فعلاً فيه تبادل ثقافات كثير
12		I met a lot of people	اتعرفت على ناس كثير
13		and my perceptions about many things changed	وتغيرت مفاهيمي لأشياء كثير
14			

Extract (7.2.3.3) highlights another reason for Yasmine's struggle in the first language institute: the shift from the social and cultural norms of Saudi Arabia to those of the UK. While classrooms in Saudi Arabia are typically gender-segregated, the UK institute presented a co-educational environment with an emphasis on communication and teamwork. This difference in social dynamics likely contributed to Yasmine's discomfort, as indicated by her statement that she "wasn't comfortable there" (line 2). The focus on friendships and socializing at the first institute further underscores the contrast between Yasmine's familiar social context and the expectations of the new learning environment.

Interestingly, in the second language institute, Yasmine does not mention the integrated classroom as a difficulty or issue. Instead, she emphasizes the positive experiences of cultural exchange and meeting people from different nationalities. This difference in perception could be attributed to Yasmine becoming more accustomed to the non-segregated environment over time. As the second institute followed the first, Yasmine may have already adjusted to the new context, which might have led to a more positive outlook and an appreciation for cultural learning and interaction.

Upon completion of her preparatory language studies, Yasmine transitioned to the MA TESOL programme. Although she anticipated similarities between the programme and her language institute experience, particularly regarding the internationally diverse student cohort, she soon discovered that the realities of postgraduate study in the UK diverged from her initial perceptions. The following extract (7.2.3.4) offers insights into the evolution of Yasmine's perspectives as she encountered the distinct demands and opportunities inherent in her master's programme.

Extract 7.2.3.4 (Yasmine – 2nd interview)

1	Yasmine	I had certain preconceptions before	كان عندي تصورات قبل
2		but when I went there, my perceptions changed	و لما رحنا هناك اتغيرت تصوراتي
3		I was used to studying according to the system we were	انا كنت متعوده دراسة على النظام اللي احنا اتعودنا
4		accustomed to, which was exams.	عليه اختبارات
5		so, I was afraid that studying in the UK would be	فكنت متخوفة انه دراسة بريطانيا بحوث
6		research-oriented.	دايما يقولون لي بحوث بحوث بحوث
7		they always say UK is research, research, research	انا جيت و انا صفر بالبحث ما اعرف اسوي بحث
8		I came here and I had zero knowledge about research	حتى برنامج البكالوريوس اللي درست فيه
9		I didn't know how to conduct research	ما كان عندنا بحوث
10		even the bachelor's programme I studied didn't include	بحوث كانت .. ما كنا نعرف فيها
11		research	كنا نسوي بحوث ما ادري اتو زينا و لا لا
12		research was (.) we didn't know about	بحوث اللي اي كلام يعني
13		we used to do research (.)	الي تنسخين من النت ما فيه
14		I don't know if you are like us or not	references ما فيه شيء (ضحك)
15		we used to do research	و ال ethics هاذي ما نعرفها
16		copying from the internet	و لا اصلا قرأ و لا تعب انفسنا حتى يصير فيه
17		without references without anything ((laugher:)).	critical thinking ولا تسوين
18		the ethics and all we didn't know about all of that	يعني ما كنت عارفة ولا شيء في البحث
19		And we don't even bother to read	كنت مره متخوفة انو البرنامج حتي يعتمد على
20		or put in effort so we develop critical thinking or anything	البحوث
21		I mean, I didn't know anything about research	كنت مره مستصعبه الفكرة حابه فكره الاختبارات أكثر
22		I was really scared that my programme would depend	
23		on research	
24		I found the idea really challenging	
25		I used to prefer the idea of exams more	

In this extract (7.2.3.4), Yasmine constructs a narrative of deficit regarding her research skills upon entering the UK MA programme. She acknowledges having misconceptions and repeatedly uses language emphasising what she lacked – ‘zero knowledge’ (line 8), not knowing ‘how to conduct research’ (line 9), and openly stating ‘I didn't know anything about research’ (line 21). Yasmine shapes an identity defined by insufficient preparation, admitting to inferior research practices like copying without references. Her statements about being ‘really scared’ (line 22) and finding research ‘challenging’ (line 24) heighten this narrative of deficiency. Yasmine constructs her initial experience in the MA programme in the UK as one of hesitation and self-doubt due to her limited research background and unfamiliarity with the education system.

On the other hand, Yasmine's account can be seen as a narrative of discovery rather than deficiency. She enters the UK programme with misconceptions but an openness to having her ‘perceptions changed’ (line 2). Yasmine acknowledges being accustomed to passive learning via exams rather than active inquiry. Her admissions of lacking knowledge emphasise less personal failings than differences in prior education systems. While Yasmine frames her preference for exams as a matter of comfort and familiarity, it can also be interpreted as a natural reaction to the

unfamiliarity of a research-intensive academic culture. This interpretation suggests that her initial hesitation might be rooted less in active resistance and more in the understandable challenges of adapting to new academic expectations.

Yasmine later continues explaining that she discovered she was not alone in her fears about research - her classmates from other countries like China and Mexico shared the same anxiety about conducting research. Yasmine wraps up her narrative by describing how she now prefers research-based education over exam-based assessments.

Extract 7.2.3.5 (Yasmine – 2nd interview)

1	Yasmine	I realized that exams don't really measure your abilities	أكتشفت يعني ان الاختبار ما يقيس قدرتك
2		because you study and your fate is determined by a single	لانه تذاكرين و بيوم واح سؤال و جواب يتحدد
3		question and answer	مصيرك
4		but with research you put in effort	اما البحث انتي تتعين عليه و حتى الاشياء بعد
5		and even after the exam, you end up studying a whole book.	الاختبار تصيرين مذاكره كتاب كامل
6		tomorrow, you'll forget all the information except for few simple	بكره تنسين كل المعلومات ما تتذكرين منه الا
7		things.	شيء بسيط
8		but with research	بس ان البحث اذا انت كتبتيه و دورقي
9		if you write it	معلومات و قرأتني articles كثير و كتب كثير
10		search for information	وطلعتي احسن ما عندك فيه و صار فيه
11		read lots of articles and books	analysis
12		and come up with the best you can	تحسين الاشياء تطلعين فيها بعد البحث تبقي
13		and you did analysis	عندك مو زي يعني الاختبار اللي تنسينه على
14		you feel like you've learned and retained the things you	طول
15		explored after the research	فجيت مره فكره البحوث وارتحت انه تقريبا ما
16		unlike the exam you forget right away	عندي و لا ماده فيها اختبار
17		so, I really liked the idea of research	كل المواد اللي درستها ال assessment حقها
18		and I felt relieved that almost none of my modules had exams	في الاخير اللي هو assignment
19		all the modules I studied were assessed through assignments	submission
20		submission	

Yasmine constructs a clear narrative depicting research as transformative in developing her academic abilities, in contrast to the limitations of exam-based assessment. Using comparison and personal realizations, Yasmine conveys research as enabling more meaningful learning. Phrases like 'you feel like you've learned and retained' (line 14) highlight her perspective that research led to deeper knowledge acquisition and retention. At the same time, Yasmine portrays exams as ineffective measures of ability. Her dramatic language, 'your fate is determined by a single question' (lines 2-3), serves to critique exams as reliant on rote memorization and passive studying rather than active learning.

The extract traces an evolution in Yasmine's identity from shying away from research to appreciating its values. Her statement, 'I realized exams don't really

measure abilities' (line 1), signals a turning point in recognizing the restrictions of exams. Yasmine's sense of relief upon discovering the UK programme's emphasis on research assignments (line 18) highlights a pivotal learning moment. This discovery solidified her embrace of a more rigorous academic approach.

7.3 Analysis of Danah's story

This section analyses Danah's narrative, an English language instructor at a large university in western Saudi Arabia. It focuses on her experiences in the English language programme after switching majors, highlighting her commitment to learning and adaptation as a part-time student. The analysis also explores her transition to full-time studies, her teaching practicum, and her subsequent experiences pursuing an MA TESOL abroad, drawing connections between these experiences and her current professional journey.

7.3.1 BA experience

Earlier in this interview (Chapter 6), Danah discussed her shift from a Home Economics programme to an English language programme. The narrative focus in this part concerns her experiences in the English language programme after changing majors. The following extracts (7.3.1.1 & 7.3.1.2) are taken from an extended account of her overall experience on the BA programme. Her description concerns the BA programme broadly rather than a specific component.

Extract 7.3.1.1 (Danah - 1st interview)

1	Danah	it was, Subhanallah ((Glory to God))	يعني سبحان الله
2		a blessing in disguise	رب ضارة نافعة
3		my family didn't like my situation	يعني اهلي ما كان عاجبهم الوضع
4		and the first year as part-timer was a shock	وكانت اول سنة في الالتساب صدمة
5		especially, 'how would you enter a foreign	خصوصا انو كيف تدخلين تخصص لغة اجنبية
6		language major (.) you have to practice'	لازم انتي you practice
7		'and you have to be within the environment that	و لازم تكونين وسط البيئة اللي تتكلم
8		speaks' ((referring to the language))	و لازم تستخدمين المعمل
9		'and you have to use the lab and be in	و تكونين على connection
10		connection especially for intensive courses'	خصوصا ال intensive courses بالشكل هذا
11		'twelve courses you will carry and you are a	اتنعمش ماده انتي بتشيلينها و وقتك كله بتكونين منتسبه
12		part-timer all of your time'	طبعا انا كنت منتسبه بالاسم بس
13		of course I was a part-timer by status only	و لكن انا كنت اداوم بشكل يومي في الكلية
14		but (.) I would go everyday to the college	اروح للمكتبة حققت التصوير و I hang out مع البنات الموجودين
15		I would go the photocopy room	اشوف مين الاوائل في النقرة احاول اوصل لل instructors و
16		and I hang out with the girls there	البروفيسورز during their office hours
17		I would see who are the top in the class	يعني I make the contact
18		I tried to reach the instructors and professors	هذا الشيء خلاني starting everything from scratch
19		during their office hours	و للأمانة في المنتسبات ما كان فيه الا انا و حده ثانيه متزوجه
20		I mean I make the contact	كانت حامل and she withdraw
21		this thing made me starting everything from	
22		scratch	
23		and honestly there was no part-timer except me	
24		and other one she was married	
25		and pregnant and she withdraw	

In the extract (7.3.1.1), Danah provides insight into the experience of proving oneself academically while resisting constraints, revealing the process of crafting an agentive student identity. Initially faced with doubt from her family due to her part-time status, Danah depicts immense personal effort and determination to immerse herself fully and succeed in her programme.

Danah acknowledges the perceived risks and difficulties of entering an English major as a part-time student, framing this decision through constructed dialogue voicing her family's doubts. Their concerns are presented as constructed dialogue through repetitive 'you have to' (lines 6-9), which reflect broader societal discourses questioning part-time students' capability to handle intensive coursework and isolation from an English-speaking environment. However, Danah resists a passive positioning within these discourses, emphasizing through repeated 'I' statements and active verbs her personal agency and immersive efforts to engage deeply in the programme (e.g., I would go, I would go, I hang out, I would see, I tried, I make) (lines 15-20). She presents herself as unique in defying expectations, describing herself as the only fully participative part-timer exceeding the minimal requirements. Danah's linguistic choices allow her to claim a determined, strategic student identity even within restrictive educational structures.

Extract 7.3.1.2 (Danah 1st interview) (continuation of extract 7.3.1.1)

26	Danah	I finished the first semester	خلصت الترم الأول
27		and I barely finished the work	و يا دوبي خلصت شغل
28		and brought the papers from the copy room	و جيت الاوراق من المكتبة
29		and I tried to comprehend every question	و جلست اقرأ
30		and every teacher	و احاول استوعب كل سؤال
31		and how her style	و كل teacher
32		and how her questions	و كيف اسلوبها
33		and how etc	و كيف اسألها و كيف كذا
34		I finished the first semester	خلصت من الترم الاول
35		and Alhamdulillah ((praise be to God)) I scored very	و الحمد لله I scored very high scores
36		high scores	و الحمد لله I scored very high scores
37		and I finished the second semester	و خلصت من الترم الثاني
38		and that's it I finished all this year	و خلاص انتهيت من السنة هاذي كلها
39		It was pivotal to be honest	كانت محورية صراحة
40		later, the second year	و بعدين السنة الثانية رجحت صراحه
41		I was honestly more relaxed	داومت بعد الناس داوموا بشهر
42		I went to college after a month from the start of the	على اساس انا انتساب و راح اكمل السنة الثانية انتساب و عارفه
43		semester on the basis that I was a part-timer and	انوه ما فيه دوامات
44		will continue for the second year as the same	فلمن جيت لقيت نفس القوائم مخطوطة على الباب
45		when I went I found a name list on the door	و لقيت اسمي من ضمن البنات
46		and found my name in that list	الي تكون السنة الاولى ممتازة و معدلك يعني 4 و نص و your
47		those who achieve a high GPA around 4.5	scored As in most of the things
48		and your scored A's in most of the things	النظام تلقائيا يحولك منتظمة
49		the system will automatically change your status to	
50		full-time student	
51			

In the second part of her narrative (extract 7.3.1.2), Danah conveys resilience by immersing fully in her studies. She repeatedly scrutinises all course aspects, depicting herself as motivated by challenges rather than limited. Though initially doubted, Danah claims agency by constructing her experience as a pivotal opportunity to prove capability rather than a constraint. This agentic academic identity is substantiated through Danah underscoring achieving top grades. Her outstanding attainment led to an unexpected but validating automatic status change from part-time to fulltime student.

Unlike other participants, Danah's account of the BA experience is constructed as one of gaining empowerment by overcoming social and cultural challenges. Where others focused on limitations, Danah stressed her own determination. She showed how her deep academic participation and success defeated assumptions about part-time students' abilities. Her narrative choices systematically transformed doubts and challenges into opportunities to prove herself academically capable and determined. By showing her automatic status change as recognition of excellence, Danah conveyed her experience as one of success in surpassing marginalization through individual determination.

Danah's BA programme was education-based, which required her to complete a supervised teaching practicum in the final year. In this following extract (7.3.1.3), Danah shares her experience during her teaching practicum.

Extract 7.3.1.3 (Danah 1st interview)

1	Danah	honesty, we didn't have (.)	للأمانة احنا ما عندنا
2		we weren't taught education theories	ما كنا ندرس ال education بالنظريات
3		you know	عرفتي
4		they didn't teach us theories of education	ما كانوا يدرسونا نظريات التعليم
5		or learning styles for students,	او ال learning styles for the students
6		or that you have to classify them this way or that way	او انه لازم قسمينهم كذا او كذا
7		no, it was just basic preparation	لا كان مجرد مجرد تهيئة
8		teaching methods require preparation and resources	يقول لك طرق التدريس لازم يكون عندك استعدادات
9		and to know how to connect the goal with reality	وامكانيات
10		and how to link reality with the Islamic environment	وكيف تربطين الهدف بالواقع
11		and how to prepare activities,	وكيف تربطين الواقع بالبيئة الاسلامية
12		and so on	وكيف تجهزين الانشطة
13		how to develop an activity wasn't something we were	وكذا يعني
14		taught	وكذا يعني
15		all these were things us; girls (<i>referring to her</i>	وكذا يعني
16		<i>classmate</i>) would compete over and do	وكذا يعني
17		so I don't remember entering the classroom with a	وكذا يعني
18		solid theoretical understanding or knowledge	وكذا يعني

Danah's construction of her teaching practicum experience highlights a disconnect between expectations and reality when it comes to preparation. Through blunt language like 'we weren't taught' (lines 1-6) and admissions of missing theoretical concepts, she constructs another narrative of deficiency. Danah uses description by using 'just basic' (line 7) and vague terms like 'and so on' (line 12) to depict the curriculum as lacking nuance and rigour. This framing presents the formal structures of the practicum programme as falling short. However, even within limitations, Danah conveys agentic action. She constructs herself as an active learner, seeking knowledge through informal means like collaborating with peers when formal instruction is inadequate.

Danah's account constructs the teaching practicum as a pivotal experience marked by disjuncture. Unlike other parts of her BA journey, this component is framed not as an empowerment story but as one of adversity not fully transformed. Her narrative suggests preparation gaps that extend beyond individual control.

Danah shares an example of the directives she received during her teaching practicum as a pre-service teacher, which she no longer agrees with.

Extract 7.3.1.4 (Danah 1st interview)

1	Danah	we were restricted to speaking English	كنا مقيدات انو حنا نتكلم انجلش
2		later on, as we learned, studied,	Later on لما اتعلمنا و درسنا و عرفنا أكثر
3		and became more aware	ال study هاذي و ال school اللي تقولك English
4		those who tell you (.)	zone only و لا انجلش only
5		in a school that insists on "English zone only"	It turned out to be an old fashion school
6		or "English only"	and its ok to use the learners mother tongue
7		It turned out to be an old fashion school	to enhance their knowledge
8		And it's okay to use the learners' mother tongue to	
9		enhance their knowledge	

Danah's excerpt 7.3.1.4 reveals critically re-examining prior teaching advice around English-only instruction. She describes initially being 'restricted to speaking English' (line 1) in the practicum, framing this as an external imposition by their supervisors and the programme's BA curriculum. However, Danah constructs herself as evolving past this limited mindset, as conveyed through phrasing like 'as we learned, studied, and became more aware' (line 2-3).

Danah depicts strictly English-only approaches as flawed and outdated through language like 'old fashion school' (line 7). She now constructs meaning around multilingual instruction as beneficial, asserting 'it's okay to use the learners' mother tongue' (line 8-9). This example demonstrates reconstructing her perspective through later experiences and learning.

Throughout her narrative, Danah constructs her BA experience as a journey of empowerment through determination, transforming obstacles into opportunities. Though initially doubted as a part-time student, Danah conveys that she immersed fully in her programme, constructing herself as motivated by challenges. She emphasizes achieving excellent grades, with her automatic status change confirming her abilities. However, Danah presents her teaching practicum as an exception, framing it as falling short in preparation compared to her high expectations. Even amidst practicum limitations, Danah actively seeks knowledge. Her narrative choices systematically reframe doubts, exclusion and gaps into platforms to prove her academic dedication and capability.

Following her BA and a brief administrative role in a public school, Danah pursued government-sponsored overseas education. Her reasons for seeking international study were not elaborated upon. It's noteworthy that, aside from practicum experience, Danah's first teaching experiences occurred after her return from abroad. The following section (7.3.2) details her educational experiences overseas.

7.3.2 SA experience

Danah went overseas to the US to do her postgraduate degree in TESOL. Like other participants, Danah enrolled in English language institute in order to fulfil the minimum language requirement for MA TESOL programme. The following extract (7.3.2.1) is about Danah's experience in the English language institute.

Extract 7.3.2.1 (Danah 2nd interview)

1	Danah	the way they taught was interesting	طريقة تدريسهم كانت interesting
2		it all relied on the activities	كلها كانت تعتمد على ال activities
3		the teacher talking time	ال teacher talking time
4		so if we consider the session to be 50 minutes	اذا حسبنا انو ال session 50 minutes
5		I would say that the teacher is talking for only ten	I would say that the teacher is talking for only ten
6		minutes	minutes
7		realistically, he didn't actually speak for more than 10	واقعا على ارض الواقع فعلا ما كان يتكلم أكثر من 10 minutes
8		minutes	minutes
9		he explains vocab work	يشرح vocab work و يشرح
10		and the rest you do on your own	و الباقي you do on your own
11		you make your own list and you do your own examples	You make your own list and you do your own
12		and you ask questions all the time	examples
13		and then you exercise, exercise, exercise, practice,	And you ask questions على طول
14		practice, practice	و بعدين you exercise exercise practice practice
15		that's it	practice practice
16		and of course, there's the involvement of technology	That's it
17		where we watch movies or listen to song lyrics	و طبعا فيه ال involvement حقت ال technology
18		we do word puzzles for spelling	اللي هي نشوف movie و لا نسمع lyrics حقت song
19		we do word formation	We do word puzzles
20		for example, how to change it to an adjective	عشان ال spelling
21		for example, turning it into something else	word formation ال We do
22		How to turn it into a verb, how to turn it into an adverb	مثلا كيف تخيلها adjective مثلا تخيلها ما ادري ايش
23		these are the things that I liked	كيف تخيلها verb كيف تخيلها adverb
24		why? Because they really develop English skills	هاذي هي الاشياء اللي انا حبيتها ليش ؟ لانها فعلا it develop
25		even though I graduated from an English major, you know	skill الانجلىش
26		what made the language sink in is the techniques they	رغم اني متخرجه انجليزي بس عرفتني ما ثبت على ال techniques
27		used	اللي هم عطوني اياها

In this extract (7.3.2.1), Danah constructs her experience at the English language institute positively by emphasizing the interactive pedagogical techniques that enhanced her language learning and engagement as a learner. She highlights the minimal 'teacher talking time' (line 3), with lectures limited to 10 minutes for vocabulary explanations. Most of the class time was devoted to activities, with Danah noting she created her own examples, asked questions freely, and repeatedly practised skills. This participatory structure enabled learner autonomy. Danah also constructs technology integration as valuable in the institute's model, in which they used multimedia tools like songs and movies to foster language learning. She presents activities like puzzles and word formation as effective for building different linguistic skills. According to Danah, despite her prior English studies, the institute's

methods deeply enriched her language abilities. She attributes this progress to the hands-on, learner-centred techniques that provided many opportunities for practice and self-direction.

Danah's construction of her meaningful institute experience points to core aspects of her teaching identity - learner-centred, constructivist, technologically integrated, and focused on skill-building through active engagement. Her learner experience seems to shape her educator perspective, which will be shown later in the thesis (chapter 8).

After the language institute, Danah enrolled in an MA Applied Linguistics programme. However, soon after enrolling, she changed to an MA TESOL programme in a different U.S. state. She professed that the university's location, along with the programme's focus, were the main reasons for her shift. According to Danah, the Applied Linguistics programme was very theoretically based, which was not what she felt she wanted. Danah didn't provide much information about her experiences in the MA TESOL courses or overall learning experience. However, most of the focus was on her MA practicum fieldwork and the impactful experiences during that teaching practice period.

Danah's teaching practicum as part of her MA programme was structured in three main phases. First, she worked as a teaching assistant, completing mentoring, observations, and assisting the lead instructor. Next, she progressed to part-time teaching duties, gaining hands-on experience while still partnering with her mentor teacher. The final 3-week phase immersed Danah into full-time teaching, as she independently instructed ESL students at the language institute and assumed complete responsibility for classes.

Danah reflected that her teaching practicum was a valuable learning experience. She recounted an incident involving a Saudi student as particularly impactful. This student delivered a presentation about his late mother, became emotional, and ultimately broke down and was unable to finish. In the aftermath, Danah and the lead teacher discussed how to evaluate the student's incomplete presentation given the sensitive circumstances. Danah then described her own takeaways from this experience in the following extract (7.3.2.2).

Extract 7.3.2.2 (Danah 2nd interview)

1	Danah	from my experience in the fieldwork	من ال experience حققتا في ال fieldwork
2		and what I consider part of the experience also in the	و الالي انا اعتبرها من ال experience الالي كان في ال
3		assessment	assessment
4		or in my approach	او في ال approach حتي
5		there are teachers who are, for example, very humane	فيه teachers الالي هم يكونوا مثلا مره انسانيين
6		and compassionate and considerate	و متعاطفين و considerate
7		but I must be reasonable in my consideration as well	بس لازم reasonable كان في ال consideration حقتي
8		you shouldn't be overly sympathetic to the point of crying	ما تكونين مره متعاطفه لدرجة انه تبكين تصيحين
9		and getting affected by a student	و تتأثرين بسبب student
10		and giving them grades based on their personal situation	و تعطينه درجات بناء على حاله خاصه
11		and based on this and that	و بناء على كذا و بناء على كذا
12		you won't be fair to other individuals who put in effort	ما راح تكونين منصفه مع الاشخاص الثانيين الالي بذلوا مجهود
13		and learned continuously and so on	و اتعلموا على طول و هذا
14		so, I also learned that I need to be a bit more professional	ف اتعلمت كان انا لازم اكون شويه محنيه عشان ايش
15		it's nice to contribute to spreading compassion	هو حلو انا نساخم في نشر التعاطف هو مطلوب الإنسانية
16		humanity is required	مطلوبه تفهم حاجه مره جميله
17		and understanding is a very beautiful thing	

Danah acknowledges the importance of compassion and understanding students' personal situations. However, she realized these sympathetic traits must be balanced with professional judgement, especially when it comes to fair assessment. By reflecting on the need to be 'more professional' (line 14) and 'reasonable' (line 7) in consideration, Danah constructs the experience as pivotal for understanding the objectivity required in teaching.

Danah appears to construct this incident during her practicum as a constructive challenge to her assumptions. She frames it as a valuable learning curve that pushed her to integrate empathy with professional reason and, thus avoid bias in assessing students. Her construction of the experience highlights its transformative impact on developing her identity and awareness as a teacher.

7.4 Analysis of Rawan's story

This section delves into Rawan's narrative, a language instructor at a large public university in western Saudi Arabia. It traces her journey from her early struggles to learn English, despite her father's encouragement and her inspiring high school teacher, to her decision to pursue an English language degree. The analysis highlights her perseverance, her experiences as a computer and English language teacher and her transformative journey pursuing an MA TESOL abroad. It concludes by examining the impact of these experiences on her professional development.

7.4.1 BA programme

In the following extract 7.4.1.1, Rawan discusses her experiences as a student in the English language programme during her BA studies. Particularly, she reflects on the linguistic challenges she faced early in the programme after transitioning from high school and her efforts to try to comprehend the academic English used by her university lecturers.

Extract 7.4.1.1 (Rawan – first interview)

1	Rawan	I told you that I studied middle school books	قلناك انا درست كتب المتوسط انا كتب الثانوية ما
2		I did not study high school level books	درستها
3		so, the first year in the major was a life shock	ف اول سنة في التخصص كانت بالنسبة لي صدمة
4		in the first two weeks	عمر
5		maybe even more	كنت اول أسبوعين (.) يمكن أكثر اول شهر تقريبا
6		almost the first month	(.)
7		I would go home to my father crying	كنت ارجع البيت ل بابا ابكي اقله 'انا احب
8		I told him 'I love English I don't want to change'	الانجليزي ما ابني اغير'
9		I used to see it as a very difficult matter	جدا كنت شايقة الموضوع صعب
10		there was this lecturer I won't say her name	كانت وحده دكتوراه الله يذكرها بالخبر بدون ذكر
11		She was the first to teach me Writing	اسماء الله يستر علينا و عليها كانت اول من درستني
12		Introduction to Writing (.) the first Writing course	ماده ال Introduction to writing (.)
13		we were around 22 23 students in the class	writing اول ماده
14		we were only in the first week	كنا كنا في الكلاس كنا يمكن 22 23 طالبة المههم
15		we barely did the course's enrolment	فكانت مو اول اسبوع دوننا عملنا الحذف و الاضافة
16		we did a first exercise together in the class	عملنا اول تمرين مع بعض في الكلاس شافت ال
17		she saw our handwriting and the sentence structure	handwriting حرفنا ال sentence structure
18		she said (.) she didn't even know our names	كانت تقول اتو (.) حتى لسه ما حفظت اسماؤنا
19		she pointed like this ((pointing gesture))	كانت تأشر كنا على قروب من البنات وانا من
20		to a group of girls which I was with them	ضمنهم 'الاسبوع الجاي لا اشوفكم في محاضراتي روجو
21		'next week I don't want to see you in my classes	غبرو تخصصاتكم لغة عربية تاريخ علم اجتماع'
22		go and change your major to Arabic History Sociology'	طبعنا مع احترامي لكل التخصصات الثانية لكنها شايقة
23		of course, with due respect to all other majors	انه مستواي مع مستوى البنات الي اشرت علينا و
24		but she saw my level with the other girls that she pointed at	نحننا مستوانا نحننا ما ياهلنا انو تخصص لغة انجليزية
25		and that our level do not qualify us to enrol in the English	فهذا شيء جدا جدا احبطني
26		language programme	كنت اقول هي تقول انو مستواي مو مستوي
27		this really really frustrated me	طالبة لغة انجليزية طيب انا من احبب الانجليزي اذا
28		I used to say 'she said that my level is not the level of an	انا متخرجة من الثانوي
29		English student'.	فكان كنت اقول 'لا انا اقدر ليش ما اقدر'
30		Ok but where can I learn English if I'm just a high school	و طبعنا هاذي المادة الوحيدة 1 writing طبعنا
31		graduate?	رست فيها حملتها هي المادة الوحيدة خلال سنواي
32		I used to say 'No, I can. Why can't I?'	الدراسية الي رست فيها ما رست و لا في مادة
33		of course, this was the only course (.) Writing 1 that I failed	ثانيه
34		throughout my years of study	
35		I didn't fail in any other course	

Rawan recounts her experiences transitioning into the academic English environment of her university English programme after graduating from a Quranic high school with minimal English education. Initially, her limited educational background in English constrained her agency, making her first university writing course a 'life shock.' (line 3). Rawan narrates an incident that captures her early struggles in the English language programme. The incident provides a standard

example she revisits to convey the emotional impact of clashing with exclusionary academic discourse practices as a newcomer from a non-traditional background i.e., a Qur'anic school graduate.

However, Rawan exhibited agency by actively resisting the lecturer's dismissal and persisting in the programme. She refused to accept the lecturer's judgment that she lacked the proper 'level' for an English student by voicing her own internal dialogue 'No, I can. Why can't I?' (line 32). Rawan's strong desire and personal identification with English motivated her to push back against structural constraints, though her agency was still limited at this early stage. Her subsequent academic success, such as passing all other courses, highlights Rawan's development of greater agency through exercising her personal determination. Yet structures continued shaping her learning path. In the following extract (7.4.1.2), Rawan expressed her perspective as a student in the English language programme.

Extract 7.4.1.2 (Rawan – first interview)

1	Rawan	they would explain in English the whole time	كانوا طول الوقت تشرح بالانجليزي
2		and would use a vocabulary that I never heard	تستخدم vocabulary اول مره اسمعها (.)
3		before (.) academic vocabulary	كانت academic vocabulary
4		they didn't treat us like we are just a high school	ما كانوا يعاملونا معاملة اللي دونا جاين من مدرسة
5		graduates	فكانت بالنسبة لنا كيان صدمه
6		it was a shock for us	what is she talking about?
7		'what is she talking about?'	طول الوقت كان هذا السؤال في راسي
8		I had this question in my head the whole time	'هي ايش بتقول هي ايش بتقول انا ماني فاهمه'
9		'what is she saying? what is she saying?'	كنت ارجع البيت افتح الكتاب احاول اقرأ عشان لما
10		I don't understand	ارجع المحاضرة مثلاً افهم معاها استوعب معاها
11		I would go home and open the book and try to read	مرره كانت تمشي وعشر مرات ما كانت
12		so that when I go back to the lecture	
13		I can understand I can comprehend	
14		sometimes it worked and ten times it didn't	

Rawan shifts to recall her overall experience as a student in the English language programme. She emphasizes the unfamiliar 'vocabulary' and full English explanations as a 'shock' (lines 1-4), constructing this new linguistic environment as unexpectedly difficult given that she and the other students were high school graduates. The constructed dialogue (lines 7-9) conveys her experience of struggling to understand the language. In addition, later in the interview, Rawan expressed that during her years in the BA programme, she rarely participated due to the fear of making mistakes, especially since the lecturers at her time were not tolerant of errors [1st interview]. Due to these challenges, she did not learn to speak English until later, after she graduated, despite being a graduate of the English language programme.

While structures like her educational background, lack of foundation year for new students, and the university academic English level constrain Rawan's participation, she exerts agency through her efforts to study textbooks at home while meeting inconsistent results (lines 12-14) and eventually graduating from the programme.

Rawan's journey through her BA studies was constructed as a challenging one, which is marked by ongoing struggles, self-doubt, and difficulties in learning the English language. Her narrative focuses more on the lack of progress rather than personal growth. These challenges were rooted in various aspects of her academic experience. The programme's structure lacked adequate support and a preparatory year for new students, which left them ill-prepared for the academic demands. In addition, lecturers set high expectations for new students, which added pressure and a sense of inadequacy to Rawan. Furthermore, the teaching style employed by the lecturers limited student participation, which hindered active engagement due to fear of making errors. Rawan concluded her narrative about her BA studies with the following statement: 'I have no loyalty to the bachelor's degree or to that university, I was mentally drained in order to graduate' [1st interview], which implies deep frustration with her bachelor's degree programme experience.

7.4.2 The early teaching experience

Rawan's early teaching experience was during the final year of her BA studies. Unlike their counterparts in colleges of education, final-year students were not required to complete a formal teaching practicum. Instead, as Rawan explained, they had the flexibility to choose their training placement, provided it required them to use English. Rawan said that most of her classmates would choose to do their final year training in banks or companies; however, she chose to work as a teacher at an EMI international school. Though she wasn't an English language teacher, she started as a computer science teacher, and later, the same school officially hired her as an English teacher after graduation.

In the following extract (7.4.2.1), Rawan talks about her first experiences as a language teacher in an international school. However, her narrative does not provide information about her actual teaching practices. Instead, Rawan's account focuses primarily on an emotional experience she had as a teacher in one of her early English classes.

Extract 7.4.2.1 (Rawan – first interview)

1	Rawan	in the first class there were four students	في اول كلاس دخلت درست كانوا اربع طالبات ديوهم مستوى
2		level 4 students	level 4
3		the institute had six levels	كان المعهد فيه له ست ليفلات المهم
4		In the first class I attended, I left crying	فتي اول محاضرة دخلت منها فيها خرجت منها ابكي
5		I went down to the director crying and told	نزلت للمديرة بكاء قتلها انا مستحيل اقدر
6		her that it was impossible for me to continue	ليش ؟لأنه بمجرد المحاضرة هالساعة و نص تقريبا
7		Why? Because during this hour and a half	وحده من الطالبات كان ما شاء الله عليها شطوره
8		one of the students was smart	طلعت لي خطتين املائية على السبورة
9		and showed me two spelling mistakes on the	ف لسعتني في الخطتين هاذي
10		board	مخلص حسيت اني انا ما اقدر
11		these two mistakes stung me	و انا فاشله و انا و انا و انا
12		so I felt like I can't	
13		and I am a failure and I am and I am	

In recounting her early teaching experiences, Rawan depicts a formerly fragile self who struggled with deep self-doubt and a lack of confidence in her capabilities as a novice teacher. Even minor critical feedback from a student provoked intense emotional distress, which left her to question her competence. Rawan highlights how she relied on external validation and encouragement from the director to help overcome these insecurities, which the director did. While acknowledging these early vulnerabilities, Rawan's narrative demonstrates the personal growth she has undergone over time in building perspective and resilience. By framing the narrative from the point of view of someone who has developed resilience and perspective, Rawan constructs her current identity as that of an assured and experienced teacher, contrasting with her former fragile, uncertain self at the start of her career. Through describing her early struggles, Rawan's account depicts her progression as both a teacher and an individual.

After working briefly at the international school, Rawan applied and received a governmental scholarship to study abroad. The narrative then transitions in section 7.4.3 to examine Rawan's experiences in the US. This includes her studies at English language institutes and her enrolment in an MA TESOL programme.

7.4.3 SA education

Rawan embarked on her study abroad journey in the United States, first enrolling in an English language institute. She later transferred to a more advanced institute per her assessment. After strengthening her English skills at these language centres, Rawan then progressed to an MA TESOL programme.

The following extract (7.4.3.1) is concerning her general take from her experiences in the English language institutes.

Extract 7.4.3.1 (Rawan – 2nd interview)

1	Rawan	do you remember when I told you that I didn't	تفكرني انا ما بدأت اتكلم الانجليزي بطلاقة الا لما تخرجت من الجامعة
2		speaking English fluently until I graduated from	من اول ما دخلت في المعهد
3		university?	فكنت نوعا ما شويه خجلانه اتكلم
4		from the moment I entered the institute (.)	عشان ما اغلط
5		I was somewhat shy to speak	خصوصا لما كنت اتكلم مع امريكان
6		afraid of making mistakes	ما ايهن يضحكوا عليا ب
7		especially when speaking with Americans	س سبحان الله الاحساس هذا جدا اتغير
8		I didn't want them to laugh at me	كنت احس انهم هيا فاهميني
9		but this feeling changed a lot	من قبل لا اكمل الجملة
10		I felt like they understood me even before I	هم يعطوني الانطباع هذا عادي
11		completed the sentence	حتى لو غلطتي ما يحسوك انك غلطتي
12		they gave me this impression that it's okay	فهذا الشيء مره عزز ثقتي في نفسي
13		even if I made a mistake	أني انا اتكلم الانجليزي بطلاقة
14		they didn't make me feel like I did	او ما اخجل اذا انا غلطت
15		so, this really boosted my confidence	و احيانا اتنبه من الشخص اللي قدامي ايش الكلام اللي استخدمه
16		that I speak English fluently	او ايش العبارات
17		or that I'm not embarrassed if I make a mistake	و القط فوكابولوري –vocabulary-
18		Sometimes I pay attention to the person in front	سبحان الله هاذي في اول سنة
19		of me,	
20		what words they use,	
21		or what phrases and vocabulary.	
22		this was in the first year	

In this extract (7.4.3.1), Rawan presents her experience at the institute as transformative in building her confidence and willingness to speak English. She admits being very shy and afraid to converse, especially with native speakers, due to insecurity about mistakes and fluency. However, Rawan suggests the receptive environment made her feel understood, accepted, and comfortable expressing herself. According to Rawan, this inclusive atmosphere 'really boosted' (line 15) her confidence to speak English more fluently without constant self-consciousness. She highlights how conversational partners used certain words and phrases that imply an openness to learning through social interaction. Generally, Rawan constructs the institute as a transformative social space that pushes her abilities through encouragement.

After achieving the required IELTS score for the postgraduate programme, Rawan started her journey in the MA TESOL program. In the following extract (7.4.3.2), Rawan highlights one aspect of the programme that made an impact on her language proficiency and teaching practice.

Extract 7.4.3.2 (Rawan – 2nd interview)

1	Rawan	honestly, I won't say I'm super smart and	صراحه ما اقول لك انا مره ذكيه و دافوره
2		talented	بس مجتهده
3		but I'm hardworking.	كانوا الدكتور صراحه يعطون الانطباع
4		the professors really gave the impression that	لما اقول كلمه
5		when I say a word	او اقول اقتراح
6		suggest something	او اقول فكره
7		or share an idea	او اعلق what I say
8		or comment	يحبسوني انا واو
9		they value what I say	قلت حاجه افدتهم
10		They make me feel like I'm 'wow'	مرحله الماجستير صراحه عززت الثقه بنفسي من ناحيه اللغة
11		like I said something beneficial.	و التدريس كان
12		the master's stage really boosted my	
13		confidence in terms of language	
14		and teaching as well	

Like her experience in the English language institute, Rawan highlights observational aspects of her experience. Rawan constructs her MA TESOL programme experience in an overwhelmingly positive light. She highlights feeling valued by professors who affirmed her contributions, stating this validation 'really boosted my confidence' (Line 12) linguistically and pedagogically. She also emphasizes her own attentiveness, depicting the supportive environment as enabling her active participation and growth. While not explicitly stated by Rawan, these focuses suggest she may derive meaning from the MA through her current role as an EFL teacher. The confidence gained and inclusive participation-focused approach could inform her teaching philosophy.

Although containing no formal practicum, Rawan's MA TESOL programme offered community teaching opportunities that she found beneficial. Particularly, the professor arranged for them to provide English instruction to refugees and special needs children. Rawan depicted this as a unique experience in which she lacked a shared common language with these students, unlike her Arabic-speaking learners in Saudi Arabia.

7.5 Analysis of Layla's story

Layla's narrative, an English language instructor at a public university in western Saudi Arabia, highlights the influence of her family's emphasis on English language learning. It explores her journey through an English language and literature programme, her early teaching experiences, and her decision to pursue an MA TESOL in the UK. The analysis focuses on the challenges she faced, the support she

sought, and the valuable skills she gained through her experiences, including teaching Arabic, learning new languages, and conducting IELTS workshops. It concludes by examining the impact of her MA and CELTA qualification on her teaching practice upon her return to Saudi Arabia.

7.5.1 BA experience

In this phase of Layla's story, she describes her experience in BA studies in the English language and literature. Before joining the programme, Layla was expecting it to be easy, especially with her confidence in her English language skills. However, the BA programme was not as she expected. In the following extract (7.5.1.1), Layla talks about her experience in the programme.

Extract 7.5.1.1 (Layla – 1st interview)

- 1 Layla at first I thought it would be so easy for me
- 2 because I used to go to summer institute
- 3 to study English every year since I was six years old
- 4 but it wasn't about language at all so
- 5 first I thought it would be about language
- 6 but then I found out it was about the literature the linguistics
- 7 and how to be a good translator
- 8 yeah I wasn't an A student though
- 9 because I struggled at first in learning the language of literature itself
- 10 and learning the methodology of the linguistics
- 11 but it was fun
- 12 they didn't teach us how to write a paper at all
- 13 so as far as I recall from my BA studies was (.)
- 14 only one paper I did
- 15 and it was 300 words only
- 16 this was a shock when I started to study MA

In this extract 7.5.1.1, Layla constructs her BA experience as one that subverted her initial confidence and forced her to adapt to unexpected challenges. Layla establishes an identity as overly self-assured about her English abilities gained from years of summer study. However, her expectations are contradicted when she realizes the focus of the programme is literature and linguistics, not language skills. Layla positions herself as a struggling novice through using blunt language to admit she 'wasn't an A student' (line 8) because the unfamiliar content and methodologies challenged her at first.

Layla's critique of the lack of writing preparation in her BA programme suggests that she sees academic writing skills as essential for professional and educational development. Her statement that she only completed a 300-word paper indicates that

rigorous writing practice and training were notably absent from her undergraduate experience. Yet when she began her MA studies, she felt shocked by the heightened expectations for writing which implies a sizeable gap between the actual skills she developed in her BA and those required for graduate-level work. For Layla, this difference highlights how foundational writing abilities were overlooked rather than fostered during her BA programme.

As part of her BA programme, Layla was required to complete training in a sector where English is used as the primary means of communication. Similar to Rawan's experience, Layla had the option of working in banks, sales, or companies. However, she chose to do her training in a private primary school. In the following extract (7.5.1.2), Layla answers my question about her early teaching practice.

Extract 7.5.1.2 (Layla – 1st interview)

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1 | Budur | <i>Do you remember how your teaching was, or where did you get your teaching method from?</i> |
| 2 | Layla | first it was spontaneous |
| 3 | | I was trying to follow the teacher's steps |
| 4 | | but then it went spontaneous |
| 5 | | because you know the kids you don't have to have a lesson plan |
| 6 | | and do certain steps it goes smooth with them |
| 7 | | I didn't know at that time to have an output by the end of the class |
| 8 | | so after 20 minutes I found myself playing with them |
| 9 | | but it wasn't a good teaching skills honestly |
| 10 | | <i>but it went well</i> |
| 11 | | now I improved a lot now |
| 12 | | <i>when I remember, I realize that there were many things wrong that I used to do</i> |

*The italic text is translated Arabic text

Layla initially depicts herself as a novice imitating others' teaching methods, admitting 'I was trying to follow the teacher's steps' (line 3). However, she quickly portrayed her approach as becoming more improvisational as she realized rigid lesson planning was unnecessary with young learners. Layla's positive statement 'it goes smooth with them' (line 6) shows her gaining confidence in unstructured play despite lacking output goals (line 7). However, the passive phrasing of 'I found myself' (line 8) implies she fell into an unstructured approach without intention rather than making planned methodological choices.

While she acknowledges this practice 'wasn't good teaching skills honestly' (line 9) her reflective attitude in describing playing with the students after 20 minutes suggests pride in her natural rapport through 'it went well' (line 10). By doing this,

Layla constructs her identity as an inherently relational teacher who flourished during this formative phase by following her intuitions.

Nonetheless, by evaluating past pedagogical deficiencies, 'there were many things wrong that I used to do' (line12) against her present knowledge 'now I improved a lot' (line 11), Layla also constructs a journey of progress from an intuitively creative yet methodologically immature trainee to a more knowledgeable professional.

7.5.2 Early teaching experiences

After Layla graduated with a BA in English language and literature, she spent a summer in Canada enrolled in an English language institute. She does not provide any details about her experience there but mentions taking the IELTS exam, on which she achieved a high score. This helped her secure her first job as an English teacher at a private primary school. In the following extract (7.5.2.1), Layla discusses her early experiences teaching English to young learners.

Extract 7.5.2.1 (Layla – 1st interview)

- 1 Layla I didn't know what to do
2 so I used to google the lessons
3 so, مثلاً ((for example)), past participle
4 how to teach past participle?
5 so I was doing exactly as a private tutor
6 ((That is when you stand by the board and write the rule)) لما تجين عند السبورة و تكتبين القاعدة
7 maybe it was good for the students
8 but I didn't teach them a language
9 more of like the grammar rules
10 ((I was following this system in my teaching)) كنت اتبع هالنظام في تدريسي
11 grammar rules ((and the likes)) و اشياء زي كذا
12 ((Also teaching was not)) كمان التدريس ما كان
13 Also I didn't know how to be a teacher
14 but not too serious
15 either I teach and become very serious
16 or I don't teach and be more like fun
17 I didn't know how to balance between the two
18 In the time of teaching it is serious teaching
19 and I felt the girls (students) didn't accept this way
20 also I didn't know how to prepare lesson plan at all
21 I didn't know that there was a thing called lesson plan to be honest
22 yeah this experience took one year
23 one whole year

*The italic text is translated Arabic text

Layla's narrative of her first-time teaching English depicts the challenges and uncertainties she faced as a novice teacher lacking adequate preparation. She describes relying heavily on online resources, admitting 'I didn't know what to do so I used to google the lessons' (lines 1-2) when planning grammar lessons. Her methods mirrored private tutoring sessions, which focused closely on decontextualized

grammar rules rather than communicative language teaching. Layla questions the effectiveness of this approach, reflecting ‘maybe it was good for the students, but I didn’t teach them a language’ (lines 8-9). This admission shows her evolving understanding of quality pedagogy, as the once novice teacher can now critically examine her early overemphasis on grammar.

Evidence of Layla’s difficulty in balancing her classroom persona also emerges. She wavered between two extremes, explaining, ‘either I teach and become very serious or I don’t teach and be more like fun’ (lines 15-18). Layla notes adopting a serious stance initially yet felt ‘the girls didn’t accept this way’ (line 19) Her strict persona resulted from uncertainty about assuming the teacher role, as she states, ‘I didn’t know how to be a teacher’ (line 13). Layla constructs her identity as someone who has gradually learned to adjust to the classroom atmosphere, which contrasts with her rigid beginnings with a more adaptable present self.

In conveying the challenges of this ‘one whole year’ (line 23) as an inexperienced teacher lacking methodology awareness and confidence, Layla’s narrative shows the transformative curve of professional identity development possible through reflecting on difficult early experiences. Her willingness to recognize past teaching limitations points to the reflective practitioner she has become.

7.5.4 SA experience

Layla’s SA experience is divided into two parts: her MA TESOL programme and CELTA course that she undertook a year after finishing her degree. Unlike the other participants, Layla is a self-funded international student who went directly from Saudi Arabia to start her MA TESOL programme in the UK without enrolling in English language institute (pre-sessional courses). In the following extract, Layla reflects on this aspect in relation to an incident that happened in the first semester of her MA.

Extract 7.5.4.1 (Layla – 2nd interview)

- 1 Layla I stayed there for a year
- 2 but the biggest mistake that I made is that I got a high band in IELTS
- 3 and I got 8.5
- 4 and I went directly for the programme
- 5 I didn’t take what they call pre-sessional course
- 6 the pre-sessional course
- 7 they teach you how to write a paper
- 8 improve your writing all of these things
- 9 as I told you I haven’t wrote a paper before
- 10

11 at the first week they asked us to write a 1000 word about any topic that is related to
12 teaching
13 and after I submitted the paper the feedback was one line from my professor
14 and he said 'you are not ready for masters yet'
15 It was big
16 the biggest shock ever *honestly*
17 *but later I knew* what was his points
18 and my weaknesses
what should I do etcetera

*The italic text is translated Arabic text

In this extract (7.5.4.1), Layla presents her experience in the MA TESOL programme as initially very challenging due to not taking the pre-sessional course. She highlights not having prior experience with academic writing as a key gap coming into the programme. When asked to write a 1000-word paper in the first week, Layla was shocked by the feedback from her professor stating she was not ready for the master's level. She constructs this as the 'biggest shock ever' (line 15) and a critical early failure. However, Layla frames this as a valuable learning opportunity that reveals her weaknesses in writing skills and academic preparation. Over time, she was able to understand the professor's perspective and need for improvement.

Layla defines the experience as a tough but critical period of adjustment. Without the support of the pre-sessional course, she was forced quickly to confront her deficits. While devastating, this proved necessary for identifying the gaps she needed to fill through further learning and improvement.

In reflecting on her MA programme, Layla highlighted two courses that were impactful for her later teaching - Second Language Learning and Second Language Teaching. In the former, students had to study a new language; Layla chose Spanish. She explained that learning Spanish in this academic context provided first-hand experience with language acquisition methods. Layla found the teaching techniques she encountered as a learner to be highly applicable to her current English language instruction. As she stated, 'the same methods and the same teaching style now I'm using with my students' [2nd interview]. For Layla, taking on the role of a novice language learner in the course enabled her to directly link research concepts to real-world educational practice, granting insight into effective language teaching strategies.

The second course is Second Language Teaching. According to Layla, this course has elements that are similar to her CELTA course experience, a course that she values the most as shaping her teaching practice. In the MA course, she learnt about making a portfolio for activities and worksheets that language teachers usually use when preparing for their classes.

Layla completed an intensive one-month CELTA course during the summer of 2017, a year after finishing her MA TESOL programme. The course ran daily from 9 am to 5 pm, with teaching practice making up a large portion of class time. Unlike her theoretically focused MA, Layla expressed that the CELTA provided hands-on practical training. She taught actual adult students. Layla also mentions preparing assignments, receiving feedback from tutors, and the demanding pace of packing a great deal of learning into four weeks. She describes the CELTA as a transformative 'lightbulb' [2nd interview] moment where theory and practice came together through trial, error, and reflection. For Layla, active experiences teaching and observing developed best practices in a way theories could not.

Layla constructs the intensive CELTA course as an essential preparation following her MA TESOL programme. The practical knowledge and skills promoted through practical teaching experience are constructed as shaping her instructional practices.

7.6 Summary

In this chapter, I provided analyses of four participants' learning experiences, which include BA programme experiences, early teaching experiences, and overseas educational experiences. It highlights the diversity in the participants' experiences and how they constructed these experiences.

The experiences of Layla, Yasmine, Rawan, and Danah in their English language BA programmes highlight the interplay between programme structure and student agency. They encountered structural limitations, including inadequate programme design and restrictive teaching practices. The lack of foundation years, misaligned course content, and demanding workloads left them feeling unsupported. Traditional teaching methods, which prioritised rote learning and limited student participation, further hindered their progress. However, these women demonstrated

significant agency in navigating these challenges. They adapted to demands, sought knowledge independently, and challenged limitations. Layla embraced improvisation in her teaching, Yasmine engaged in self-directed learning, Rawan persevered despite setbacks, and Danah defied expectations associated with her part-time status. Their experiences show how individual agency can thrive even within imperfect educational structures while underlining the need for institutional changes to create more equitable and supportive learning environments.

The early teaching experiences of Yasmine, Rawan, and Layla reveal a complex interplay between structural constraints and individual agency within the field of English language teaching. All three women encountered systemic limitations, including inadequate teacher training programmes, unrealistic workload expectations, and curriculum designs that prioritised traditional teaching methods. These structural barriers contributed to feelings of unpreparedness, self-doubt, and a reliance on self-directed learning. However, despite these challenges, each woman demonstrated agency in navigating their early teaching experiences. They exhibited resilience and adaptability, proactively seeking out resources, reflecting critically on their practices, and challenging established norms. Their narratives highlight the need for educational institutions to provide more robust support systems and training opportunities to empower novice teachers, while also showcasing the capacity for individual growth and professional development even within imperfect structures.

Yasmine's, Danah's, Rawan's, and Layla's experiences transitioning from Saudi Arabian education to Western pedagogical approaches proved challenging. They encountered constraints, such as unfamiliar teaching methods and assessment styles, which highlight how existing educational structures can present obstacles for students transitioning between pedagogical cultures. Despite these challenges, each woman demonstrated significant agency as they adapted to these new environments. Yasmine proactively switched language institutes to align with her academic goals and eventually embraced research-based learning. Danah, through her practicum, learned to balance compassion with professional judgment in assessment. Rawan's confidence grew in the supportive environment of the language institute and MA programme. Layla drew parallels between her own language learning and effective teaching methodologies. Their narratives emphasise the transformative power of

practical experience and underline the need for institutions to provide comprehensive support for international students navigating diverse pedagogical cultures.

The following chapter examines how three participants develop their teaching practices. It specifically analyses how their experiences shape their desired pedagogical approaches. The chapter explores the connections they make between their past and their teaching and considers both the limitations and opportunities their current teaching contexts present.

CHAPTER 8: NARRATIVE OF TEACHING PRACTICE

8.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the teaching practices of three participants - Yasmine, Danah, and Layla - drawing on the rich detail and contextual information they provided about their work. In doing so, it directly addresses two key research questions. First, what experiences have shaped the participants' current teaching approaches? The chapter analyses the connections participants make between their pedagogical choices and their prior experiences as learners. Second, what enabling and constraining factors affect the participants' ability to enact their desired teaching practices? The chapter examines how participants define their teaching within their current work contexts, including the factors that both support and present challenges to their pedagogical goals.

8.2 Yasmine

This extract is from Yasmine's 3rd interview. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Yasmine worked as a language instructor/lecturer at her local university before undertaking her MA in TESOL in the UK. Before starting her MA programme, Yasmine had to undertake pre-sessional English language courses to fulfil the language requirement for her MA programme. In this part of the interview, Yasmine is talking about the time when she returned to her work after finishing her master's degree.

Extract 8.2.1 (Yasmine 3rd interview)

- | | | | |
|----|---------|--|--|
| 1 | Budur | After you returned from your overseas study (.) | بدور: بعد ما رجعتي من الابتعاث ممكن تتكلمين عن |
| 2 | | could you tell me about your experience going back to work to | تجربته العودة للعمل للتدريس؟ |
| 3 | | teaching? | ياسمين: او كيه انا قبل |
| 4 | Yasmine | okay I was before | يعني بعد ما رجعت من الابتعاث و بديت ادرس |
| 5 | | I mean after I returned from abroad and started teaching | كنت مشتاقه ارجع للتدريس |
| 6 | | I was eager to go back to teaching | ابي ارجع لبيئة العمل و اصلح كل الاخطاء اللي سويتها |
| 7 | | I wanted to go back to the work environment and fix all the | قبل (ضحك) |
| 8 | | mistakes that I did before ((laughter)) | قبل انا كنت ماخذة فكره انه الاستاذ لازم يكون |
| 9 | | before I had the idea that the teacher should be like | formal يعني |
| 10 | | I mean formal | و العلاقة بين الاستاذ و الطالب لازم يكون شيء |
| 11 | | and the relationship between the student | رسمي |
| 12 | | and the teacher should be something formal | و انه فيه الرسمية الزيادة و الاحترام يعني |
| 13 | | there is more formality and respect | لاني انا اصلا طول عمري درست كذا |
| 14 | | because all my life I was taught this way | متوسط و ثانوي للجامعة كان نفس الوضع |
| 15 | | Intermediate secondary ((school)) until university it was the same | لما رحنا هناك و شفت كيف تعامل الدكتور معنا |
| 16 | | when I went there and I saw how the tutors deal with us | كيف كانت يعني العلاقة بينهم مره علاقه بسيطه |
| 17 | | how it was (.) | ما فيها ايد رسمية |
| 18 | | the relationship between them was very simple relationship | الابتسامه الدائمة |
| 19 | | there was no formality | ما تحسسين انك قاعده مع شخص غريب |
| 20 | | the usual smile | كتر ما انه هو كصديق |
| 21 | | you don't feel that you are sitting with a stranger | و طريقة المحاضرة ما هو تلقين |
| 22 | | more like a friend | |
| 23 | | and the lecturing style was not indoctrination | |

24	that that they would give a lecture (.) no	انو يلقي عليك محاضرة لا
25	it was more of (.) it includes discussion	أكثره انو يكون فيها discussion
26	the student is not passive there has to be something	الطالب مو passive لازم فيه شيء يعني
27	he/she should be active	لازم يكون active
28	he/she should participate	لازم يعني يشارك
29	he/she should give his/her opinion	لازم يعطي رأيه
30	the critical thinking was totally wiped from us	ال critical thinking كان مره عندنا ممسوح
31	we didn't have (.)	ماكان عندنا انو
32	that you have a space to say your opinion	يكون فيه مجال تقولين رأيك
33	or that you listen to students' opinions	او انك تسمعين آراء طلاب
34	or that you change a way of thinking	او انك ممكن تغيرين فكر
35	the teacher is always right	الاستاذ دايما هو على حق
36	after I returned no (.) it was different	بعد ما رجعت لا غير
37	I tried to be closer to the students	حاولت اني اكون اقرب للطلاب
38	the formal relationship (.) no	العلاقة الرسمية هاذي لا
39	it became way less almost disappeared	خفت معالي كثير
40	I was (.) I tried to be more like a friend than a teacher	اختفت تقريبا
41	I treat them like if there were my colleagues	كنت احاول اني اكون لهم زميله أكثر من اني استاذتهم
42	that they are adults	اعاملهم انهم مثل زميلات لي
43	and they know their goals when they come to the lecture	انوه هم كبار و عارفين يعني ايش هدفهم اصلا و هم
44	I don't like giving them things	جابين للمحاضرة
45	and indoctrinate them and leave, no	انا ماني جايه اعطيهم اشياء و القنهم و اطلع لا
46	I give and take with them	آخذ و اعطي معاهم
47	I tried to break the boundaries	حاولت اني اكسر الحواجز بين الاستاذ و الطالب
48	between the teacher and the students	بس.. انصدمت!! (ضحك) انو صعب مره مره صعب
49	but I was shocked ((laughter))	
50	It is difficult, really really difficult	

Yasmine here narrates a story of a change in perspective about her teaching practice. This narrative is structured into three stages. These stages were indexed by referring to time; 'before' (line 8) to refer to her previous beliefs, 'when' (line 16) to mark her experience in the SA context, and 'after' (line 36) to refer to her experience post-SA study. Unlike the previous narrative that Yasmine provided, she didn't engage in constructing other characters; instead, her narrative centres around her own beliefs/practices now against her beliefs/practices back then.

At the start of this extract (lines 3-7), Yasmine provides a narrative orientation by describing how she felt about returning to work after her SA experience. She expressed her excitement about returning to teaching. Yasmine's statement negatively evaluates her past teaching experiences by framing them as 'mistakes'.

In lines 8-12, Yasmine recounts her previous beliefs. These beliefs centre on the student-teacher distance; she describes it as '*more formality and respect*' (line 12). The description fits one aspect of the long-held teacher-centred approach in the Saudi Arabian context (A. Alshahrani, 2016), that of *power distance* between teachers and students. In this approach, the teachers maintain a formal image by keeping distance between them and the students.

In lines 13-15, Yasmine exits this narrative recap of her previous beliefs to justify why she adapted this in her teaching '*because all my life I was taught this way*' (line 13). Yasmine's rationale resonates with Lortie's notion of *apprenticeship of observation* (Lortie, 1975). Yasmine didn't refer to her BA teacher training to explain this, but she refers to '*all of her life*'; k12 education and university education.

In lines 16-25, Yasmine shifts to talk about the SA experience in '*When I went there*' (line 16). Yasmine didn't specify which part of her SA experience, either a pre-sessional English language course or MA programme, she is reflecting on, which suggests a projection of her view of the experience in general. The reflection is focused on the tutors. Yasmine didn't mention the content of the courses but rather how the tutors approached the students.

Yasmine's reflections on her SA experience clearly align with Lortie's notion of the AoO. Her focus on 'how' the tutors/lecturers taught ('I saw how' (line 16), 'how it was' (line 17)) rather than the content itself reveals a deep engagement with their pedagogical approaches. This observational focus allows her to contrast the teaching styles and classroom dynamics she encountered in the SA context with those familiar to her from her experiences as a student and instructor in Saudi Arabia. This contrast, gained through the lens of Lortie's apprenticeship, likely provides Yasmine with a broadened perspective on pedagogical practices, one that could inform and potentially transform her own teaching now that she's navigating a familiar context with fresh insights.

Further, Yasmine presents two contrasting models of teaching through indexing the words: formal versus informal (line 19), teacher as stranger versus teacher as a friend (line 22), indoctrination versus discussion (lines 23-25), and student as passive learners versus active learners (lines 26-27). Interestingly, while constructing these contrasting models, Yasmine code-switches, specifically using the English terms 'passive' and 'active' to describe student roles. This choice of language suggests that these concepts of 'passive' and 'active' learning, often central to Western pedagogical approaches, hold a particular weight or authority for Yasmine. This was indexed through the consecutive emphasis in the following lines:

Excerpt (1)

26 <i>the student is not passive</i>	الطالب هو passive
--------------------------------------	-------------------

27	<i>he/she should be active</i>	لازم يكون active
28	<i>he/she should participate</i>	لازم يعني يشارك
29	<i>he/she should give his/her opinion</i>	لازم يعطي رأيه

Yasmine's discursive construction of a strict divide between the 'traditional' and the 'new' models resembles the Emirati student teachers' responses in Clarke (2008)'s study. However, in Clarke's study, the student-teacher construction was attributed to the programme's aim: to move from the teacher-centred model in the Emirati context to the student-centred model. For Yasmine, the construction of the divide could be motivated by two possible reasons. First, it could be a result of what she learned in the MA programme that stirred her to reflect on the local model. Second, it could be triggered by the disparities between the Saudi local education and the SA context, which might helped Yasmine observe the differences. The reference to the differences might be because she experienced its influence from the student's perspective, as a language learner in the pre-sessional English language courses and as a student-teacher in the TESOL MA programme.

In line 30, Yasmine raises the issue of critical thinking. For Yasmine, the teacher-centred model didn't cultivate critical thinking for her as a student as it limited the space for expressing opinions. It also didn't equip her as a teacher to open this space for her students. Yasmine's narrative here echoes circulating educational discourse among educators in the Saudi Arabian context, which highlights the lack of critical thinking among students and the need for innovative approaches to promote this skill (Alkathiri, 2020; Almulla, 2018; Elyas & Al-Ghamdi, 2018; Omar, 2018). The discourse of critical thinking has become increasingly dominant in Saudi Arabian education, culminating in the recent establishment of Critical Thinking as a formal subject within the public school curriculum (B. Alharbi, 2022).

Yasmine, in her effort to explain the issue of critical thinking, uses the pronoun 'us' in 'wiped from us' (line 30). Yasmine's reference to 'us' here gives a sense of collectivity to the issue of the lack of critical thinking among those who were brought up in the same education system. Also, the pronoun 'us' evokes the peculiarity of the issue in the Saudi context as opposed to 'them' in the SA context. It denotes the view of SA education as promoting critical thinking and local education as obstructing /impeding it. Yasmine's construction continues with 'we' (line 31), followed by a shift

to a series of the generic 'yous'. The shift to a series of generic you might be a persuasive strategy to engage the listener into seeing it from her perspective. Also, it could have a generalizable effect; that is, this experience is not particular to her, but it extends to those who are in similar circumstances (Van De Mierop, 2021).

Excerpt (2)

31	<i>we didn't have (.)</i>	ما كان عندنا انو
32	<i>that you have a space to say your opinion</i>	يكون فيه مجال تقولين رأيك
33	<i>or that you listen to students' opinions</i>	او انك تسمعين آراء طلاب
34	<i>or that you change a way of thinking</i>	او انك ممكن تغيرين فكر
35	<i>the teacher is always right</i>	الاستاذ دايما هو على حق

In this section, Yasmine reflects on her past experiences as a student and as EFL instructor. As a student, in '*we didn't have*' (line 31) and '*you have a space to say your opinion*'. As a EFL instructor, '*you listen*' and '*you change*' (lines 33 & 34). This construction further creates a contrast between her experience and understanding before and after the SA education.

In lines 36-50, Yasemin focuses on herself. The narrative describes her efforts to apply her new beliefs to practice. These efforts respond to the earlier narrative of experience as a learner and language instructor. That is, Yasmine's efforts to '*fix the mistakes*' in her practice were informed by her own experiences as a student and as an instructor in the same context. Yasmine constructs her effort to promote critical thinking skills by mitigating the barriers between her and her students and opting for a discussion approach instead of a lecturing style.

In this section, the narrative construction shifts from explaining her past experience to her actions now as a language instructor/lecturer at the university. Yasmine's agentic efforts to apply her new beliefs are indexed in a series of action verbs (I tried) illustrated in excerpt 8.2.3:

Excerpt (3)

37	<i>I tried to be closer to the students</i>	حاولت اني اكون اقرب للطلاب
40	<i>I tried to be more like a friend than a teacher</i>	كنت احاول اني اكون لهم زميله اكثر من اني استاذتهم
47	<i>I tried to break the boundaries</i>	حاولت اني اكسر الحواجز
49	<i>but I was shocked ((laughter))</i>	بس انصدمت
50	<i>It is difficult, really really difficult</i>	انو صعب مره مره صعب

Yasmine's efforts seem to focus on alleviating the authoritative power of the teacher and building a closer relationship with the students. The repetition of '*I tried*' (lines 37/40/47) imply that she didn't succeed then was followed by the repetition of '*really really*' (line 50) to stress the difficulty of applying her new beliefs in practice.

In summary, the local context, throughout Yasmine's learning and teaching career, had one dominant model of teaching, i.e. teacher-centred model. Thus, it was logical for her to inhabit this kind of model in her early career. However, during her SA experience, the pre-sessional language courses and the MA programme, Yasmine was exposed to a different teaching model, which is at the other end of the spectrum from what she knew and practised. Experiencing the positive influence of this model on her as a student in the SA context enabled her to embrace it in the local context, despite the difficulties.

The shift in roles from a teacher in the local context to a student in the SA context seem to have brought about a change in Yasmine's teaching beliefs. Wernicke (2010) remarks that students in SA focus on content knowledge, while teachers engage with SA experience 'with the view of later transforming this into learning opportunities for their students' (Wernicke, 2010, p. 14). The same could be the case for Yasmine. Yasmine was an English language instructor at her local university before her SA sojourn. This shift in roles from being a language instructor to a language learner triggered reflection on her practice in the local context. As seen in this narrative, Yasmine's observation moved beyond the content of the SA course to compare the delivery of the courses against her own experience. Similar to Yasmine's reflections are the participants' reflections in Dressler and Kawalilak (2022)'s study. Although the conditions of this study differ in contexts, the participants, Andrea and Matthew, who undertook a language course, reflected 'upon strategies that they observed, resources that they encountered, and the disposition of teachers' (Dressler & Kawalilak, 2022, p. 106).

While Yasmine projects a strong orientation toward a student-centred approach, the last section of the narrative suggests difficulties in applying them in practice. The following extract is a continuous part of the narrative in which she explains the sources of the challenges in her local university.

Extract 8.2.2 (Yasmine 3rd interview)

1	Budur	How is it difficult?	أ: كيف صعب يعني ؟
2	Yasmine	It is difficult because of students' acceptance	ب: صعب من تقبل الطالبات
3		yeah true we try to change the traditional teaching	يعني صحيح انا نحاول نغير ال traditional
4		but still, the student has this idea	teaching
5		'no I will remain passive all the time'	بس لازال الطالب عنده فكره انه "لا انا اظل passive
6		before (.) almost two weeks ago	طول الوقت "
7		I had a Reading class	يعني قبل الى قبل اسبوعين تقريبا
8		the student is supposed to speak, explain and answer all the time	كان عندي كلاس reading يعني المفروض
9		there was no interaction	هو الطالب يتكلم طول الوقت و يشرح و يجاوب
10		half of the time passed while I was trying to pull words from them	ماكان فيه اي تفاعل
11		I give them time to discuss between them	يعني تروح نص المحاضرة على ابي اسمع الكلام منهم
12		to solve questions together	معهم
13		no (.) everyone is working alone	اعطيتهم وقت انهم يتناقشون بينهم
14		and if she talks to the one beside her	يحاولون يحلون اسئله مع بعض ما فيه
15		she would speak off-topic	كل وحده لخالها
16		we don't have group work	و اذا صارت تتكلم مع اللي جنبها تتكلم برى الموضوع
17		and these things still (.)	يعني ما عندنا حنا ال group work
18		we don't have it	و الاشياء هاذي للحين مو موجوده عندنا

This short narrative extract is generated in response to my inquiry into her closing line in the previous extract. Yasmine addressed the question and responded, '*It is difficult because of students' acceptance*' (line 2). Her response foregrounds the students as the main challenge influencing her current teaching practice.

In lines 3-4, Yasmine's statement '*yeah true*' (line 3) constitutes the move from traditional teaching to the student-centred approach as the normal course of action. The constitution of the move could be a result of educational discourses that permeate all levels of education and call for a change to improve the education status quo. Further, Yasmine's usage of the pronoun '*we*' in '*we try to change*' (line 3) could be expanding the effort to change beyond the interlocutor to include all teachers in the context who are assumed to embrace the shift from the traditional teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach at a theoretical level. This was followed by '*but*' (line 4) to negate the possibility of it at the practice level because of students' acceptance. Yasmine uses constructed dialogue '*no I will remain passive all the time*' (line 5) to project her interpretation of students' resistance to participate in the class activities. This framing constructs students' resistance as a hindrance in attaining her intended teaching practice.

To illustrate her point, Yasmine narrates a recent instance in one Reading class that she is teaching. The reference to the time '*two weeks ago*' (line 6) at the start of her narrative might give more credibility to her account since it's closer to her status at the time of the interview. It also moves her account from generalities to specifics. Yasmine sets the expectations for this class, in which the students are

expected to 'speak, explain and answer all the time' (line 8). However, the students were not responsive despite her efforts to give them time.

Yasmine wraps up this narrative with a repetition of 'we don't have' (lines 17 & 18). The first refers to group work activities, and the second refers to all classroom activities requiring student engagement/interaction. Yasmine's usage of the pronoun 'we' here might refer to her local university context. For Yasmine, the activities that require students to be active in the classroom, such as group work, are not common in the local context; therefore, the students will not respond to her efforts because it is out of their role expectations, i.e. 'passive' role.

The following extract is about Yasmine's defining the spaces where she can apply her desired teaching practice within her local university context. The extract is generated by my inquiry on the level of the students she is teaching at the time of the interview. As mentioned earlier, Yasmine is a lecturer in the English Language department. In addition to teaching English major students, Yasmine teaches general English courses for preparatory year students (pre-major first-year students) and English as an elective course for students in other departments.

Extract 8.2.3 (Yasmine - 3rd interview)

1	Budur	Are these major students or general courses students?	بدور: هنولا طالبات التخصص و لا طالبات المواد العامة؟
2	Yasmine	For the major student I (.) see	ياسمين: التخصص انا شوفي
3		I focus more on major students	انا اركز مع التخصص أكثر من تركيزي مع طالباتي في مواد
4		more than the general courses ones	الاعداد العام
5		of course the main focus is the major students	طبعا الهدف الاساسي مواد التخصص يعني
6		not that I want to be done with this course	مو عشاني اخلص مثلا من المادة هاذي
7		((referring to elective/general courses))	اعدادهم اقل و اقدر اسوي معهم
8		their numbers are less and I can do	يعني يصير فيه شويه control في الكلاس
9		I mean there is more control in the class	يعني اقدر اتحكم بالوقت و اعطي كل شيء انا مخططة له
10		I can control the time	حقه بس مواد الاعداد العام
11		and I give everything that I planned to do	الاعداد كبيره و اصلا البنات ما عندهم قابليه للانجليزي ما
12		but for the general English courses their numbers are larger	يحيون
13		and the girls they don't like English	ف انتي تتكلمين معهم بشيء هم اصلا كارهينه
14		you are talking to them in something that they dislike	يفرض عليهم اشياء و هم مو متقبلين المادة احسن بتعب كثير
15		would I impose things on them and they don't like the subject?	احاول اتي.. تعاملني مع الكل نفسه تخصص و الثاني
16		I feel that it would be very exhausting	احاول اتي اكون مبتسمه معهم دائما
17		I try (.) I try to deal with the major and the elective the same	ما احسنهم اتي انا جايه بعطيك محاضرة و اطلع
18		I try to smile always	انو friendly بطريقة أكثر من انو formal و كنا
19		I don't make them feel that	موجوده مع الكل
20		'I'm going to give you a lecture and leave'	بس اتي احاول اطبق استراتيجيات في التدريس انو
21		to be more friendly than formal and the like	ال group work و ال discussion و الاشياء هاذي
22		I'm there for everyone	اقدر اطبقها في التخصص لانه عندهم اللغة اتي اكلم انا و
23		but to apply the teaching strategies	وياهم المشكله في الطالبات من الاجتهاد العامه
24		the group work and discussion and the like	طالبات تخصصهم اسلامي و تخصصهم عربي
25		I do that with the major students	و هم اساسا ضعيفات بالانجليزي
26		because they have the linguistic competence to discuss	يعني بسوي معهم discussion بالانجليزي يعني هذا
27		the problem in the elective courses' students	مستحيل (ضحك)
28		those who are majored in Islamic studies and Arabic	اي تقبل او اي استجابه
29		their English is weak	فالاشياء هذي انا احاول اقيس على مستوى طالباتي
30		to do a discussion with them in English is impossible ((laughter))	

31	it is through the acceptance and the response	يمكن ادرس مواد اعداد عام يكون تخصصهم مثلا
32	these things I measure on the students' level	اذا جنك البنت تخصصها مثلا هندسه
33	for example when I teach an elective course	هي already عندها انجليزي كويس
34	for a girl who is majored in Engineering for example	ف انا اتخصص على حسب مستوى طالباني
35	she already has a good English	اذا هي مستواها كويس
36	if she has a good level	احاول اعطي الشيء اللي يناسب مستواها
37	I would give her what is suitable for her level	اذا هي مستواها ضعيف احاول انزل للمستوى اللي هي
38	If her level is low I try to lower it to her level	فيه
39	and I give to the level of her ability	و اعطيها على قد اللي تقدر عليه

In extract 8.2.3, Yasmine narrates the factors that influence her decisions in her teaching practice. These factors could be classified into two interrelated factors: socio-cultural and situational factors. The socio-cultural factor is the students' acceptance/resistance to activities that require them to move from 'passive' to 'active' learners. This could be the case for the general English courses and English as an elective course for students from other majors. These students take all other courses in a traditional/lecture style. Yasmine attributes the students' resistance to her efforts to the status of English language courses to non-major students. She says '*they consider it an intruding course to their major*' [Yasmine - 1st interview]. It is an additional course to fulfil the requirement of their degree, therefore, demanding the students to engage in unaccustomed activities is regarded as *imposing* (line 15). Further, any attempts on her part would be '*exhausting*' (line 16) since the students would resist due to their low regard for the English language courses compared to their major courses.

The factors are the class size, time constraints, and students' English language proficiency, which are associated with the type of courses she teaches. That is, in general, in English courses and elective courses, the class sizes are larger than for major students and thus uncontrollable. This was earlier emphasized in Yasmine's first interview '*the larger the class size the more I'm restricted in resources* كلما زاد عدد الطالبات كلما قلت الوسائل لي' [Yasmine - 1st interview]. The time constraints limit the space for conducting teaching activities that the students are unfamiliar with. This is especially the case since Yasmine has already experienced resistance to these activities, as exemplified in the reading class (extract 8.2.2). She expressed earlier that for general course students, she meets each section twice a week for four hours in total. This puts her under pressure to follow the syllabus timeline, and any new attempts to innovate in the classes would risk not meeting the course deadlines.

The students' resistance is further supported by existing structures and expectations. The following is an example from Yasmine 4th interview in which she explains this:

Extract 8.2.4 (Yasmine - 4th interview)

1	Yasmine	I mean you try	يعني تحاولين تجهدين
2		you work hard	و تقطعين نفسك عشان شيء
3		and you pull all of your efforts for something	يا انه يقابلوك البنات بالرفض بانه ما بيون شيء جديد عليهم
4		then either the girls would resist	يا انه يقابلونك بشكوى لو انتي قلتي لهم الاختبار مثلا راح يكون
5		they don't want anything they are unfamiliar with	خارجي
6		or they'll raise a complaint	Reading و لا Writing
7		if, for example, you said the exam is external	الطبيعي انه ما تجيبين لهم شيء من داخل الكتاب
8		Writing and Reading	فكانت فيه مجموعة من البنات
9		naturally you wouldn't bring something from the book	على طول تشتكي للوكيلة
10		there were this group of girls	و الوكيلة ترفع بك خطاب
11		they would directly complain to the vice dean	و 'لا ارجعي حظي لهم كتاب حظي لهم منهج'
12		and the vice dean would raise a letter	فيه فيه اشياء تقيدك
13		Or she would say 'go back, give them something from	
14		the book'	
15		there are there are things that restrict you	

At the start of the extract, Yasmine projects her frustration with responses that she receives on her effort to improve '*I mean you try / you work hard / and you pull all of your efforts*' (lines 1-3). This is constructed through the repetition of the generic '*you*' which could serve interactional function of implicating the listener in problem that she is talking about. Furthermore, the consecutive use of the pronoun '*you*' evokes a 'shared epistemic space' with the listener (Heritage, 2012). By highlighting her relentless effort, she subtly seeks to build empathy and establish an '*us versus them*' dynamic that underscores her subsequent frustrations.

In this extract, the existing structure, exemplified in the vice dean's response to students' complaints, does not support Yasmine's attempts for change. The change that Yasmine attempted was not a drastic change; to the contrary, it was part of teaching language skills, i.e., writing and reading. However, the students are used to memorization. Yasmine's decision to bring the exam from external materials other than the assigned course book is strongly resisted by the students. The students' resistance is further supported by the university authority, in this narrative, the vice dean.

The construction of the vice dean in a constructed dialogue, '*go back, give them something from the book*' (line 13) heightened the authority of the vice dean over Yasmine and overrides the decisions she made in her courses. This was followed by a repetition of '*there are there are* فيه فيه' to imply further situations similar

to her example that restrict Yasmine's decisions over her courses. In the second interview, Yasmine mentioned a similar situation that happened to her colleague when she attempted to bring a new material to the course. The colleague was given a warning letter from the administration due to students' complaint.

Another reflected factor (extract 8.2.3: lines 28-30) is the disparities in students' language proficiency across different courses. For Yasmine, these disparities dictate the type of activities she can implement in her classes. The discussion is not a possible activity with students of low English language proficiency. The students with low English language proficiency are typically non-major students.

On a general level, Yasmine maintains her beliefs regarding the student-teacher relationship with all of her students: to be friendly and smile. This is constructed to maintain a caring teacher attitude. Yasmine describes her teaching practice as responsive to the situation. That is, Yasmine defines her approach as evaluating students' *'acceptance and the response'* (line 31) and *'students' level'* (line 32).

8.2.6 Summary

This analysis examines Yasmine's narrative of teaching practice, focusing on how she constructs her past educational experiences in relation to her current role as an EFL instructor at her local university. Yasmine draws a clear contrast between her early experiences as a student and EFL instructor in Saudi Arabia and her subsequent experiences as a language learner and MA student in the SA context. She positions the SA context as a transformative period, one that led her to embrace a more student-centred approach to teaching in contrast to the traditional teacher-centred methods prevalent in her prior experience.

This shift in belief, sparked by her SA experiences, is evident in Yasmine's emphasis on reconsidering the teacher-student relationship, advocating for more active student roles, and prioritising the cultivation of critical thinking skills. These pedagogical values are rooted in her own reflections on her experiences as a student in Saudi Arabia and solidified through her exposure to different approaches in the SA context.

Despite her strong convictions about student-centred pedagogy, Yasmine expresses difficulties in consistently applying these beliefs in her current teaching practice. She identifies a confluence of socio-cultural, situational, and institutional factors that constrain her ability to fully implement her desired approach. This tension between belief and practice highlights the complexities of navigating pedagogical change within a specific educational context.

Unlike other participants in this study, Yasmine works in a university setting where the English language programme faculty teach a wide range of students and courses, from academic English for majors to general English for preparatory year students and electives for non-majors. This lack of departmental division, combined with the demands of teaching students with diverse English proficiency levels and class sizes, necessitates constant adaptation in her teaching methods.

Yasmine's narratives are imbued with a sense of injustice and discouragement, stemming from a perceived disconnect between her university's expectations and the support provided for meaningful change. Having been encouraged to pursue further education in the SA context with the expectation that she would contribute to improving educational quality, Yasmine feels frustrated by the institutional barriers she encounters. This frustration is compounded by the broader societal discourse in Saudi Arabia, which emphasises educational reform and positions graduates of international programmes, like Yasmine, as agents of change. However, Yasmine finds that the existing structures within her university act as a constraining force, limiting her ability to implement the pedagogical approaches she values.

8.3 Danah

The following narrative is from Danah's 1st interview. The focus was on her BA experience. I asked her about the teaching practicum in her BA studies which generated a lengthy narrative, of which the following extract is a part. Danah is now working at a large university in the western part of Saudi Arabia. She is a language instructor in the university English language institute, which provides English language courses for preparatory year students.

Extract 8.3.1 (Danah 1st interview)

1	Danah	our education period	فترة التعلم حقنا
2		I mean (.) for example when I graduated	يعني انا لما اتخرجت مثلا اربع سنين درستها هنا
3		the four years that I studied here	اللي هو في ال bachelor
4		I mean my bachelor's degree	سنه رحت لها السنه في امريكا حسبها مختلفه تماما
5		the year that I went to the US I felt it was totally different	حسيت انو كل اللي درستو ماله علاقه باللي رجعت درستة
6		I felt that all what I've studied before had nothing to do with the	السنه هذي في الولايات المتحدة مختلف تمام
7		years I've studied in US	لا في المحتوى لا في طريقة ال delivery لا فيه طريقة التقييم
8		totally different	لا في مستواي انا شخصيا عرفت
9		different in the content, the delivery, the assessment	لانه انا في مستواي شخصيا كان الموضوع ضغط ضغط ضغط
10		even at a personal level, you know	الحين عندي اختبار بالمعون و اختبا انا لازم جيب الامي
11		Because I, personally	هاذي
12		it was more of a pressure pressure pressure ((referring to her BA	و اروح عند الدكتور الفلانيه
13		studies))	و اروح عند المكان الفلاني
14		'now I have an exam I have to achieve an A'	لكن انا ايش استغدت
15		and I would go to this lecturer and that place	انا شلون حللت
16		but what did I gain?	انا سويت reflection و لا لا
17		how I analyzed?	انا كتبت ال paper
18		did I do reflection or not?	حطيت رأي و لا ؟
19		I wrote the paper	انا بحثت و لا لا ؟
20		did I add an opinion or not?	نفس الوقت كنت قاعده حاول انه يكون for my
21		did I search or not?	students
22		At the same time I'm trying for my students	انا تجربتي نفسها تكون تجربه مفيدة للطلاب نفسها
23		that my experience would be beneficial for the students	و عشان كذا مو مدحا في نفسي
24		and for that (.) not to praise myself	انا احس كلاساتي كلها مختلفه
25		but I feel my classes are different	البنات احسهم يحسون براحه أكبر
26		the girls, I feel, they feel more comfortable	يعني انا ما ادقق على التفاصيل يعني تبين تجلسين بعبايتك
27		I mean, I don't pick on details like	اجلسي تبين تنزلين عباتك نزلها
28		'if you want to sit wearing your Abaya fine,	يعني مو انا I don't care
29		if you want to take off take it off'	اهمشكي و لا اهمش نفسيك
30		I mean it is not that	و لكن تجلسين براحتك
31		'I don't care I would disregard you and disregard your feelings	فالبنات فعلا يجلسون براحتهم
32		but you sit with comfort'	بالنسبة لاستخدامهم مثلا الجوالا
33		the girls really sit with comfort	اخليهم يستخدمون التليفون لكن بطريقة تحمسهم
34		for using for example cell phones	مثلا احيانا نلعب كاهوت و لا تابلت
35		I would let them use it but in an exciting way	و لا نسوي هاشتاق على تويتر و كلهم يشاركون
36		for example (.) sometimes we play Kahoot or Tablet	ما خليت شعور انا في محاضرة وانا لازم اقلل تلفوني
37		or we would make a hashtag on Twitter	فخليته بطبيعة الحال
38		and all of them participate	زي ما احنا في امريكا
39		I didn't leave a feeling of	ف فعلا حسيت الاشياء التفاصيل هاذي فرقت مع البنات
40		'oh I'm in a lecture and I have to turn off my cell phone'	
41		I left it as it is (.) like we were in the US	
42		really I felt these things	
43		these details made a difference with the girls	

*((text)) transcriber comments

This narrative extract is broadly divided into two parts; Danah's BA experience implicated with SA experience and reflections on her teaching practice. More precisely, this narrative construction highlights the perceived links between Danah's early experiences as a student and how she now draws on these experiences in her teaching practice.

At the start of the narrative, Danah refers to her BA education as '*our education period*' (line 1). Like Yasmine, Danah used the pronoun '*our*' to refer to her early education, more precisely, her BA education. Her description reflects the reality of the status of education in Saudi Arabia at that time. Further, this reality is construed as a

collective in the sense that she directly refers to me due to her knowledge of my background from an earlier conversation. This direct reference highlights a key feature of 'acquaintance interviews' (Garton & Copland, 2010), demonstrating the participant's confidence in my ability to recognize the context. Further, it assumes that all BA students in this context shared similar experiences at the time of their BA study. The reference to '*our*' implies a difference from the '*theirs*', which might refer to the current status of students in the local context. It generates a contrast between the old and the new education in terms of students' experience.

In lines 2-10, Danah narrates her BA experience to explain the difference between this and her SA experience in the US. The emphasis on the difference is repeated three times (lines 6 & 9 & 10). Danah frames these differences to the '*content, the delivery, the assessment even at a personal level*' (lines 10-11).

In lines 14-21, Danah's construction of her BA experience projects contrasts between her BA study and her SA experience. She evaluates her BA experience as '*pressure*' (line 12). The pressure was as a result of her focus on attaining high scores. To illustrate her perspective, Danah consecutively constructs two discursive strategies. First, the repetition of the word '*pressure*' augments the intensity of the experience. The second is the construction of internal constructed dialogue in '*now I have an exam I have to achieve an A*' (line 14) to elaborate on the experience by engaging the listener to view the experience at that time from her perspective. These constructions were followed by her efforts to attain high scores through '*and I would go to this lecturer and that place*' (line 15). The use of the pronouns of '*this*' and '*that*' with no specific references imbues a sense of the constancy of her focus throughout her BA studies.

The implied contrast between her experiences is evident in lines (17-22) when Danah interjects her narrative about her BA experience with a series of rhetorical questions to herself.

Excerpt (1)

17	how I analysed?	انا شلون حللت
18	did I do reflection or not?	انا سويت reflection ولا لا
19	I wrote the paper	انا كتبت ال paper
20	did I add an opinion or not?	حطيت رأي ولا ؟
21	did I research or not?	انا بحثت ولا لا ؟

The constructed questions offer an implicit critique of her BA experience, suggesting that her focus on high grades may have limited her deeper learning. However, they simultaneously frame her SA experience positively, which she explicitly connects to her current teaching practice (line 41). This phrasing could reveal her teaching philosophy, which emphasizes student analysis, reflection, opinion formation, and research. This is underlined in the line *'my experience would be beneficial for the students'* (line 23).

In lines 22-43, Danah explains how her previous experiences are brought to her practice. Danah projects her classes as *'different'* from other instructors. The difference is built around classroom management. The construction of her classroom rules is based on unspoken classroom rules in the Saudi context. The first rule is that students should take off their *'Abaya'* (a long loose garment) in the classrooms. The *Abaya* is typically worn in gender-mixed spaces such as streets, malls, hospitals etc. University campuses are female-only spaces; therefore, it is expected that students take off their *Abaya* within female-only spaces. This expectation extends to instructors' own guidelines in which they ask students to take it off inside the classroom. Danah establishes her difference from other instructors in not adhering to the expectations and leaving it to the students to decide. This was emphasized by a constructed dialogue of herself *'if you want to sit wearing your Abaya fine, if you want to take off take it off'* (lines 28-29), which contributes to the construction of her as different from the other instructors. Danah immediately follows her description of a relaxed classroom atmosphere with a constructed dialogue: *'I mean it is not that I don't care I would disregard you and disregard your feelings but you sit with comfort'* (lines 30-32). This seemingly contradictory statement highlights her attempt at impression management. By explicitly stating, *'it is not that I don't care,'* she directly refutes a potential interpretation of her approach as neglecting student needs. Instead, she positions her emphasis on comfort ('you sit with comfort') as entirely compatible with, even driven by, her care for their well-being and learning experience.

The second assumption about classroom rules is that students are not allowed to use their cell phones in the classroom. Danah presented her approach to using cell phones as a means of innovation and integrating technology in her classes. In line

(4), Danah uses constructed dialogue, '*oh I'm in a lecture and I have to turn off my cell phone*' to project her interpretation of the students' perspective on using cell phones in their classes. This rhetorical device enables her to frame her approach as correct and projects an understanding of students' feelings towards classroom rules.

Danah positions herself as someone who challenges traditional classroom rules, prioritizing student comfort as a means to foster motivation and engagement. She believes that this approach, leading to a more relaxed and '*exciting*' (line 35) environment where '*all of them participate*' (line 38), ultimately creates a more positive classroom atmosphere in her view.

In lines 41-43, Danah professes that her approach is similar to what she experienced in her SA studies in the US '*like we were in the US*'. Her reference of '*we*' here might be due to her knowledge of my experience in the US. It also presumes the commonality of experiences with those who study abroad. That is, all SA graduates experienced similar classroom 'comfort' in their abroad studies. It also frames it as a common-sense way of managing the classroom since '*we*' experience it as students in the SA context.

The following extract is from Danah's fourth interview. It is important to note that throughout the interviews, Danah evaluates her classroom practice as free from problems. Her work context and teaching practice were constructed in a positive light. In response, I posed a question about the system in the university in regard to English language teaching, which generated a lengthy extract.

Extract 8.3.2 (Danah 4th interview)

1	Danah	We have two levels one and two	احنا عندنا ليفيلين one و two
2		It is unified ((referring to the exams))	ف It is unified
3		which is confusing as well	Which is كانه يخلبك مختاره
4		are all the instructors are doing what we need to do	هل all the instructors are doing what we need to do
5		covering all the SLOs?	do
6		because even the questions it is not us who write them	do
7		the men section do	covering all the SLOs و
8		there is one main instructor in charge of the assessment	لانه حتى الاستاذ مو احنا اللي نخطها
9		he is the one who write the exams	الاولاد هم اللي يخطونها
10		so you don't write them	و استاذ مسؤول في ال assessment هو اللي يخطها
11		and you don't know about the others	ف انت لم تخطها و ما تدري عن المجموعة اللي قدمت هذا الشيء
12		those who are teaching the same course	و ما تدري عن كيف تقدمت و كيف هذا
13		you don't know how they progressed and so on	و كل واحد بتجيب worksheet من عندها
14		each one would bring their own worksheet	و كل وحده بتجيب exercise من عندها
15		each one would bring their own exercise	و كل وحده بتوريهم فيلم و كل وحده بتوريهم كذا
16		each one would show them a movie	It is hard for the students
17		each one would do this and that	
18		it is hard for the students	
19		it is not fair	

*SLOs: Student Learning Objectives

In this part, Danah talks about the unified exams across all sections of English language courses. These sections are levels one and two, which means that the students are pre-major preparatory year students. Danah is criticizing the unified exam system in her university. This starts with the question, '*are all the instructors are doing what we need to do covering all the SLOs?*' (lines 4-5). Danah explained earlier in the interview that the system is guided by SLOs (Student Learning Objectives), which means that instructors have freedom in the courses as long as they cover the SLO guidelines. The question here is intended to cast doubt on the possibility that teachers are covering similar aspects in their classes. It further projects Danah's disagreement with this system. In lines 6-9, Danah's statement, '*it is not us who writes them*' (line 6) highlights her distance from the decision-making process around student assessment, suggesting a sense of frustration.

In lines 10-13, Danah summarises the issue of unified exams. The problem is distance from the decision-making process in the contents of the exams and the ambiguity of the other instructors' practice and progress. In her effort to explain this, Danah constructs a rhythmic pattern that starts with generic '*you*' as in '*you don't write*' (lines 10) '*you don't know*' (line 11) and '*you don't know*' (line 13). The framing of the statement with generic '*you*' might create 'shared epistemic space' in which speaker and listener have a common understanding of a situation (Heritage, 2012). Danah further explains the ambiguity about other instructors' teaching activities and progress in rhythmic patterns to amplify this issue. Danah's construction of the influence of the unified exams on the education process is projected from the perspective of the students. That is, she did not mention how this system influenced her teaching practice, nor does she reflect on making efforts to work against this system. The focus on students' perspectives might also contribute to projecting a caring teacher attitude by placing the students at the centre of the educational process.

8.3.3 Summary

Danah constructs her teaching practice by drawing on her experience of studying abroad in the US. She aims to create a classroom environment that resembles the 'comfort' she experienced during her time abroad, believing that this

leads to better student motivation and engagement. Danah presents herself as different from other instructors by subverting traditional classroom rules, such as not requiring students to remove their Abaya or allowing cell phone use in class. Her teaching philosophy emphasizes student-centred learning, which focuses on promoting analysis, reflection, opinion formation, and research.

Throughout the narrative extracts, Danah projects a caring teacher attitude, considering her students' feelings and perspectives in her approach to classroom management. However, she also expresses frustration with the unified exam system in her university, as she feels disconnected from the decision-making process regarding exam content and highlights the ambiguity surrounding other instructors' teaching activities and progress. In general, Danah's construction of her teaching practice is influenced by her study abroad experience, which she uses to create an engaging and comfortable learning environment, even though within the constraints of the institutional system.

8.4 Layla

As stated in Chapter 4, Layla has a BA in English language and literature and an MA in TESOL from the UK, where she also undertook a CELTA course. Layla is now working as an EFL instructor at a large university in the western part of Saudi Arabia. Similar to Danah, Layla's university is a well-established urban university. The university has an English language institute that provides foundation English language courses for university programmes such as Medicine and Engineering. In this extract, Layla reflects on what she learned from her educational experiences. More precisely, she is reflecting on the influence of the SA experience on her teaching practice. The extract is generated by my direct inquiry about her experiences and teaching practice now.

Extract 8.4.1 (Layla 2nd interview)

- | | | |
|----|-------|--|
| 1 | Budur | Is there anything that you took from your educational experiences to your practice |
| 2 | | now? |
| 3 | Layla | let me tell you something |
| 4 | | my BA was the longest |
| 5 | | and four years but I didn't learn as I learned from my MA to be honest |
| 6 | | Maybe because I was young |
| 7 | | or I didn't focus on my studies that much |
| 8 | | I honestly don't know what's the problem |
| 9 | | but I learned from my master |
| 10 | | and I'm applying some of the teaching methods |
| 11 | | some of them were part of the theories we studied |
| 12 | | others were my teachers' attitudes in the classroom |

13 kind of affected me
 14 also I liked the British kind of teaching style
 15 they don't use a lot of technology
 16 they give you the information
 17 and you understand everything only with papers
 18 if I, one day, I went to the class
 19 and my computer or the projector broke
 20 and it didn't work
 21 I'm going to be stuck without anything to be used
 22 but they taught me if the computer broke
 23 you can deliver your class successfully
 24 and it could be even more fun
 25 with worksheets
 26 with games
 27 with changing the chairs
 28 Many many other ideas
 29 and I like this thing about them
 30 but the course that I learned from the most were Turkish and Spanish language
 31 because actually there was language learning
 32 because the same methods
 33 and the same teaching style now I'm using with my students
 34 because they were teaching me a language
 35 and now I'm teaching my students a language
 36 at the end it is the same thing

The start of Layla's narrative was framed as a contrast between her BA experience and MA experience abroad. The comparison could be due to my question format, which triggered the construction of educational experiences in comparison. Layla focuses on highlighting the contrast between SA and BA, with SA having a much stronger influence. Like Yasmine and Danah, the BA experience is presented as not contributing to her practice. However, the rationale for not benefiting from it differs. For Layla, it was attributed not to the BA education itself but to other possible reasons, such as being young and not focusing on her studies. The focus of her narrative then shifted to explain what she learned from her MA studies.

In lines 9-13, Layla recalls what she learned from her MA studies. The learning emerges as a result of MA programme's content in '*teaching methods*' (line 10) / '*theories*' (line 11) and her observation of the programme's instructors in '*my teachers' attitudes*' (line 12). The reference to teachers' attitudes is connected to how these attitudes influenced her as a student '*kind of affected me*' (line 13). Layla's reference to the teacher's attitude is similar to Yasmine's observation. The contrasting differences between her experiences as a student in the local context might trigger the observation of the unfamiliar in the SA context. This observation is greater when EFL instructors shift to students in the SA context.

In lines 14-17, Layla provides an example of what she learned from the SA experience. She explains her preference for what she referred to as the '*British*

teaching style' (line 14), which is constructed as not relying on technology. Here, Layla's narrative construction is responding indirectly to circulating discourses in the Saudi context around the need to integrate technology in education. This is clear throughout the participants' narratives. For example, in Yasmine's narrative (extract 5: line 7), she discusses integrating technology as part of her teaching duties of preparation and innovation. Another example from Danah's narrative (extract 3; lines 34-37) is about students' use of cell phones in the classroom as an '*exciting*' way of teaching. In this extract, Layla is subverting these discourses by foregrounding her preference for the 'British' way as opposed to the 'Saudi' way of teaching. This is evident in the following lines:

Excerpt (1)

18	if I, one day, I went to the class
19	and my computer or the projector broke
20	and it didn't work
21	I'm going to be stuck without anything to be used

Here Layla interrupts her own narrative with a possible scenario to illustrate her point. The example problematizes the idea of over-reliance on technology in teaching. The shift to providing examples and the construction of this shift with '*if*' statement might be a way to persuade the listener of the rationality of her perspective.

In lines 24 - 29, Layla's alignment with the British teaching approach is emphasized when she adds, '*it could be even more fun*' (line 24). This starts a persuasive account that responds to the assumption that technology in the classroom is fun for students. This was followed by explaining how it could be fun to construct a list (excerpt 8.4.2). The repetition of the words '*with, many*' in the list creates a rhythmic effect which implies, contrary to expectations, that the list is long (Tannen, 2007).

Excerpt (2)

25	with worksheets
26	with games
27	with changing the chairs
28	many many other ideas

Layla construction in this section establishes her knowledge of various teaching activities that she learned from her SA experience. The persuasive account of the value of this approach illustrates her teaching belief, which is presented as a counter-discourse to technology integration in teaching practice in the Saudi context.

In lines 29-36, Layla shift to explains the course that she benefited the most from her MA studies. As part of her master's programme, Layla had to enrol in a course to learn languages other than English and reflect on her experience learning these languages. Layla enrolled in Turkish and Spanish courses. In this part of the extract, Layla draws a link between her experience as a language learner in the MA programme and her teaching practice now. She relates the idea that her being a language learner enabled her to adapt what she learnt in her teaching practice now. The reflection is based on her observing the '*methods*' and '*teaching style*' (line 32). Although it differs in narrative construction, Layla's observation is similar to Yasmine's (extract 1) observation of the instructors in the pre-sessional English and MA programmes. This reflection might result from a shift from the role of an EFL instructor in the local context to that of a language learner in the SA context. This shift might trigger noticing beyond the course content to include how the courses are delivered, which is evident across the participants' narrative.

In the following extract 8.4.2, Layla is reflecting on her teaching practice at her university. It is important to mention that Layla works at the same institution as Danah. This extract projects a different perspective on the same structure.

Extract 8.4.2 (Layla 3rd interview)

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1 | Budur | Do you recall taking anything from your master studies to your current teaching practice? |
| 2 | Layla | well actually I was shocked that during my master |
| 3 | | it was different from the way it was going on in my university |
| 4 | | because we had many theories that the university kind of didn't have time to hear |
| 5 | | they said that we appreciate all the knowledge that you have |
| 6 | | that's why we are giving you a symposium at the end of each year |
| 7 | | you can present your paper |
| 8 | | you can do a workshop |
| 9 | | even during teaching |
| 10 | | you can do a workshop if you have the knowledge |
| 11 | | a certificate that you can do for other colleague |
| 12 | | but when it comes to teaching (.) |
| 13 | | actually my masters didn't help me much |
| 14 | | not because the masters wasn't as good |
| 15 | | but because we had kind of fixed system |
| 16 | | maybe at the beginning of modules |
| 17 | | I used to do worksheets and games and stuff |
| 18 | | but I felt so depressed |
| 19 | | so it was kind of depressing for me as a teacher |

20 to do only worksheets and games in the class
 21 because everything is fixed
 22 I know my student
 23 I know their level of learning
 24 I know their needs
 25 However I couldn't help them
 26 I just explain the curriculum three times four times until they get the idea
 27 so mainly I know the way it's going in the university
 28 so I used to take the grammar rules
 29 explain it to the students
 30 you know when we go to a private tutor how she explains the lessons
 31 it seems so traditional
 32 and you feel it is not a modern way
 33 and on the long run it will not benefit the students
 34 this is the way it was going
 35 I mean the girls were keen to get A+
 36 so that they can go to Medicine or Law school
 37 I helped them that way

In the previous extract, Layla made links between what she learned from her educational experiences, more precisely, the SA context. In this extract, Layla narrates her expectations after she finished her MA and the reality in her working context. The construction of this narrative could be divided into two ideas: first, the exclusion from the educational decisions and second, the influence of this system on her teaching practice.

In line 2-12, Layla expresses her shock when she returned to work. The 'shock' implies an expectation that Layla had prior to commencing work. This expectation is that since she has the knowledge in the form of an academic degree, her voice will have value in the decision-making process. However, when she returned, her expectations were not met. Layla's explains that she and other EFL instructors implicated in 'we' (line 3) had suggestions '*theories*' that were not welcomed by the administration. Layla presents the administration's response in the form of a dialogue which might be a way to summarize their perspectives on the spaces in which instructors can voice their suggestions. It also establishes the authoritative power of the administration by setting the spaces through which the instructors' voices are valued. These spaces are an annual symposium for presenting a paper or doing workshops for their local college or other colleges (lines 6-11). Layla's construction further works towards elucidating the exclusion/positioning of the instructors away from the decision-making processes i.e. '*but when it comes to teaching*' (line 12).

In lines 13-16, Layla interjects her narrative with an appraisal of the value of her MA studies to her teaching practices. The MA experience is framed as having no value in practice due to the '*fixed system*' (line 15) at the university. Layla's

descriptions of the system as '*fixed*' entails confining and limited room for change. The 'fixed system' influence is projected in two ways; being unresponsive to instructors' voices on the educational processes and the summative assessment practices in the form of unified exams that dictates her teaching practice which she mentioned later in lines (26-37).

In lines 17-21, Layla constructs the system as a source of demotivation to innovate in her classroom, evidenced by the contrast between her early attempts '*I used to do worksheets and games and stuff*' (line 17) and her work now '*I just explain the curriculum three times four times until they get the idea*' (line 26). The demotivation is projected in two ways. First, in her inability to fulfil her desired teacher self in 'so depressed' & 'depressing for me as a teacher' (line 18-19). Second, her inability to help her students '*I couldn't help them*' (Line 25). The latter is presented using a three-part construction (Jefferson, 1988) that start the repetition of '*I know*' (excerpt 8.4.3). This construction functions at several levels. First, it emphasizes Layla's views on summative assessment practices. Second, it subtly evaluates the system as neglecting students' needs. Third, it creates a sense that her knowledge and expertise are being undervalued in her work.

Excerpt 8.4.2 (1)

22	I know my student
23	I know their level of learning
24	I know their needs
25	However I couldn't help them

In lines 26-27, Layla defines her teaching practice in the light of the existing structure. For Layla, dismissing her input in the system of the unified exams led her to adopt a traditional teaching practice exemplified in '*I explain the curriculum three times four times until they get the idea*' (line 26). Layla states, '*I know the way it's going in the university*' (line 27) which indicates her awareness of the power structure in her institution. This awareness led her to inhabit her current teaching practice.

In lines 28-37, Layla provides an example of her grammar teaching practice. Layla describes her teaching practice as 'a private tutor'. The reference 'private tutor' in the Saudi Arabian context is frequently associated with traditional teaching methods that rely on memorization and repetition. In the first interview, Layla mentions the same example to describe her first teaching experience. The reference of '*private*

tutor مدرسة خاصه is used to imply outdated methods compared to '*modern way*' of teaching (line 32). Although Layla does not align with this approach, '*it will not benefit the students*' (line 33), she constructs it as adhering to students' needs to achieve good grades for Medicine or Law school.

Layla's explanation depicts her as being caught between her desire to teach her students based on her knowledge of their needs and teaching them for the sake of achieving high scores. It shows her alignment with what she learned in the SA context while having to adapt to her prescribed teaching role. Further, the construction in this narrative depicts the teacher as a saviour who wants to help students learn the language and help them achieve their desired scores.

8.4.3 Summary

The analysis draws on Layla's narrative of teaching practice. It highlighted the links between her previous experiences and her teaching practice. Similar to Danah and Yasmine, Layla draws on her SA educational experiences to inform her teaching practice. Layla projects her belief about teaching with what she called the 'British' style of teaching, an approach that she learnt in her SA experience. Layla's perspective is constructed in contrast to the local discourse on the need to integrate technology in the classroom. She presents a persuasive argument that challenges this perspective, highlighting her view that technology is not necessarily conducive to effective learning. Another SA experience that was directly linked to her practice is when she enrolled in a language learning course. Layla professes that she draws on this experience by bringing the teaching methods and materials that the language instructors used in that course. Like Yasmine, Layla's reflection on the links between her SA experience and practice is focused more on experiential learning (i.e the *how* of the experience) rather than the programme content.

The second part of Layla's narrative of practice is about her experience now at her employing university. Layla's expresses frustration about her current status in the university due to the dismissal of her input to improve the educational process and the summative assessment practice. Despite her effort to endorse SA learned practices in her classroom, summative assessment practice is projected to define her current practice as more traditional practice. For Layla, since the summative assessment is an unfair practice, the way to be fair to her students is to teach them

in traditional way so that they could achieve good grades that qualify them for Medicine or Law school.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided analyses of three participants' narrative of teaching practice. The analysis highlighted the constructed links that the participants draw between their educational experiences and their teaching practice now. It is evident in their narratives that their SA experiences somehow informed their teaching beliefs and practices. Further, the analysis shed light on the obstacles that the participants encountered in attempting to apply their desired practice. The following chapter is the discussion chapter which will focus on answering the research questions.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction

In this study, I have explored Saudi EFL instructors' narratives of experiences. The aim of this chapter is to gather the threads of the analytic findings and highlight the significance of the study in the field of language teacher education, more precisely, professional learning and study abroad within the Saudi context. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section will address the participants' career histories, more precisely, educational trajectories. It addresses Q1: How did the participants construct the influences on their educational choices? Q2: How do the participants construct their learning experiences? The second section is focused on the participants' practice now as EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia's higher education institutions. It addresses Q3: What are the experiences that informed the participants' current practice? Q4: What are the enabling and constraining factors that affect the achievement of desired teaching practices?

9.2. Q1 How did the participants construct the influences on their educational choices?

The analyses reveal that the participants' educational choices were 'a process as opposed to an act' (Fernandez, McGregor, & Yuldashev, 2021, p. 892). It shed light on the participants' dialogue between their internal reasoning and external structures. It reveals that their educational choices were not only influenced by a complex set of factors but also informed by their own experiences and ambitions. In the following, I highlight the themes that emerge as shaping the participants' educational choices, either BA choice or decision to study abroad.

9.2.1 *The influence of family*

Family emerged as one prominent factor that influences the participants' educational choices, chiming with several studies on Saudi students' educational choices (Almoaibed, 2020; Yakaboski et al., 2016). In this study, family as an influence appears in the participants' narratives in different ways: as a motivating factor to pursue their desired pathways, as a hindering force, and sometimes as both constraining and enabling. Participants often described their families' past experiences as shaping their own educational choices. Sometimes, these

experiences served as a positive model, motivating them; other times, they acted as a cautionary tale, leading them to different paths. This is seen in Yasmine's and Layla's narratives of BA choice. Yasmine did not want to follow her sister's path as a maths teacher. In contrast, for Layla, the choice of English language programme was motivated by her observing her family; her father and sisters were English programme graduates. In addition, the absence of family as an exemplar was projected in some cases as a deterring force from seeking overseas education. This appears in Rawan's narrative about her father's uncertainty due to the lack of past experiences on which her family could base their decision.

Family voice is constructed in the participants' narratives differently and is often used to elaborate agentic decisions. For example, in Danah's narrative, the family voice is constructed as a hindering force toward her desired major. Danah asserts her individuality by not listening to her family's concerns; rather, her choices were constructed as driven by her own desires and personal beliefs. For Rawan, the family voice demonstrated through her father was projected as a support to her wishes to seek overseas education by attempting to solve the financial issues and the Mehram's condition. At the same time, his voice is a constraint when he was hesitant about the idea of her studying abroad.

9.2.2 Mobility and socio-cultural norms

One of the themes that appears across participants' narratives is the issue of mobility and socio-cultural norms influencing decisions about studying locally or overseas. Historically, Saudi women have faced mobility restrictions due to legal reasons, such as the ban on driving and restrictions on living alone. This is in addition to the socio-cultural norms of Saudi society, where all family members, especially females, are expected to live in the same household until marriage (Almoaibed, 2020). These factors have restricted women's access to education (Baki, 2004), particularly for those living in remote areas. However, recent years have witnessed significant changes regarding women's mobility, as mentioned in Chapter 2, including lifting the ban on women driving in 2017 and permitting adult women to live alone in 2020.

The issue of mobility, intertwined with socio-cultural norms, surfaces in the participants' narratives. For example, Yasmine's desire to study in a field befitting her capabilities as a top student was hindered by the structures that made it difficult to

study outside her hometown. Similarly, while Rawan favoured two majors equally, English Language and Jurisprudence of Inheritance, she abandoned the latter because it was located outside her hometown.

Furthermore, the issue of mobility appears in their choices regarding studying abroad, specifically concerning the Mehram condition for scholarships. As mentioned in Chapter 2, until recently, Saudi government scholarship programmes, such as KASP, required female scholarship recipients to fulfill the condition of having a Mehram accompany them during their overseas studies. Rawan's case exemplifies how the initial absence of a Mehram restricted her ability to study abroad. Layla also encountered the Mehram issue when expressing her desire to study abroad to her family. Although Layla was self-funded rather than on a government scholarship, thus not subject to scholarship conditions, the need for a Mehram while traveling abroad was then a socio-cultural norm and expectation for women studying overseas.

9.2.3 Job and professional development

The prospect of securing future employment, gaining English competency, and advancing professionally emerge as salient motivations in the participants' narratives of educational choices. The perceived linkage between English proficiency and labor market opportunities is well-established in the Saudi context (Alqahtani, 2022; Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). As noted in Chapter 2, the emphasis on English language skills has increased since the introduction of Saudi Vision 2030 in 2016 (Khawaji, 2022), shaping discourses around the value of English competence. The participants draw on similar discourses to justify their educational decisions. For example, Yasmine chose English because others said it 'has a future', envisioning becoming an English teacher and expanding job prospects. This demonstrates the projective dimension of agency when considering career outcomes. Similarly, Layla referred to the reputation of English literature graduates for desirable teaching positions as a factor in selecting her major. The decision to study abroad was also linked to goals of language proficiency and professional development for some participants. Rawan believed immersing herself where English is spoken would finally make her fluent. Similar responses were found in studies such as Marshall and Spracklin (2022) and Macalister (2022) in which some teachers cite English language proficiency as a main goal for studying abroad. For Layla, the decision was influenced by observing

colleagues who had studied abroad. She sought to follow their pathway, pursuing an MA and CELTA certificate abroad for career advancement.

9.2.4 Existing educational structures

The participants' geographical locations in Saudi Arabia imposed varying constraints and affordances on their educational options. Those situated in remote areas and rural towns expressed more limited choices compared to peers in large urban centres. For example, Yasmine's options were confined by the few local pathways available in her small town, leading to default choices. Rawan preferred local options when majors were outside of her hometown. In contrast, Danah and Layla's narratives demonstrate the expanded opportunities in urban areas with diverse universities and programmes to choose from. Their metropolitan locations afforded more flexibility and alternatives. On a broader level, all participants had access to sponsored scholarships, whether through employer-funded options like Yasmine, national government scholarships obtained by Rawan and Danah, or Layla's opportunity to secure funding after enrolling in her MA programme.

9.2.5 Forging their own path

This theme centres on participants demonstrating a strong sense of agency by actively shaping their educational journeys, even when facing challenging circumstances. While some participants initially conformed to conventional pathways, they later asserted their agency when opportunities arose that better aligned with their aspirations and capabilities. For instance, initially limited by location and programme availability, Yasmine settled for an English Language BA. However, when a new engineering programme aligned with her skills emerged, she chose to stay in English, believing it was the best path for her. This demonstrates her agency in shaping her education. Other participants, like Danah, maintained a strong sense of agency throughout their educational narratives. Although she acknowledged familial opinions favouring university over college and part-time over full-time studies, Danah ultimately made different choices. She asserted her individuality by forging her own path, driven by her own desires and beliefs rather than conforming to pre-existing norms and expectations. This proactive and self-directed approach to decision-making, however, is not fully reflected in Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) chordal triad of agency. While the model acknowledges the past, present, and future in its conceptualisation of

agency, it does not fully account for instances where individuals make choices specifically to differentiate themselves from those who conform to established norms. A similar observation was made in Brotherhood's (2023) study, where some participants expressed distaste for existing norms and opted to pursue their own unique pathways.

As seen in participants' narratives of educational choices, their agentic orientation responds to various factors, including personal beliefs, family circumstances, mobility and socio-cultural norms, geographical location, institutional policies, and circulating discourses. These factors are not stand-alone factors rather they are intertwined and interact in complex ways that shape participants' identities and decision-making. The integrated model of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984) helped illuminate the dynamic interplay between individual agency and social structures across time and contexts. The findings demonstrate how participants, embedded within particular socio-cultural contexts, actively navigated opportunities and constraints, drew upon past experiences, envisioned future possibilities, and ultimately shaped their educational journeys in meaningful ways.

9.3. Q2: How do the participants construct their learning experiences?

The participants' narratives showcase a diversity of perspectives in the meanings they make from their educational journeys. However, some common themes emerge in how they construct their learning experiences across the key phases explored – their BA studies, early teaching, and overseas MA programmes.

9.3.1 *The BA programme*

A common challenge depicted across the participants' narratives involves struggling to adapt to new academic expectations and cultures in the transition from high school to university. Yasmine, Rawan, and Layla voice feelings of lost confidence, self-doubt, and linguistic barriers as novice students overwhelmed by passive teaching methods. This sense of disconnect from the new academic environment was intensified by perceptions of an unsupportive programme structure lacking scaffolded preparation for student success. However, another shared theme involves the participants showcasing agency even amidst difficulties. Yasmine and Layla took the initiative to gradually improve their understanding over time through personal study efforts. Despite limitations, they exert control over their learning

journeys. Meanwhile, Danah and Rawan persist in their programmes with determination against pressures.

A distinctive feature of Danah's narrative is her framing of the BA experience as an empowering opportunity to surpass doubts and demonstrate her abilities through outstanding achievement as a part-time student. In contrast, Rawan uniquely focuses on ongoing linguistic struggles and lack of meaningful learning progress throughout her studies, constructing a journey of self-doubt rather than empowerment. Furthermore, Yasmine offers nuanced critiques of passive teaching methods and lack of student participation, while Layla provides reflective insights on early teaching limitations recognized in hindsight. Layla also uniquely emphasizes the absence of academic writing preparation in her BA as a gap revealed later during MA study.

In sum, across these diverse accounts, common challenges exist in adapting to university-level education from high school. However, each teacher crafts a unique narrative identity in relation to her BA studies, ranging from empowerment to disappointment. However, agency consistently emerges as participants shape personal meanings from their trajectories through this transitional educational period despite constraints.

9.3.2 Early teaching experience

A predominant shared challenge depicted in the accounts of Yasmine, Rawan, and Layla in relation to their early teaching experiences involves feeling underprepared and struggling to adapt as novice teachers who lack confidence in their capabilities. All three admit facing difficulties managing students, classroom dynamics, and instructional approaches in their first teaching roles beyond university. Their narratives underscore entering the classroom as uncertain novices relying heavily on mimicking others' methods or seeking external validation rather than implementing intentional pedagogical choices aligned with clear understandings of quality teaching.

However, the teachers' stories also reveal shared threads of resilience and growth in reconstructing these formative experiences. Yasmine, Rawan, and Layla frame their accounts from more assured professional personas, attaining critical distance to evaluate past teaching limitations recognized in reflection. Their

willingness to identify early shortcomings highlights the development of reflective capacities that might aid ongoing improvement.

While common struggles exist, each teacher also conveys unique aspects of her transitional teaching journey. Yasmine provides an in-depth perspective on the challenges of adjusting to the heightened expectations of university instruction versus teaching adults or schoolchildren. Meanwhile, Rawan uniquely focuses on an emotional account of overcoming fragility and self-doubt during early teaching. Layla offers a critique of over-relying on decontextualized grammar at the expense of communicative teaching. She also provides an interesting narrative tension between enacting contrasting strict versus relaxed teaching personas as she searches for her style.

In sum, the teachers' stories underscore the interplay between structural constraints and individual agency in shaping the trajectory as they moved from being students to becoming teachers.

9.3.3 *SA education*

The participants' narratives highlight a common theme in the broader SA literature, which is 'transfer shock' (Ivins, Copenhaver, & Koclanes, 2017), which refers to the confusion and disorientation that occurs when students move from one educational culture to another. The participants encountered unfamiliar academic environments and expectations when transitioning from Saudi to Western education systems. Yasmine, Layla, Rawan, and Danah all construct narratives highlighting their initial lack of preparation for the active, collaborative norms of UK/US institutes and programmes. This required difficult adjustments, as evidenced by descriptions of shock, discomfort, and self-doubt when confronted by unfamiliar pedagogical approaches, academic writing, and research methodologies.

Another shared theme involves the teachers ultimately framing these challenging transitions as valuable learning curves. By the end of their journeys, the participants largely derive positive meaning from navigating difficulties in which they perceived study abroad as an opportunity for profound personal and professional growth. Their narratives reveal developing independence, confidence, knowledge, and skills over time.

While common experiences exist, each participant also offers unique insights into her transitional journey. Yasmine provides an in-depth perspective on evolving from passive learning norms to appreciating active, collaborative education. Layla highlights that her MA lacked practical knowledge later gained from CELTA, while Rawan focuses on becoming comfortable expressing herself in English. Furthermore, Danah uniquely shares an impactful student empathy lesson from her practicum, underscoring her emerging teacher identity. Meanwhile, only Yasmine examines cultural factors, in which she highlights initial discomfort in adjusting to integrated classrooms that contrast with Saudi norms.

9.4. Q3: What are the experiences that informed the participants' current practice?

The participants' narratives reflect the complexities of their journeys of learning how to teach and highlight the various levels of influence that have informed their teaching practices. As the participants narrate their journeys, they draw mostly on their SA experiences to inform their teaching practice. It is clear from the constant contrast between their pre-sojourn learning experiences and post-sojourn realizations.

The participants' accounts place their SA experiences as transformative learning experiences. The participants' narrative included articulation of their prior beliefs about teachers' and students' roles and teaching methods. It also included a description of their efforts in their classroom, efforts that they based on what they learnt in the SA context. Further, the participants engaged in reconsidering their teaching approach after trialling them in their classroom and provided rational explanations for adopting certain teaching approaches (e.g., Yasmine and Layla). In the following sub-sections, I will highlight aspects that the participants projected as changing/informing their teaching beliefs and practices.

9.4.1 *Instructors/students relationship*

One of the aspects that the participants highlighted in their narrative is the re-evaluation of student-teacher relations after their SA studies. In the Saudi culture, individuals' authority is associated with age and knowledge (Al-Johani, 2009) , in the form of educational qualification. Instructors are given complete authority in the classroom, as they are older and more knowledgeable than the students. The long-

held classroom roles are that of instructors who deliver knowledge, and the students are receivers who should not question or negotiate this knowledge (Elyas & Picard, 2010). This view of teachers' authority is reflected in Yasmine's narrative. When she spoke about her experience as a learner and an EFL instructor, she described teachers' image as 'formal' (authoritative), 'respect' as an obligation of the learners, and 'always right' as non-negotiable. Similar references were mentioned across the participants' narratives, especially when they spoke about either their BA experiences or their early teaching practice.

Following their study abroad experiences, the participants made a conscious effort to break down the barriers between themselves and their students and improve the students' educational experience. The improvement is associated with being comfortable in the classroom and thus creating a classroom environment where they could achieve their teaching beliefs. This kind of environment, from the perspective of the instructors (Yasmine & Danah) is necessary for the move from the traditional approach to a more student-centred approach. Further, it would facilitate participation, give confidence in expressing their opinions, and work with others in a group and thus cultivate their critical thinking. Similar to the participants in Miller and Gkonou's (2018) study, caring became 'part of their professional responsibility' (Miller & Gkonou, 2018, p. 55) due to their experience during their international sojourn.

9.4.2 *Experiential learning over didactics*

When the participants engaged in reflecting on their teaching practice, they highlighted aspects that they learnt from the SA context as informing their practice. The reflection emphasis is similar across participants despite the different SA destinations that the participants went to and the different pre-sessional English language courses and MA TESOL programmes that they completed. The highlighted aspects seem to focus on the experiential facet of learning rather than the didactics of the courses. That is, the participants' narrative placed more emphasis on what they observed rather than the content of the courses. The observation was in relation to the teaching style, teacher-student relationship, students' engagement, and classroom management rules. In Yasmine's case, the reflection was brought to the fore by contrasting what she is used to at home and what she observed in the SA courses. She reflected on the instructors noticing the instructors' approach to the students, in delivering the course content, and in encouraging discussion. For Danah,

the reflection was implicated with her classroom management in giving students the freedom to wear what they want and in integrating using their cell phones for classroom activities instead of turning them off. These aspects were directly linked to what she observed and experienced in the SA context. For Layla, she notes instructors' attitudes and the 'British' style of teaching, which became a preference for her as a teaching approach. Also, she reflects on a course in her MA TESOL programme in which she had to learn other languages. Layla notes that she derived her teaching approach and materials from observing the instructors in the language learning course.

The participants' remarks on the experiential aspect of learning could be explained through Lortie's (1975) 'apprenticeship of observation' (AoO). The premise of Lortie's concept is that teachers' perception of education and teaching is derived from their own experiences when they were students. While this notion has been frequently used to explain the lack of change in teachers' practice (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006), I will be using it here to provide a possible explanation for the participants' focus on experiential learning and SA context. Mewborn and Tyminski (2006) state that Lortie's term apprenticeship of observation 'pertain[s] to the general milieu of teaching, rather than to specific instances of teaching and learning' (Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006, p. 31). This description of Lortie's notion resembles the level of observation in the participants' narratives. The participants didn't engage in specifics of the experience rather, they referred to learnt aspects as a result of their SA educational experience. The participants' reflection depicts the SA experience as a whole with few specific references to the sources of their observation either during their MA TESOL programme or pre-sessional English language courses or, in the case of Layla, CELTA course.

The participants' early knowledge about teaching and learning is presented as a result of their experience as a student in the education system and their BA teaching education and practicum. This is clear in Yasmine's narrative when she makes an explicit reference to her early teaching experience as informed by her experience as a learner in the Saudi education system. For all the participants, the reference to positive change in their practice was framed after their SA experience. In local educational settings, teachers and learners usually have comparable implicit and deeply rooted beliefs about the significance of knowledge, the ways it is acquired, and

the roles individuals assume during the learning process (Macalister, 2016). Macalister (2013) postulates that in order to achieve change in teachers' practice, they should experience 'dissonance between what is already known and has already been experienced' (Macalister, 2013, p. 314) or a 'disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). This dissonance could be achieved through the 'encounter with the difference' (Ingersoll, Sears, Hirschhorn, Landine, & Kawtharani-Chami, 2019, p. 42) which is a characteristic of study abroad. The contrast between the SA educational context and the local might trigger the participants to highlight the experiential aspect of the educational process. The SA context provides a transnational space in which the participants' observation moves beyond the course content. It offers an alternative stage where they retake the learners' seat and engage with different students' and teachers' roles that they are not accustomed to in the local context. The reflection on experiential learning could be due to their liking these aspects, especially if these aspects had a positive impact on them. For example, Layla and Yasmine referred to the instructors' attitudes as an affective influence when they spoke about their teaching practice.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the emphasis on experiential learning in the SA experience might be due to the distance from the time of the experience, a result of the research methodology adopted in this study. That is, the participants at the time of the interviews were already immersed in their work in Saudi Arabia, and the SA experience for them was two to three years' ago. The temporal distance from the experience might impede them from remembering educational intricacies and lead them to focus more on the overall observation of the educational context. However, this distance suggests that these experiences, although they happened a while ago, had some notable influence on them as EFL instructors. Moreover, I argue that the process of reflecting on their experiences, once removed from the immediacy of their overseas contexts, allowed the participants to examine those experiences and connect them to their local educational realities. By constructing narratives about their time abroad, the instructors provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of these experiences on their beliefs and practices.

9.4.3 *The construction of the 'other'*

Part of the narrative methodology is to interrogate not only the 'what' of the narrative but also the 'how' and 'why' of the narrative. That is, to extend the analysis

beyond what the participants say about their experiences to question how the narrative is presented and why it was presented in this way. Throughout the interviews, the participants projected their SA experiences in a positive light. This projection is maintained to be in a higher position than their other educational experiences in the local context. That is, when the participants narrate their experiences, they present the SA education as a reference for ideal practice. This was accomplished by constructing a contrast between their experiences as learners/instructors before and after their sojourn: the pre-sojourn as old/traditional and the post-sojourn as new/adequate way of teaching. The participants' construction did not engage in critical evaluation of the new understandings; rather, the imported knowledge was presented as informing their teaching beliefs/practices. The contrasted aspects that the participants reflected on are in relation to education type, student role, teacher role, and student-teacher relationship, for example. Yasmine described the local context and herself with words such as 'traditional' (authoritarian), 'passive', and lacking critical thinking. On the other hand, she described the SA context as informal (non-authoritarian), active, and promoting critical thinking. Further, Danah draws on Western discourses to define students' role as 'reflect, write, search, analyse' when she spoke about her BA experience in Saudi Arabia. For Layla, she referred to her preferred teaching style as the 'British way' when she spoke about her teaching practice. These descriptions contribute to the construction of 'Othering' (Palfreyman, 2005). The term Othering refers to the ways in which the 'discourse of a particular group defines other groups in opposition to itself; an Us and Them view that constructs an identity for the Other and, implicitly for the Self' (Palfreyman, 2005, p. 213). The 'Othering' could be an 'internalized orientalism' (Alahmed, 2020) in which the EFL instructors hold downgraded perceptions of the local education culture and an amplified perception of Western knowledge. This is clear in the participants' descriptions of past selves (as learners/teachers) in the local Saudi context and in their presentation of what they learnt from their SA experience. Further, the narrative construction of the SA in a positive light is seen in their efforts to apply what they learnt abroad in the local context. That is, when faced with difficulties in applying the imported knowledge in their classrooms, the participants didn't necessarily question the appropriateness of these approaches. Instead, they focused on criticizing the local conditions that hindered the teaching practices they had learned in Saudi Arabia. This

is especially seen in Yasmine's narrative of teaching practice (chapter 7). This finding is unlike Barnawi and Phan's (2015) Saudi Western-trained participants who demonstrated critical awareness of the appropriateness of what they learnt abroad in their classroom.

The absence of a critical evaluation of their SA experiences could be due to several reasons. It could be that the construction is installed by the dominant discourses in the Saudi context. Palfreyman (2005) explains, '[t]he representation of the Other may be used to interpret actions and phenomena in a way consistent with a dominant discourse, rather than with what appear to be facts' (Palfreyman, 2005, p. 214). The construction of the Other could be due to the knowledge forces from three levels. The dominant discourses of the need of globalisation and internationalising at the macro-Saudi context, the institutional initiatives to adopt to Western educational standards (e.g. the reference to international benchmarks and SA university rankings) at the meso level, and the EFL instructors' consumption of Western materials for teaching and for learning to teach at the micro level. These interrelated levels might have aided the view on the SA educational contexts as a source of the 'truth' (Kubota, 2001) for the EFL instructors, which is thus not questionable.

The dominant discourses on the value of study abroad education in the Saudi context made it a form of 'social cultural economic and symbolic capital' (Barnawi & Phan, 2015, p. 274). The participants' construction of their SA experience in this way might be an attempt to maintain their capital. This construction is evident in the framing devices they employ and their attempts to position me, the researcher, as sympathetic to their perspectives.

Several factors likely contribute to this tendency towards positive framing. The financial and emotional investment in their SA degrees might aid the construction of these experiences in a positive light. That is, constructing their experience in a bad way might undermine their efforts and achievements. Moreover, the instructors' occupation of their workload might leave little space for critically evaluating their imported practice. That is, due to the workload and lack of time, the instructors would not engage in 'political activity' of openly discussing the suitability of imported knowledge in their local context (Kim, 2012). This is especially the case when their employing universities are aligned (theoretically) and are pushing for Western forms

of education. Another reason could be the ‘immediate *payoff*’ (Barnawi, 2018) after completion of their SA qualification. This payoff is in the form of securing a permanent job contract (Layla’s case) or being promoted in the employing institution (Yasmine’s case), which might have facilitated such a perspective.

9.5. Q4: What are the enabling and constraining factors that affect the achievement of desired teaching practices?

The Saudi MoE sets the overarching goals for Saudi national reform. One of the main goals in the reform is to shift from the dominant traditional teacher-centred to a more communicatively oriented student-centred approach to develop learners’ linguistic skills. Unlike public education institutions, Saudi HE institutions have the autonomy to set their own guidelines to meet these goals. From the participants’ narratives, there are differences in universities’ procedures in regard to educational practices. More precisely, the analysis of the three cases by Yasmine, Layla and Danah revealed discrepancies in the circumstances between a well-established urban university (Danah /Layla) and a newly established rural university (Yasmine) in the Saudi context. Moreover, the issues that Yasmine reflected on were not present in either Danah’s or Layla’s narrative, and vice versa. I will explore the constraints on each teacher in the following sections.

9.5.1 Yasmine (Rural newly established university)

The constraining factors in Yasmine’s narrative that inhibited her from attaining her desired teaching practice resemble many of the themes about the difficulties that Saudi EFL teachers in public education face while attempting to implement Western pedagogies such as communicative language teaching (CLT). Some of these issues are teaching load, variability in English language competence, large classes, workload, and students’ resistance to change (Abahussain, 2016; Al Asmari, 2015; A. Alharbi, 2022). The literature on these issues seems to address them as standalone factors in the context in which they occur. For Yasmine, these constraining factors are interrelated and are institutionally driven.

Yasmine’s dual role of EFL instructor and academic lecturer resulted in attending different sets of students, those who are majored in English language programmes and those who are enrolled in other majors where English courses are a prerequisite for their programme degree. In addition, Yasmine teaches preparatory

year students. The different sets of students come with different class size with non-major and preparatory students the largest in numbers. This meant that Yasmine must cater to the students' differences in English language competence and the differences in the courses' language level. The variability in classes' size, English language proficiency, and course level limit the extent of activities that she can use in her classes. An example that Yasmine remarks on is the difficulty of conducting activities that involve discussion with students with low English language proficiency. Further, the preparation for more student-centered classes takes longer than the traditional approaches, which Yasmine can't afford due to the limited class time and her workload.

In addition, Yasmine reported students' resistance to her efforts in the classroom. The resistance took the form of not actively participating in group activities or not engaging in classroom discussions. The existing literature commonly attributed this issue to students' lack of motivation (A. Alharbi, 2022). However, although lack of motivation could be a possible explanation for this, it could also be due to the school culture, which places certain expectations on the roles of students and instructors (Wei, 2010). The HE education context is dominated by a lecture-style approach to teaching; when students are in English language course, they expect it to be similar to the other courses in which they are receivers of knowledge rather than active participants. Another form of student resistance that is associated with the Saudi HE institutional context is the complaint over changes in the exam format, which was supported by the institution's administration. Although Yasmine has the duties of assessing students' performance in her courses, any attempt for changes in assessment practices that do not resemble the mainstream assessment practices of the institution was not endorsed by the administration. Yasmine's narrative presents the administration in her institution as maintaining the status quo rather than seeking improvement. A similar theme emerged in Alhuwaydi's (2020) study, which found that authoritarian leadership within a university setting constrained EFL instructors' capacity for innovation in their teaching practices.

Yasmine's narrative also highlights the absence of a community of practice in her institution. This can be attributed to the small size of the university, which results in a smaller number of faculty members in the same field. Further, the workload of teaching multiple courses might create an individualistic teaching culture that leaves

little space for collegial sharing. The absence of a community of practice in Yasmine's institution might play an extra constraining factor on her teaching practice as she had to navigate the issues she encountered by herself. Moreover, the lack of a supportive community of practice may reduce the likelihood of change, especially given the reported authoritative administration in her institution.

9.5.2 Danah and Layla (Urban well-established university)

As mentioned earlier, Danah and Layla's narrative did not include any of the constraining factors that Yasmine reported in her institutional context. This might be due to the well-established system in their university. However, Danah and Layla reported that the institution's summative assessment practices are also an issue. In many Saudi HE institutions summative assessment practices are adopted due to 'large numbers of EFL teachers, efficiency, practicality, and reliability require that assessment be centrally managed' (Troudi, Coombe, & Al-Hamly, 2009, p. 550). This is the case for Danah's and Layla's institutions. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Danah and Layla work in the same institution and hold the same work position, that is, EFL instructor. Teaching EFL courses for pre-major students is the only work duty that they refer to in their narrative. That is, unlike Yasmine, they didn't mention any administrative work; rather, most of their workday is occupied by teaching. When Danah and Layla referred to the summative assessment practices, they both constructed it in a negative light.

For Layla, the summative assessment practice was constructed as a source of 'emotion labor' (Benesch, 2020). Benesch (2020) explains that emotion labor could happen when assessment practices 'conflict with teachers' training and/or beliefs' (Benesch, 2020, p. 31). The emotion labor is signalled by her words such as 'depressed' and 'depressing' when she talked about the exclusion from the assessment process decisions. Layla's prior knowledge and training about students' assessments are irrelevant under the summative assessment practice. This exclusion might be interpreted by Layla as devaluing her expertise and thus demotivating her. Further, the summative assessment practice put her at the intersection between conducting her teaching practice in accordance with her training/beliefs or teach to the test approach which is constructed as a fair route for her students. That is, her teaching practice became focused on helping students achieve high scores in order to enrol in their desired majors. Thus, her teaching practice, against her own belief,

became product-focused rather than on the process of ensuring the students acquire language skills.

Like Layla, Danah also grapples with the issue of fairness within summative assessment practices. However, Danah's concerns focus more on the impact on students rather than her own teaching. She worries that when instructors operate independently, without knowledge of each other's progress, there's an increased risk of inconsistencies. This could mean certain SLOs are underemphasized or completely absent, potentially creating unfairness for students.

All the participants aligned their views with what they learned in their SA sojourns; however, the application in practice is bounded by the institutional context. Layla and Danah didn't report any issues that are frequently reported in Saudi EFL context when attempting to implement more Western approaches such as CLT. This suggests that their work institutions support the shift from teacher-centred to more student-centred approaches. Further, the well-established urban institution meant that it has a large community of practice. This was reflected in Layla's narrative, which refers to observing others with SA qualifications that encouraged her to seek overseas education (MA TESOL/CELTA course) and in her reference to the annual symposium for the EFL instructors. In Danah's narrative, she referred to a discussion between her colleagues on how to explain a certain grammatical rule for Arabic learners. These references suggest that in Danah and Layla's institution, they have a large community of practice.

9.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the research questions and highlighted the study findings around educational choices, learning experiences, and teachers' teaching practices. The following chapter is the conclusion chapter. In this chapter, I highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions of this study, examining its implications for language teacher education within international education. Furthermore, I acknowledge the study's limitations and outline possible directions for future research in this field.

CHAPTER 10 : CONCLUSION

10.1 Introduction

In a quest to better understand EFL instructors' experiences, this study has explored the narratives of Saudi female EFL instructors who pursued MA TESOL abroad. The analysis chapters interrogated their educational choices, learning and teaching experiences, and their narrative of teaching practices. In the previous chapter (9), I have answered the research questions about how they constructed educational choices, learning experiences and teaching practices. In this chapter, I highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions. I also discuss the limitations of this study and its implications for the Saudi HE context and the broader research on EFL teachers' education abroad.

10.2 Theoretical and methodological contributions

In this thesis, I have used an integrated model of agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Giddens, 1984). By employing a combined theoretical lens of Giddens' (1984) structuration theory and Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) chordal triad of agency, this study offered a nuanced approach to understanding how these instructors navigated the complex interplay of structure and agency in their lives. This combined framework allowed for a deeper understanding of how broader social structures, such as cultural expectations and educational systems in Saudi Arabia, both enabled and constrained the agency of these women while also highlighting how they actively drew on their past experiences, future ambitions, and present evaluations to shape their own trajectories.

The integrated model of agency was especially insightful in exploring the instructors' stories. As Biesta and Tedder (2007) explain, 'stories allow for the articulation and evaluation of one's agentic orientations' (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 138). Indeed, in the participants' narratives, the act of storytelling itself becomes a site where they grapple with their own agency, reflecting on past choices, justifying present actions, and envisioning future possibilities. Moreover, as they narrate their stories, they bring to the fore the voices, discourses, and assumptions that have shaped their trajectories, locating themselves within a complex web of influences. Through this process of narrativization, individuals not only make sense of their own

agency but also illuminate the dynamic interplay between individual action and existing structures.

While the integrated model of agency offers valuable insights into the iterational and projective dimensions of agency, as revealed through participants' narratives of past experiences and future aspirations, it acknowledges the limitations of fully capturing the practical-evaluative dimension through retrospective narratives. While the analysis of discursive strategies offered glimpses into how these instructors retrospectively framed their past evaluations and adjustments, the study recognized the limitations of fully capturing the dynamic, in-the-moment processes of practical-evaluative dimension as they unfolded. In some instances in the analysis, it was difficult to differentiate between whether their actions fall within the iteration dimension or practical-evaluative dimension. This theoretical limitation could be tackled in future research by employing longitudinal designs through tracking these processes over time, offering more insights into how practical evaluation shapes agentic action in real time.

This study moved beyond the analysis of narrative content to examine the discursive construction of agency within these narratives. This is crucial because, as Prior and Talmy (2021) note, 'narratives are not freestanding stories or even recollections of experiences; rather, they are fundamentally versioned and occasioned constructions of experience' (Prior & Talmy, 2021, p. 2). By attending to the narrated and narrating events (Wortham & Reyes, 2015), and the strategic use of discursive strategies like constructed dialogue, repetition, and pronominal usage, this study shed light on how these instructors actively shaped their stories to make sense of their experiences and present themselves as agentic/unagentic actors within their specific social contexts. As they locate themselves as agentic/un-agentic or in between in their narrative, they are exercising agency in their discursive choices and how they present themselves to the interviewer and within the interview context. As seen the analysis, attending both, the narrated and narrating events, contributed to providing more insights into the meaning construction and thus understanding their experiences. This approach provided valuable insights into the ways in which agency is not simply asserted but carefully crafted and negotiated through language.

One of the methodological contributions of this study lies in its use of multiple narrative interviews (Riessman, 2008) with the same participants. This approach provided participants with valuable opportunities for reflexivity and agency exploration that extend beyond a single interview encounter. The recurring and open nature of the interviews, I argue, enabled participants to not only share their experiences but to actively reconstruct them. As they revisited their narratives across interviews, they were able to refine, reinterpret, and potentially challenge their initial understandings. This iterative process of narrating and reframing their experiences likely enabled participants to gain a critical distance from the immediacy of their experiences, explore the nuances of their agency within those moments, and evaluate how their capacity for agency may have evolved. Moreover, this method created a space for participants to reflect on their own learning processes as language instructors, bringing to the surface often implicit assumptions about teaching and learning. In the final interviews, all participants expressed that they appreciated having the space to narrate their experiences in depth. One participant, Danah, described the interviews as ‘therapeutic,’ which highlights the potential personal value of reflection on experience.

10.3 Implications of the study

This study carries implications for Saudi higher education institutions, particularly regarding the support and utilisation of knowledge gained by EFL instructors during their study abroad experiences. The Saudi government has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the education sector through various initiatives, including substantial investments in professional development programmes for EFL instructors, such as overseas scholarships. However, as highlighted in this study and supported by previous research (Al-Seghayer, 2017a; Moskovsky, 2018; Al-Samiri, 2020; Alhuwaydi, 2020), a gap often exists between these national reform aspirations and the realities of HE institutional practices. To bridge this gap, Saudi HE institutions must move beyond simply sending academics abroad based on university rankings. Instead, they need to establish clear, strategic objectives for overseas professional development programmes.

This study also highlights the need for preparation and support for EFL instructors participating in overseas professional development programmes. Whilst study abroad experiences are generally viewed positively, the shift in expectations

and demands can come as a shock to some participants. To ensure a smoother transition and maximise programme benefits, a range of supportive measures should be implemented. Saudi HE institutions should establish comprehensive pre-departure orientation programmes addressing academic culture, workload, cultural adjustment, and support networks. Upon their return, instructors need structured support, including mentoring, workshops, and knowledge-sharing opportunities, to effectively integrate their newly acquired knowledge and skills into the Saudi HE context.

Given the autonomy Saudi HE institutions have in implementing Ministry of Education policies and the national educational vision, a key strategy for success lies in leveraging the expertise of returning instructors. These instructors gain valuable experience abroad and can play a crucial role in shaping effective pedagogical approaches within their institutions. This is particularly relevant as broader initiatives align with the renewed perspectives on teaching that many returning instructors demonstrate. These perspectives include the shift from teacher-centred approaches to more student-centred methodologies, as highlighted in Chapter 8. It is, therefore, vital that these institutions actively engage these returning instructors in the planning and execution of educational goals and ensure their experiences and expertise inform policy and practice. This collaborative approach can lead to more innovative and contextually sensitive strategies for enhancing English language education in Saudi Arabia.

One key implication relates to the need to foster a more critical engagement with overseas education. While participants in this study expressed overwhelmingly positive views of their experiences, it is crucial to encourage a more nuanced and critical perspective on international education models. As Marshall and Spracklin (2022) suggest, EFL professional development programmes should promote co-teaching and knowledge exchange, positioning local teachers as active co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive recipients of Western educational practices. This can be achieved by incorporating diverse viewpoints and fostering dialogue between participants from different backgrounds. Furthermore, instructors' reflection on their experience is strongly encouraged to practice in the field of TESOL (Farrell, 2018). To foster reflective practice, professional development programmes should integrate structured opportunities for self-reflection throughout the programme, encouraging instructors to examine their own beliefs and practices in

light of their experiences. Moreover, providing resources and support for instructors to continue engaging in critical reflection and professional development upon their return to their home institutions is vital for long-term growth.

10.4 Limitations and future research

Like all research, my thesis is not without its limitations. My research was conducted over multiple interviews to explore the past and current experiences of EFL instructors who studied abroad. The first methodological limitation concerns the sample size. Although the study follows a qualitative epistemology that is not concerned with generalisation, having more participants would have provided more insights into the ways EFL instructors define their choices and highlighted the aspects of these experiences that formed and informed their teaching practices. In addition, it would have expanded our understanding of how different Saudi HE institutional settings influence instructors' teaching practices. Moreover, it would have shed light on how EFL instructors appropriate their practices under broader institutional reforms and policies. However, this was not possible in my research due to the analytical framework, as seen in the analysis chapters (6, 7, & 8), which requires a detailed analysis that would be more difficult to conduct with more than four participants due to limitations of time and thesis word count.

It is important to acknowledge that the contextual constraints on instructors' teaching practices, as discussed in Chapter 8, are specific to the institutions studied and may not be representative of all Saudi HE institutions. The differing challenges encountered by participants from the urban university compared to those from the rural areas of the newly established university highlight the need for further research exploring the range of obstacles EFL instructors face when attempting to align their teaching with their evolving beliefs.

Another limitation concerns the participant criteria. The study focused solely on female EFL instructors and excluded male instructors due to cultural and institutional constraints. In the Saudi Arabian context, cultural norms and boundaries between men and women limited the extent to which a female researcher could engage in in-depth conversations with male participants. Research on EFL instructors who studied abroad is limited, and to my knowledge, there are two current studies within the Saudi context: Al-Samiri (2020) and Alhuwaydi (2020). Like the present

study, both were conducted by female researchers with female participants. For future research, the inclusion of male instructors' perspectives and experiences would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Saudi EFL instructors' experiences and potentially highlight gender differences, both locally and internationally.

While this study offers valuable insights into the experiences of EFL instructors who have studied abroad, the retrospective nature of the data collection offers a particular lens for understanding these experiences. As interviews were conducted two to three years after participants completed their study abroad programmes, their narratives allowed them to reflect on their journeys from a point of greater distance, offering a more holistic evaluation of the impact of those experiences. For future research, a longitudinal design, tracking participants' experiences before, during, and after their educational sojourns, would shed light on the process of learning and change. Such an approach could capture nuanced shifts in perspectives and practices that a retrospective study might miss.

It is important to contemplate the potential impact of the study's bilingual nature. While data were collected in Arabic to ensure participants could express themselves authentically, the analysis was conducted in English, drawing upon literature primarily based on English-language studies. It is possible that certain nuances or culturally specific expressions, significant within the Saudi Arabian context, may not fully translate into the analytical framework used. This highlights a broader need for research methodologies that bridge linguistic and cultural perspectives in EFL studies.

Finally, study abroad programmes receive significant investment from the Saudi Arabian government, driven by the belief that such experiences accelerate educational reform. While this study contributes to the understanding of the personal and professional benefits Saudi EFL instructors gain from overseas education, it also reveals that contextual constraints can hinder the implementation of these benefits for some. Given the substantial financial commitment to overseas scholarships, larger-scale research is needed. This research should investigate the extent to which study abroad programmes align with and effectively contribute to national educational reform objectives. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for research that examines

how to best support EFL instructors returning to Saudi HE institutions, ensuring they can effectively utilise their international experiences in local classrooms and educational contexts.

10.5 Final remarks

This research, initially sparked by my own reflections as an EFL instructor, sought to understand the impact of study abroad programmes on instructors like myself. While I began with the assumption that this impact would be unequivocally positive, the literature and, more importantly, the narratives of my participants, revealed a far more complex picture. The influence of such programmes is not linear but rather an intricate tapestry of personal growth, professional challenges, and individual journeys.

By centring the voices of EFL instructors, this research underscores the value of their lived experiences and the unique insights they offer. It is my sincere hope that the findings presented here will contribute to meaningful discussions and informed decisions regarding professional development initiatives within the Saudi MoE and HE institutions.

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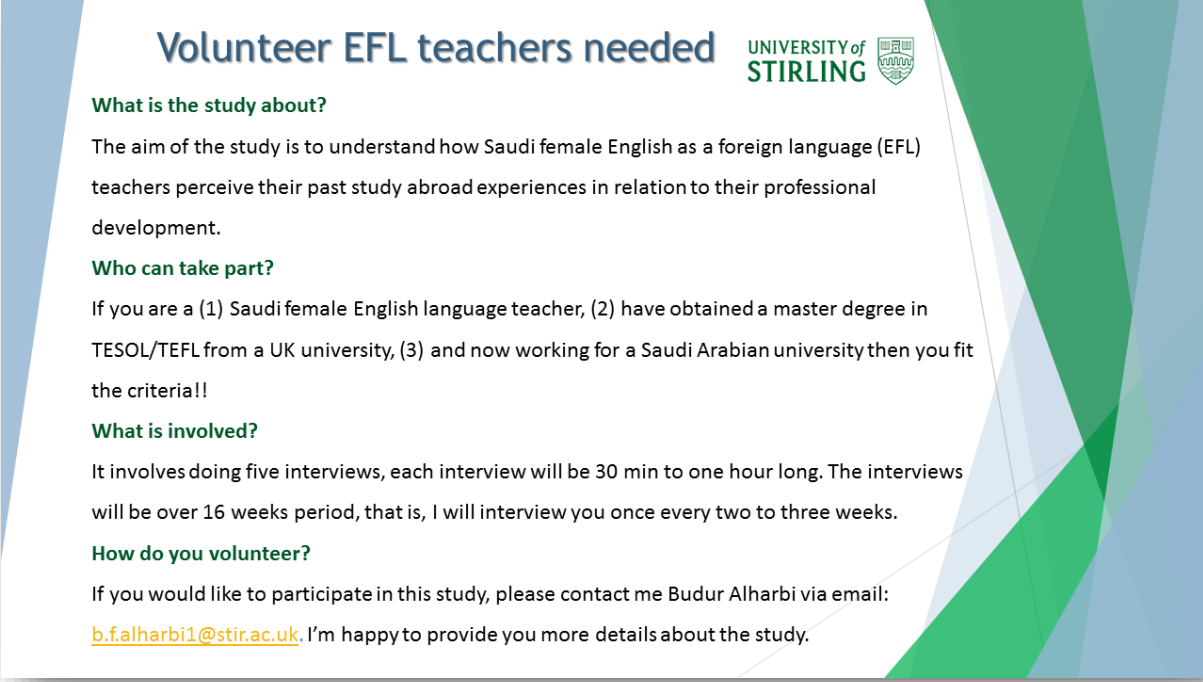
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Appendix 1: Ethical approval



Appendix 2: Advertisement on social media channels



Volunteer EFL teachers needed

UNIVERSITY of STIRLING 

What is the study about?
The aim of the study is to understand how Saudi female English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers perceive their past study abroad experiences in relation to their professional development.

Who can take part?
If you are a (1) Saudi female English language teacher, (2) have obtained a master degree in TESOL/TEFL from a UK university, (3) and now working for a Saudi Arabian university then you fit the criteria!!

What is involved?
It involves doing five interviews, each interview will be 30 min to one hour long. The interviews will be over 16 weeks period, that is, I will interview you once every two to three weeks.

How do you volunteer?
If you would like to participate in this study, please contact me Budur Alharbi via email: b.f.alharbi1@stir.ac.uk. I'm happy to provide you more details about the study.

Appendix 3. Information sheet

About me	My name is Budur, and I am a doctoral student at University of Stirling.
About the study	I'm exploring study abroad experiences of Saudi female English language teachers in Saudi Arabia. More precisely, I want to explore teachers' perspectives on the impact of their study abroad experience on their professional development.
What will happen in this study?	I will conduct a series of interviews with English language teachers who work for Saudi Arabian universities and who have obtained a master degree in TESOL/TEFL from UK based universities.
What do I expect from you?	I expect you to share your English language teaching experiences and your study abroad experiences. I need to interview you five times. That is, I will interview you once every two to three weeks via online telecommunication programs (Skype or Zoom). The interviews' time will range from 30 minutes to one hour. All the interviews will be audio recorded, transcribed, and extracts will be translated into English.
What do you need to know?	You need to know that your involvement is voluntarily and you do not have to take part in it. If you say yes to participation now and along the way you do not wish to continue, you can withdraw at any time prior to the start of the data analysis and, if you wish, all the interviews we have already done will be deleted. Note that I will keep your name confidential and I will use a pseudonym in my notes, interview transcripts, and research. The raw data you provide will not be shared with your employers or anyone expect my supervisors. The information gained will be used for research purposes under a pseudonym.
How will I use the data?	The information obtained from the interviews will be used in my doctoral thesis. Findings may be also published as academic papers and conference presentations. The data will be kept in locked and secure facilities /or in password protected electronic form.
How can you take part in it?	Please contact me via my contact details, so I can arrange for your participation in this study.
What if I have further concerns or questions?	If you have further concerns or questions on the way in which you have been approached or treated during this study, you should contact Fiona Copland at Stirling University via email : fiona.copland@stir.ac.uk or David Bowker: david.bowker@stir.ac.uk
If you want to contact me	Budur Alharbi E-mail: b.f.alharbi@stir.ac.uk 3517 Colin Bell Building, University of Stirling Stirling UK, FK9 4LA

Appendix 4. Informed consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This consent form aims at to ensuring that you fully understand your participation in this study and you are aware of your rights as a research participant. Please read the following carefully and sign with your initials when appropriate.

	Please Initials
1. I have read and understood the information sheet and I have been given the chance to ask questions about the study.	
2. I know that my participation is voluntary, and I have right to withdraw any time prior to the start of the data analysis without giving a reason, and without any penalty. I should inform researcher via e-mail whether I am happy if the researcher uses the data obtained up to that point.	
3. I understand that I will be interviewed five times over the period of 16 weeks.	
4. I understand that the all the interviews will be audio recorded.	
5. I give permission to the researcher to have my audio recordings.	
6. I understand that my answers could be quoted directly and published under a pseudonym.	
7. I understand that extracts from interviews will be used in the researchers' doctoral thesis and in future publications.	
8. I understanding that the raw data will not be shared with anyone beyond the researcher and her supervisors.	
9. I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidential.	
10. Overall, I agree to take part in this study	

Name of Participant: Signature:

Date:

Appendix 5. Danah 1st interview

أ: بالبداية اذا ممكن تعطيني نبذة صغره عنك او نقدر نقول mini CV?	
ب: ال mini CV حققي	
My name is (Full name – Danah) I graduated majoring in English language from K University	
I worked in a private school for one semester or so	بعدين
I got admitted in the scholarship program	
Then I went to the United States in 2009	
And I stayed there until 2015	
It took me a while to achieve the master degree	
I extended for another year	بعدين و language year ال
I withdraw for a year	بعدين
و بعدين رجعت في جامعة و بعدين حولت من الجامعة لجامعة ثانية	
It took me almost five to six years to get the masters	
I graduated December 2015	بعدين
و بعدين على طول رجعت السعودية و	
I stayed for a semester	
As a language instructor	
I got a job in R university as a lecturer	بعدين
I preceded from there	و
يعني 16 و 17 و 18	
So yes three years	
أ: راح ارجع فيك وراء و زي ما قلت لك المقابل هاذي عن مرحلة ما قبل الابتعاث سؤالي الاول ليش اخترتي اللغة الانجليزية و ليش التعليم؟	
ب: ليش اللغة الانجليزية و ليش التعليم	
طبعا بالنسبة للغة الانجليزية انا اخترتها لانني كنت احبها	
يعني من يوم كنت صغيرة كانت عاجبتني اللغة	
تعرفين طفل يعني كانت عالقة في ادني و اتخيل الاصوات	
و اقول حاجه مو مفهومه	
It doesn't make any sense	
كنت اقول (Gibberish –imitating the sounds of English)	
اتخيل اني قاعدة اتكلم انجليزي	
فهذا هو ال main thing اللي خلاني اتعلق بالانجلش	
و هي كانت اللغة اللي تقريبا very common , popular	
و اللحين من بعد ما عشت في مكان فيه diversity كثير و ethnicities كثير	
عرفت انو فيه لغات ثانية French و Spanish زي ال sounds more popular	
لكن في محيطنا احنا في السعودية يمكن الانجلش اكثر حاجه	
نسمعها في الافلام و في المطاعم و في الاشياء	
فيمكن هي استرعت انتباهي اكثر شيء	
هو اللي mainly قبل لانجليزي	
طبعا اللي هو قبل الابتعاث	
اتخرجت من الثانوي عادي	
فكنت محتاره بين التخصصات ايش ادخل ايش ادخل	
علمي و لا ادبي ادبي و لا علمي	
الحيرة العادية ما اقول لك انو خياره كان مبني على معرفه و لا على حاجه انا ابغاها	

هو كذا by default او بطبيعة الحال

دخلت اقتصاد منزلي

سواق خالتي على اساس نروح مع بعض مشوارينا و نقضي مع بعض

و بعدين ما قدرت اكمل مع انه كان مقعدي جامعي و وضعي منتظم و كانت اموري حلوه

و كان تخصص اللي هو اقتصاد منزلي fun

كان عباره عن رسم و تريكو و الوان و ما ادري ايش

اشياء مره سهله

موزي الدراسة الاكاديمية ما فيه theories و ما فيه شغل كثير و مافيه,,

يعني زي بقية التخصصات

بس انا حسيت اني اروح و احي ..

قبل نهايه الترم رحلت للجامعة الثانية ال campus الثاني اللي فيه التخصصات الادبية و كان عندهم حاجه الانتساب

الانتساب لسه مفتوح الين نهايه الترم

قلت له لو انا بغير تخصصي من هنا ل

قالو لي " انتي علمي عشان تنقلين ادبي لازم تكملين و لازم تجيبين معدل و زي كذا و تنقلين بنهايه السنة ما راح تقدرين تنقلين الآن"

فقلت no i'm not gonna waste a whole year to do this

قررت اني اروح اسحب ملفي و اسجل منتسبه يعني بصرف النظر

يعني انتي تغيرين من جامعة لكلية

طبعاً الكلية كانت هذي الايام يعني شويه اشد

ف انتي لما تقولين جامعة it sounds more academic than a college عندنا هنا في السعودية

فكانت صدمة للأهل "كيف تخلين الجامعة و تروحين لكلية كأنك مدرسة

"تركنتي مثلاً مكافأتك المنتظمة

شهادتك راح تطلع منتسبة"

هذا كله ما فكرت فيه لاني كنت حابه أخذ تخصص انا ابغاه

و اللي انا حاسته كويس

طبعاً انا ليش قاعدة اقول لك هاذي المعلومات لانه يمكن خلال بحثك تستفيدين

انه كيف المناهج او كيف فرق التدريس كيف الجامعات على اي اساس تبني

كيف الفرق بين خريجين الجامعة و خريجين الكلية التربوي و اللي من غير تربوي و اللي ادب انجليزي و اللي translation

و اللي كذا و اللي كذا بما انه تخصصك في ال education

كانت الفكرة في الكلية كانت 12 مادة per term

فكنا روح من الصباح الى الساعة 2 الظهر كأنها دراسة مدرسية

عرفتي it was very heavy very intensive courses

طبعاً 8 منها كانت ال core courses في الانجليش

و 4 منها كانت educational

اللي هي التربية علم النفس طرق تدريس و ما الى ذلك

فكانت دراستي جدا ضاغطة ما بين الادب و ما بين الترجمة و ما بين اللغويات و ما بين ال phonetics ما بين ال translation ما بين الانجليش

literature

كنا ناخذ بجميع فروعها يعني ما بين صرف ما بين لغويات و syntax و morphology

Everything , a piece of everything

فكانت النتيجة الدراسة مره صعبه

و on top of that we were prepared educationally to be an educator

اللي هو الاعداد التربوي

يعني سبحان الله رب ضارة نافعة

يعني اهلي ما كان عاجبهم الوضع و كانت اول سنة في الانتساب صدمة

خصوصاً انو كيف تدخلين تخصص لغة اجنبية لازم انتي you practice

و لازم تكونين وسط البيئة اللي تتكلم و لازم تستخدمين المعمل
و تكونين على connection خصوصا ال intensive courses بالشكل هذا
12ماده انتي بتشييلينها و وقتك كلوه بتكونين منتسبه
طبعاً انا كنت منتسبة بالاسم بس
و لكن انا كنت اداوم بشكل يومي في الكلية
اروح للمكتبة حقت التصوير و I hang out مع البنات الموجودين
اشوف مين الاوائل في الدفعة احاول اوصل لل instructors و البروفيسورز during their office hours
يعني I make the contact
هذا الشيء خلاني starting everthing from scratch
و للامانه في المنتسبات ما كان فيه الا انا و حده ثانيه متزوجه كانت حاول and she withdraw
خلصت الترم الاول و يا دوبي خلصت شغل و جيت الاوراق من المكتبة و جلست اقرأ و احاول استوعب كل سؤال
و كل teacher و كيف اسلوبها و كيف اسألها و كيف كذا
خلصت من الترم الاول و الحمدلله I scored very high scores
و خلصت من الترم الثاني و خلاص انتهيت من السنه هادي كلها
كانت محورية صراحه
و بعدين السنه الثانيه ريحت صراحه
داومت بعد الناس داومو بشهر
على اساس انا انتساب و راح اكمل السنه الثانيه انتساب و عارفه انوه ما فيه داومات
فلمن جيت لقيت نفس القوائم محطوطه على الباب
و ليقت اسمي من ضمن البنات اللي تكون السنه الاولى ممتازه و معدلك يعني 4 و نص و your scored As in most of the things
النظام تلقائياً يحولك منتظمة و انتي ترجعين و تحسبينيها
فكان اسمي ينزل في القوائم و التحضير و كل شيء على اساس اكون المفروض طالبه منتظمة
جيتهم على نص الترم و اتفاجأت اني اتحولت انتظام فحببت الفكره و كملت
و التحقت مع البنات النظام العادي
و كملت في الكلية السنه الثانيه و السنه الثالثه و السنه الرابعه
و سويت ال field work حقي الحمدلله و اتخرجت
و رأساً على طول من اتخرجت رحت للمدرسة الاهليه اللي اتخرجت منها
لانه صاحبها صديقه الوالده و قدمت directly عندهم و اشتغلت مدرسة لغة انجليزية لمدة ثلاث شهور
و بعدين انا I got admitted في البرنامج حق الابتعاث
و جهزت انا و رحت
هذا بالنسبة للانجليزي لاني كنت انا حابته
و لاني حسيت اني حظيت شويه جهد مني انا و برغبه شخصية تماماً
و بدأت فيه
تعرفين لما شيء انتي تبغينه و تحققيه غير الشيء لما يكون مفروض عليك انك دخلتي اي تخصص و اخذتي شهاده و خلاص
بالنسبة ليش التعليم و ليش ال education؟ (راحت تقريباً 4 دقائق)
حلو هالسؤال لانه it determined بعدين my masters و ان شاء الله my PhD
ال education عشان يكون امتداد حق التخصص حقي
لان البكالوريوس كان مبني على التربية كمان التيسول حقي او الماستر تكون على ال education as well
فلما جيت اتخصص فيه قالو لي بعضه يروح لل Art و بعضه يكون لل education
فقلت ال education افضل اللي اخذت فيه مواد ال education و نظريات ال education
غير التيسول اللي يكون based on art
و رايح اكثر لل cultural studies و هادي النواحي
أ: ذكرت لي انه في برنامج البكالوريوس كان فيه تدريب ميداني او field work
ب: ابوه او تدريب عملي

أ: اذا ممكن تتكلمين عن تجربتك في التدريب العملي ؟

ب: التجربة كانت حلوه

هو انتي عارفه لما الوحده توصل تقريبا ل هالمرحلة و تبغى تصوير استاذة و لا معلمة و لا في المجال اللي هي تعطي و تقابل الجمهور

راح تكون هاذي النقطة بالنسبة لها هي التوب

فتجربتي كانت ,,, اول شيء كنت جدا جدا متخوفة

لانه انا بطبيعة الحال انسانة مره اجتماعية و مره متحدثة و easy going و عرفتني

لكن خلتنى اكتشف انى انسانة مره قلقه

في اليوم اللي يكون عندي فيه presentation او يكون عندي فيه تحضير او observation or whatever

اكون خلاص انا ما اقدر انام ما اقدر اكل ما اقدر

مركزه بشدة

و بعدين الحمدالله مع الخبرة سبحانه الله خفت هاذي الوتيرة بشكل اكبر و صرت اسيطر عليها بحيث انى ما اكون مره stressed

لدرجة بعد ما اتعينت , كان عندنا mentoring program where they join you with another instructor

فلما خلصت ال mentoring program طبعاً ال mentoring program كانت ال main instructor هي اللي dealing with everyone

و هي اللي تمسك الكلاس من الاول للآخر

فكنت مره مرتبكة راح يجي الاسبوع الجاي و انا راح handle everything

كان مره مربك الموضوع

لكن تجربتي فيه كان مره حلوه من ناحية الاستعداد

من ناحية المواجهه الاولى

يعني الحلو في ال interview انو راح يرجعني لل reflective process

يعني where I have to remember my first days teaching

كنت دايماً Memorize how I'm gonna start everything

لكن الآن صرت اعطي بخبره بحب اكبر و استعداد اكثر

ارتحت مع نفسي ارتحت مع ادواتي ارتحت مع ال resources اللي عندي

مع المجموعة اللي انا already مسويتها من activities من اشياء مجهزه

غير لما تكونين انتي تسوين كل حاجه للمره الاولى

هذا شيء

الشيء الثاني اللي كمان بسبب لي الربكة اللي هو waiting to be observed

انو خلاص راح انتهي .. ما ابى entering the class مو بالضروري هو they are picking on you

بس هو يبقى بطبيعة الحال ال process هاذي غير مريحة

عرفتي تكون شويه مقلقه

لا للشخص يعني و لا للشخص الثاني

انا عارفه انه اجراء لازم يتم و طبيعي جدا عند كل الناس

بس برضو فيه يعني نقطة discomfort

Mild discomfort about this

هاذي هي الحاجه which annoys me a little bit

مو لان انا annoyed because I don't want this

بس لانه انا I feel annoyed because it is overwhelming to me

و احسها very very stressful

مع انو انا سويت اشياء كثيرة مشابهه بدايه بالتدريب الميداني اللي احنا سويناها في الكلية

و اخذت during the masters سيمستر اللي هو volunteered work

و اخذت السيمستر الثاني اللي هو ال mandatory field work

Where you achieve عدد من الساعات تقريبا 100 ساعه في ال institute

و بعدين عندك option انك تسوي volunteered hours as a tutor

بس انا I did both of them which they were fine

ال observation و لا ال mentoring program ما كان نوع تقييمي مثلا و سلطوي و مخيف او مربك زي اللي احنا فاهمينه
كان team ال instructors الاكثر خبرة و ال teacher الثاني اللي موجود ممكن ينيهك ممكن يخليك..
فهي هادي الحركه يعني تعتبر من اساليب التقييم ال peer feedback
فكانت حلو و كانت مره مفيدة لي
Very beneficial و كنت اسأل انا ؟ how did I do of this activity
و كانو كذا very supportive و داعم اكثر من someone setting at the back of the class to find what is going on
رغم انو انا في ال observation حققي اخذت كلها full mark
الحمد لله يعني five out of five outstanding performance الحمد لله
But still انا احس انو مره يوترني
حتى في ايام هذا , ما بيان التوتر اثناء ما انا بعطي لانه هذا its not professional
لكن بيان علي بعدين كذا
لما يخلص الكلاس احس انو ودي ابكي عرفتي كيف
انو انتهيت من هالشيء لانه مره مره متعب
أ: اتفهم كليا (ضحك)
ب: (ضحك)
أ: اذا تتذكرين ايش اساليب التدريس اللي استخدمتها في اول كلاس في التدريب العملي و من وين اخذتها ؟
ب : during my masters or BA
أ: ال BA
ب: بالنسبة لل BA اساليب التدريس لانه للامانه احنا ما عندنا ..
ما كنا ندرس ال education بالنظريات عرفتي
ما كانو مثلا يدرسون نظريات التعليم او ال learning styles for the students او انه لازم تقسمينهم كذا او كذا
لا كان مجرد مجرد تهيئة
يقول لك طرق التدريس لازم يكون عندك استعدادات و امكانيات و كيف تربطين الهدف بالواقع
و كيف تربطين الواقع بالبيئة الإسلامية و
كيف تجهزين الانشطة و كذا يعني
How to develop an activity ما كان موجود عندنا
هادي كلها احنا البنات اللي كنا نتنافس عليها و نسويها
فما اذكر انو انا دخلت و انا عندي علم و إحاطة و كفايه نظرية
بستخدم هذا الاسلوب و لا بستخدم هذا الاسلوب
و لكن كنت دائما اركز على ال trends اللي involves the students more
لانه انا نفسي اكره هالحاجز بين شخص و شخص ثاني
انا احب انو انا اكون جالس في الكلاس و انا مرتاحه
اعتمدت انا الفكره اللي هو its gonna be activities activities activities و بعدين they pick up the mostly
طبعاً لانه انا restrictive and my hands are tied to follow this form
حق التحضير و حق ال warm up activities و procedures و حق moving on tasks
و task chain اللي لازم تسوينها و بعدين ال summative assessment
و ال assessment part لما يجي و بعدين giving students feedback
ف انا عشان التقييم I followed this procedure
did it ايس واقعيا الاسلوب اللي استخدمته mainly student-centred kinda of learning
Where I stand as a couch when they needed help مثلاً
لانه غالباً ال material ولا ال information concept that I present to students wasn't totally new to them
لانه ما كان فيه ثقة كامله they assign a whole section to the trainees و لا للبنات اللي جابن للتدريب الميداني
كانو يعطونا المراجعه مثلاً راجعين لهم الاختبار
راجعين لهم unit 5 and 6 راجعي لهم كذا و كذا

كانت المعلومات ما هي مقدمة بشكل جديد لل students
كانت بالشكل اللي سبق هم اتعرفو عليه و اتقنوه
ف بالتالي الفكره كانت اسهل لي حتى انا في ال activities
They picked up everything و حبوه حبو الفكره
و ساعدوني كثير
اتذكر انو لما بدأ اشرح انو حابين لانه فيه استاذة جديده تدرسنا
انو فيه كذا انو فيه كذا
لاقو صعبه مثلا انو استاذة جديده و لازم نتكلم انجليزي طول الوقت
حنا مقيدات انو حنا نتكلم انجلش
شوفي later on لما كبرنا و اتعلمنا و درسنا و عرفنا اكثر
ال study هاذي و ال school اللي تقولك English zone only و لا انجلش
It turned out to be an old fashion school and its ok to use the learners mother tongue to enhance their
knowledge
لانه يعتبر من ال multiple intelligence اللي موجوده عندهم
هي حاجه حلوه انو you shift from once a while و لا you use a word here and there
يوجدون ال similarities و لا differences اللي موجوده بينهم و بين اللغة الثانية
و احيانا اقول للبنات الكلمة هاذي نفس الكلمة الموجوده عندنا بالعربي
زي ما احنا نقول ديموقراطية) democracy انا (imitating students reaction – فيالتالي الكلمة ما تنسي الكلمة ابدأ
طول الوقت نقول do you guys remember that word in Arabic ? we have it in Arabic too
فعلى طول تلقينهم كلهم يقولون Democracy democracy
ف زي كذا
أ: ذكرتي نقد على التدريب الميداني اللي هو عدم استخدام اللغة العربية , هل فيه نقد ثاني على the whole process of the field work?
ب: شوفي و للامانه انا ما ابغي اظلم اللي سبقونا في المجال و الخبرات و لا لا
لكن ابي اقول انو ال English teaching recently خلينا نقول
لأنك انتي باحثة و هذا مجالك
Within the last ten years ترى حصل shift كبير
قبل كان عندهم انو I learned English and I have the second language و اذا انا ما اتكلم بس انجليزي
ابربر انجليزي طول الوقت
الجماعة فهمو ما فهمو تابعو استوعبو
و بالتالي زي ما انتي شابفه من خلال الدراسات و من خلال ال statistics
نسبة الرسوب نسبة ال demotivation نسبه العزوف عن اللغة و عن ممارستها بشكل او ب آخر
كانت خلال عشر سنين مرعيه
بدليل انو الطالب السعودي في ال public education system بيدرس انجليزي
Lets say الثلاث سنين حقت المتوسط و بعد الثلاث حقت الثانوي و بعدين السنه ال foundation في الجامعة
هاذي ست سنوات هاذي اذا ما فرضنا انو الطالب التحق بالتعليم الاهلي هاذي ست سنوات ثانية
فصارت 12 سنه
هو لو انه يدرس 12 سنه في اي مكان ثاني في العال كان صار بلبل
هي الانجلش ايش بتزيدين و تعيدين فيه هو Grammar و ياخذونها فيه مره
ال tenses ال if clause ياخذون ال reported speech
فياخذون و يعيدون فيها every single time ما فيه حاجه جديده
يعني ما فيه قيمه مضافه كله repetitive عرفتي
هاذي شغله انو كان الانجلش كان تركيزهم على اللغة و انو ما يكون فيه حاجه ثانية
نفس التقييم احسه كان شويه مجحف
يعني لو نتكلم عن العشر سنين اللي راحت

اللي هو تقييمي انو هل انا وريتها اللغة اللي عندي
هل انا وريتها انو اتكلم انجليزي طول الوقت في الكلاس
لانه ما اقدر اتكلم غير اللغة هاذي سواء فهمو البنات و لا ما فهمو
ال way of giving feedback كانت صح و لا لا ؟
التطبيق اللي استخدمته لهم كان effective و لا لا
كل هالاشياء ما حس انه تم تقييمي عليها
كثر ما انه ايش قدمتي للبنات activities وسائل مبهرة و اشياء ثانية جديده و لا لا
كان فيه حاجات كانت culturally على قولتهم يدققون عليها الجيل القديم مثلا لا تستخدمون الاغاني لا تستخدمون الاقلام لا تستخدمون الترجمة لا
تستخدمون الاشياء الثانية
فتحسين الموضوع مره جدا مقيد و it's like I'm teaching kindergarten عرفتي
كان الموضوع كله around colors و big letters و الحروف اللي تتحط على المغناطيس و تتشال عن المناطق
ما كانت اشياء تحاكي في ال thinking عرفتي
عقلية و interesting لهم
زي ما احنا اتعلمنا بعدين في المعاهد , معاهد امريكا
ف اتغير الوضع totally
أ: صحيح
ب: ايوه فتره التعليم حققتنا
يعني انا لما اتخرجت مثلا اربع سنين درستها هنا اللي هو في ال bachelor
سنه رحلت لها السنه في امريكا حسيته مختلفه تماما
حسيت انو كل اللي درستو ماله علاقه باللي رجعت درستة السنه هذيك في الولايات المتحده مختلف تمام
لا في المحتوى لا في طريقة ال delivery لا فيه طريقة التقييم لا في مستواي انا شخصا عرفتي
لانه انا في مستواي شخصا كان الموضوع ضغط ضغط للحين عندي اختبار بالمعرون و اختها انا لازم جيب ال A هاذي
و ارواح عند الدكتوراه الفلانيه و ارواح عند المكان الفلاني
لكن انا ايش استقدت انا شلون حلت انا سويت reflection و لا لا
انا كتبت ال paper حطيت رأي و لا ؟ انا بحثت و لا لا ؟
انا كتبت المعلومه مختلفه تماما نفس طريقة ال education مختلفه
نفس الوقت كنت قاعده حاول انه يكون for my students
انا انا تجربتي نفسها تكون تجربيه مفيده للطلاب نفسهم
و عشان كذا مو مدحا في نفسي انا احس كلاساتي كلها مختلفه
البنات احسهم يحسون براحه اكبر
يعني انا ما ادقق على التفاصيل يعني تبين تجلسين بعبايتك اجلسي تبين تتفصخين تفصخي
يعني مو انا I don't care اهمشكي و لا اهمش نفسيك
و لكن تجلسين براحتك
فالبنات فعلا يجلسون براحتهم
بالنسبة لاستخدامهم مثلا الجوالات
اخليهم يستخدمون التليفون لكن بطريقة تحمسهم
منا احيانا لعب كاهوت و لا تابلت
و لا نسوي هاشتاق على تويتر و كلهم يشاركون
ما خليت شعور انا في محاضره وانا لازم اقل تلفوني فخليته بطبيعة الحال زي ما احنا في امريكا
ف فعلا حسيت الاشياء ,, التفاصيل هاذي فرقته مع البنات
حتى البنات تحسيتها كذا ,, من ادور في الكلاسن حالها تحط تلفونها و تحاول قد ما تقد توريني يعني انا مركزه في الكلاس
و انا اقدر استخدم هذا في البحث لانه كذا
فحببت انو انبي عندهم حاجه كمان ال responsibility
الاشياء اللي حسيت انها نقد يعني مو انها وصلتنى بس تعرفين لما نطلع "هاه وش قالت لك هاه"

"علقت على هذا الموضوع"

و احنا كمان we tend to use كمان الغلط كمان مننا احنا
من جهالتنا

اهم شيء اخذ الدكتور الهينة اللينة اللي ما تدري عن شيء
حطيلها قهوه و توافق

جيبلي لها كيك تنسى الموضوع " فهمتي

فحتى مننا احنا ك candidates

لانه ما كان عندنا مفهوم ال self-assessments

انتي قيمي نفسك و انتي سوي الفورم هذا على نفسك

انتي قولي لي ايش حبيتي و ش ما حبيتي

فيه discussion في ال pre-interview و لا لا

بينما four years later ما هو بالشيء البعيد

اقولك اخذت سنين عشان اتعلم ..لا

في ظرف سنتين ثلاثة I achieved the master degree

و سويت نفس الحركة

كان اختلاف فضيع

اول شيء حكاية ال report في ال mentoring system هذا

لانه انتي لما تجلسين مع ال mentor لا تجلسين مع .. فيه co-teaching

و يكون مسمماكي assistance tutor

ال procedures حقته انو انتي تجلسين كل اسبوع

و تاخذين ال feedback من ال mentor حقك اللي موجود معاكي

و بعدين تحطين ال feedback هاذي كلها و انو انتي yourself assessment في reflective paper

و تقولين ايش كانت مشكله الاسبوع الاول و ايش كانت شكله الاسبوع الثاني و ايش كانت مشكله الاسبوع الثالث

و لكن mean while انتي تكلمتي و جلستي مع ال mentor و قالك واحد اثنين ثلاثة

و انا شخصيا بقول انا عندي مشكله واحد اثنين ثلاثة و كمان ال results

اللي هي تجي من ال students

Students votes or students rating و لا ال student level

سواء من خلال ال quiz او من خلال تصويئاتهم هم

Teacher A و لا Teacher B

مثلا انتي حبيتي ال .. students فيخلون ال students كمان يصغون

فهناك كانت التجربة حقيقية اكثر لانه تعليم اللغة مع متحدثين لغير العربية

ف انا درست صينيين روسيين Japanese Korean

الاشخاص اللي ما كانت لغتي الام ال mean حققت ال communication بيني و بينهم

فكانت ال transaltion عندي او استخدام الترجمة ما اقدر له او استخدام اللغة الام ما اقدر له

فبالنالي انا علي ل level لانو I have to teach them in English

Because they don't understand any other language

هذا الشيء كمان من ضمن التجربة

خلي التجربة حقيقية اكثر

احنا عندنا هنا قبل بس اتكلمي انجلش لا تتكلمين عربي

هناك انا اضطرريت اتكلم انجلش لانهم ما راح يفهمون عربي and they don't know it

ف بالفعل كان التقييم اول شيء على introducing the objectives

لانه? they need to understand what is the objective? Why we are doing this

Because you need to do this this and that

و بعدين على introducing the task and giving structure

في ال instructions تحسين يركزون معاني كثير تحسين في loss فيه confusion
 اما ال teacherمره مستعجله او اما كذا
 تحسين ال students did they pick whatever و لا لا ؟
 Did they pick the task ؟ و لا لا
 طبعاً انا اعرف من خلال اللي هو achieving the task
 بعضهم يكتب ال task غلط مثلاً انا اقول ال write an introductory paragraph about yourself including your likes dislikes
 and preferences
 ال content مثلاً او ال objective مثلاً التعبير عن التفضيلات
 I like I dislike I love I prefer I adore
 فالمفروض يعبر عن نفسه في paragraph
 الاغلبية يجي يكتب informative information
 'My name is Su ling I am 20 years I study in California '
 كذا | كذا
 فيالتالي الخطاء هذا من انو الطالب ما فهم ال instructions
 او انه ما فهم ال key words اللي موجوده في ال task
 فهذا يعني انه عندك مشكله في using the terms او عندك مشكله في ال delivering
 او عند ال students مشكله انه they didn't understand the words totally
 They didn't understand
 adore or prefer or like or dislike
 So they didn't pick it up
 فيالتالي فيه مشكله عندك ناقشناها المرة الاولى مع ال mentor
 و ردودي مثلاً او my responses اللي هو self-assesment هو yes
 did face امثلاً two or three students who didn't have the ability انهم يكتبون paragraph صحيح
 In the correct way
 بعدين نجمع هاذي الاجتماعات هاذي كلها اللي هي ال meetings او ال gatherings
 و بعدين اكتب انا عليها ال reflections
 ف خلال ترم احنا اجتمعنا خرينا نقول ثمان مرات
 فطلع علينا ثمان بما بقول mistakes لانو احنا ال teachers ما فيه حاجه right or wrong
 لكن بنقول experiences او gaps او things that you have to avoid next time
 فطلع عندي مره في ال using instructions
 طلع عندي مره في اللي هو terms
 used terminology that اما ابقولك انو الخطاء جسيم لكن كان فيه ممكن حلول و بدائل مره سهله
 يعني ال teacher اللي معي قالت لي ببساطه "Danah why not let them using the dictionary why abandon the dictionary"
 فعلياً انا جلست افكر بيني و بين نفسي ليش انا ما ابيهم ابدأ يستخدمون ال dictionary هذا نهائياً
 قلت لانهم.. they are using their phones and translation.
 لانه المشكله هنا مو بس انهم عرب
 يعني جنسيات اخرى و لغات اخرى
 فهي تقول لي ليش ما خليتهم بسيط و منطقي و كلاسيكي ليش ما تستخدمين dictionary ؟ عشان يعرفون معاني الكلمات هاذي
 ليش انتي تكتبين الكلمه و تبدئين تشرحينها و تعطين مثال عليها و تحرفين الكلاس كله عن استخدام ال dictionary
 فهاذي نقطة مثلاً من ال personal experience حققي
 فقلت "oh do you think it is effective"
 'of course of course it's a language centred they should make use of their dictionary in each class'
 ف فعلاً اشرت لي على ال dictionary
 حاجه كذا out of no where ما استخدمته و ما انو فكرت فيه او شيء
 هاذي شغلها ثانية

الشغلة الثالثة اللي هي مثلا ال examples
 ف انا كنت بركز على اللي هو ال learning process
 اني اسوي معاهم نفس ال learning process
 يعني ياالله let's do this
 و لا يتفرون مثلا على movie و من ال movie او ال clip هذا يبدأون extracting the objectives
 و لا extracting the theme of the unit
 و بعدين نروح على ال exercise و لا على ال activity
 و بعدين نروح على كذا
 فthere is a lack of examples
 و لا lack of demonstration
 فهادي من الاشياء اللي مره كمان كانت موجوده عندي
 المهم انو خلال الثمان اسابيع كانت موجوده على ارض الواقع لانه انتي يكون معاك شخص ثاني خبير 18 سنه و لا 17 سنه
 فحببت استفتت منها و من her feedback و من her comments
 يعني زي كذا اشياء بسيطة
 فعرفتي اللي زي اللي لمعتني كذا
 'no you have a teacher in you'
 فكانت كلماتها مؤثرة
 'Danah you have a teacher in you, you are ready, you are doing what you need to do and its okay'
 عرفتي كانت تعطيني comment و تشوفني انصرع عليه و اكتبه و احلله و اقول okay what do I need to do
 فكانت تهدي من . . من
 فكانت تقول 'you have a teacher in you but you have to do this'
 'have you thought of this or this'
 بعدين كمان later on انا اكتشفت ال concept حق ال teaching اللي هو تبادل المعلومات و تبادل الخبرات
 زي ما يصير معانا كمان حتى هنا في الجامعة
 و اقول اوكي جايه اللحين
 اليوم مثلا كنت اسأل مس ثانيه و وحده اسمها (x) و وحده اسمها (x) عندنا في الجامعة
 فكنت اقولهم بنات انتو كيف شرحو .. البنات ما هم فاهمين فكره ال future perfect simple و ال future perfect continuous
 ف (x) تقولهم انا قلت لهم بالعربي شرحتلهم بالعربي
 قلت معقوله ي (x) ما فيه any other way تشرحين لهم لفكره هادي
 قالت ما فيه يا انا امثلها لهم و احطها بالامثال بس حسيت لما نربطها لهم بالعربي مره سهله حتى قلتلهم
 حنا ال use حق ال tense هذا is to express something in a certain time in the future - is specifically
 فيكون مره صعب على ال students
 حنا متعودين على ال will و ال going to و خلاص planned action و non planned action
 هو ال future مره سهل لانو حنا خلاص بنحط ال will و ال going to - followed by infinitive
 و لكن لما انتي you want to specify something زي ال tense هذا it has a certain use for it
 فكنت اقولهم "ان شاءالله ما يآذن العصر بكرة الا و حنا بالرياض"
 و الله المثل مره حلو (ضحك)
 ا: بطل المثل صراحه (ضحك)
 ب: مره واقعي المثل مره جاي من الخندق (ضحك)
 و فعلا يخدم الفكره و الزمن
 و قالت لك certain time in the future بكرة
 انشاءالله ما يآذن العصر اللي هو certain time و بكرة ايش بيصير بنكون وصلنا اتمينا الفعل انو حنا موجودين في الرياض
 و بكذا حنا استخدمنا القاعدة
 قلت لها it make sense لانه احنا خبيرات و عارفين و we are linking it to something similar to what we say

في ال norms حقتنا في العربي
 قلت لها بس النبات they are not gonna pick it
 It is very hard for them
 They need further examples
 فهذا رجعتي انو انا لازم استخدم معاهم example examples examples
 ما هو in a way انهم بس يعتمدون ال examples لانني انا ما احبها لكن انا شرحتها لهم مع ال differentiation
 بين هذا و بين الزمن الثاني اللي هو مثلا using present continuous to give a meaning of near future
 زي لما نقول مثلا I'm getting a haircut tomorrow
 ليش ما استخدمت I will get a haircut or I'm going to cut my hair tomorrow
 لانو انا اقدر اعبر بالطريقة هاذي و also I can express using another term و لا using another tense
 فعندنا هذا ال tense و عندنا هذا ال tense و عندنا هذا ال tense
 It takes time but slowly slowly عرفتي
 Sometimes you need to elaborate and you need to express and you need to give more examples
 And you need to use more than way to give the things
 Especially if the concept is difficult for the students
 لكن sometimes when the concept is a piece of cake
 They simply get bored
 "شرحتيه خلاص ندري يا الله اللي بعده"
 "فهمنا الحكاية) they feel bored like hell" ضحك)
 كمان ال teacher عليها حمل انو يا الله what's going on you moderate عرفتي
 أ: احتاج اتوسع معك على هاذي النقطة بس لها مقابلة ان شاء الله لحالها
 ب: ان شاء الله okay just say 'okay by the way I'm very talkative person so at any point you feel that we should precede just say 'okay
 Danah enough next one I have a time her'
 أ: (ضحك) you know I would never say that you are giving me rich data here
 ب: (ضحك) ممتاز انا احببت .. انا ليش اتوسع في هذا و هذا و هذا انا لانني I understand انو انتي حاليا في مرحلة بحث فالباحث يكون
 supervising و لا picking everything و observing
 مثلا لما يكون عنده كلمة و لا مقارنه و لا كتاب و لا جملة ممكن تفيد في البحث
 و يمكن تكون a door you open it and you start from there
 ف انا حابه مو بس انا I talk و خلاص و انتي تجلسين و تحليلين و تطلعين ال text و لا تسوين مدري و شو
 حلو كمانه تحسبته leading
 أ: و الله I appreciate your words and every sentence counts
 We are going to expand on these experiences later ان شاء الله
 I want to take you back to you pre-study abroad experience
 ليش اخترتي امريكا؟
 ب: (laughs) why America ? why not America :
 أ : (laughs)
 قلتي لي برنامج الملك عبدالله
 ب: ايوه برنامج الملك عبدالله الله يرحمه
 اللي هو البرنامج اللي حسبت له ثقل و له اهميه و له results احنا الآن في 2019 قاعدين نلمسه و قاعدين contribute in it
 حديث عن برنامج الملك عبدالله و التغيير في السعودية (من 17:00 الى 19:00)
 أ: برجع اسألك ليش امريكا؟ لاني اتذكر برنامج الملك عبدالله كن فيه خيارات دول كثيرة
 ب: و اللي شوفي امريكا كانت لنا زيارات سابقة و تماشي فيها هاذي حاجه
 الحاجه الثانية خالتي موجوده هناك خالتي و زوجها
 ف It felt like a support

لمن انتي تروحين مكان تحسين انك ودك تروحين المكان اللي لك احد فيه و اللي فيه احد يعرفك هناك
 ليش؟ لانو انتي تساعدك في البلد و لانه .. حلو كمان انها خاله like a mom عرفتي (interruption by someone)
 ف اقول لك هادي الشغله
 الشغله الثانية كمان لانو فيها خيارات كثيرة و فيها جامعات كثيرة و فيها امكانيه قبولات غير محدوده
 غير لما تكون كندا او استراليا
 استراليا البعد طبعاً خلاها جدا مستنناه
 كندا الجو و البرد و ال lack of admission
 و البلدان العربية طبعاً كانت not on the list لانه محد بيغي يروح هناك
 كانت فيه المجر و هنغاريا و المانيا و فرنسا و لكن طبعاً ال language كانت major barrier
 رغم انو ال language كانت مدفوعة يعني لو انتي تروحين مثلاً اخترتي فرنسا و لا اخترتي المانيا و لا اخترتي هذا
 ترى المانيا السنتين حقت اللغة مدفوعة و لا هي بسنه وحده سنتين
 تروحين يعطونك سنتين تتعلمين فيها الالمانية و فرنسا كذلك
 الصين و اليابان يعني انتي ستوعيه حجم البرنامج و ثقله و الخدمات المقدمة للمواطنين
 It looks like a dream
 اللين بعثتك و وظيفتك تحتاجين فيها الدعم جيبى approval انو انتي تروحين و الله يستر عليك
 اول كان دفع يعني ثلاث سنين اروح ادرس في الصين لغة صينية و بعدين اتخصص و بعدين اجيب القبول و بعدين..
 آه كان برنامج ثري و قوي و فضيع
 فهادي الاشياء اللي هي خلتنى نختار امريكا
 اول شيء المعرفة فيها
 انو حنا نعرفها و رحنا لها و حبينها
 ثاني شيء اللي هو ال relative اللي هو موجود هناك و ال support حقهم و انو حلو تروحين مكان و لك داعم فيه بالغربة
 ثالث شيء اللي هو اللغة حقها انو حنا عارفين لغتها الانجليزية
 رابع شيء ال variety حقها الموجود في الولايات و ال variety في القبولات و ال variety في ال learning اللي موجود لانه جامعاتها كانت
 مختلفة
 انا طبعاً تجربتي فيها مبنيه على تجربه خالتي و رجال خالتي و ولد خالتي و ولد خالي الثاني لانهم كلهم كانوا مبتعثين
 فكل واحد له تجربة في ولايه و له تجربه ابتعاث و له تجربه في غربه
 انا شخصياً كا انسانة تلقيني دايماً اسمع وش سويت وش حظيت طيب ايش كذا
 ف انا ما اسوي شيء الا بعد ما اسمع التجربة من الشخص نفسه صاحب التجربة
 و لا عندي مشكله في الثقة
 فخالتي و رجالها كان يقولولي تعالي الولايات المتوسطة كويسه اسعارها كويسه مدري ايش مدري ايش
 لكن انا عن تجربتي اخترنا سان ديبغو في كاليفورنيا
 اول شيء كاليفورنيا ما يجيها عواصف ما يجيها برد
 كانت عندي مشكله مع البرد خورافيه
 انا انسانة براده مرره (ضحك)
 ما احب البرد و لا اواطن البرد
 فهذا ال main thing اللي خلاتنا نختار امريكا صراحه
 و خياراتها متعددة
 أ: طيب هل كان فيه تحفظ من العائله او المجتمع كونك بنت سعودية تطلع برى ؟
 ب: هل كان فيه تحفظ ايوه
 لانه الوالد الله يرحمه اتوفى و انا بالصف الخامس ابتدائي و انا البنت البكر لامي الكبيرة
 و بعدين بعدي ثلاث اولاد
 فهي كبرتت و ربنا الين صرنا في الثانوي
 ف ما تبغى عيالها ما ربتهم و تعبت عليهم " تفلتيينهم في امريكا امريكا !!!"
 "تخليينهم في امريكا ليه!"

عرفتي كانت مستغربه جدا
او زي ما تقولين صعبه شويه
و خصوصا انها كان في البدايات
بس سبحان الله بعد ثاني سنه و ثالث سنه
حتى عمي نفسه ما بقول عارض بس هو اللي كان شايل هم البيت
او هو اللي كان يرعانا
هو و جدي بعد وفاه الوالد الله يرحمه
و عمائي و خوالي يعني كان فيه involvement اكبر
فتلقين خوالي من جهه و جدي على امي و خالي
فحتى لما سافرنا انا و اخوي اخذنا جدتي معنا لانو امي كانت موظفه ما تقدر تروح
خالتي موجوده هناك already و زوج خالتي موجود و عيال خالتي موجودين ف اخذنا جدتي معنا نقول يعني "حج بحاجه"
يعني تشوف بنتها و عيال ولده و كمان عيال بنتها اللي راحت معاهم
غير كذا حنا حاسين انو فيه عزوه في احد معنا عرفتي
الفكره كانت مستكره كبار و بن تقعين لحالك طيب العيال صغار العيال كذا
و انا اقول يمكن احنا بس حاله فردية بسبب وفاه الوالد و اشك انها the same reaction في اشخاص والدهم موجود و قرارهم كأسره بينهم بين بعض
داخلي
مالهم علاقه انه العم يتدخل و لا الجد يتدخل او الخال يرفض او الاخ الثاني ما يوافق
مع انو المنع من السفر "والله ما تروحين" موجود و سمعت عن حالا و ناس سولفو لي
و لكن على ارض الواقع من جهه اخرى بنات بالكريك على قولتهم اللي مع اخوها و اللي مع ابوها و اللي لحالها و اللي اختين و لا ثلاثه و لا اربعه
ابد ما كان المنع زي ما كنا احنا نشوفه بالصوره
يكون حالات فردية
و لكن انا بطبيعة الحال كنا نروح و نجي و نسافر ما كان السفر مشكله
لكن كانت الغريه مشكله
كان الابتعاد عن والدتي يمكن هو المشكله الثانيه
كوننا احنا انو عيالها الاكبر هذا و هذا المشكله الثالثه عرفتي
هاذا هو الشيء
اتذكر انو كان اخوي يبكي
هو اللي كان يبكي انا ما كنت ابكي
انا كنت مبسوطه يالله ابغى اروح what's next
ابي اشوف ابي اعيش ابي استقل
ابي اقع في البلد هاذي
فكنت شايله مسؤوليتها هو و جدتي
لاني انا اللي كنت اتكلم انجليزي بطلاقه
اخوي يتكلم انجلش و لكن ما عنده الجراه انو يروح و يجي
و بعدين من اول ما نزلنا المطار رغم انو نسافر دايم
حصلوه موقف اللي هو random check
اللي هو ياخذون شخص و يحققون معاه على جنب
فحصله الموقف هذاك تول ما وصلنا مطار واشنطن
اخذه على جنب و حققو معاه و انتظر يمكن ساعه ساعتين
و كان شايل همنا قلقان علينا انا و جدتي
قلت له عادي حبيبي حنا ننتظرك سنه سنتين شهر شهرين
يعني انو متوقع انا بنطلع من المطار و نخليك و لا متوقع انو ماندرى عنك
هو طلع مرعوب يعني terrified من هالتجربه
"انتو وينكم طيب وين انتظرتو طيب وين" ..

انو هو حاس انا الرجال و لازم انتبه لهم و ان محبوس و يحققو معاي وين بتروح و ين بتجي

قلت حبيبي it is just a check يحققون معاك لما تكون متهم لما تكون مجرم

لكن هذا شيء طبيعي ممكن انت ممكن غيرك اللي يكون

اللي سألوك شوفه عينك اسئله طبيعيه

وين انتو وين رايحين حجزتو ما حجزتو لقيتو لكم سكن مين معاك ليش جيت وش عندك مين تعرف مين كذا

وين جوالك وين لآب توبك

طبيعي جدا يعني انت جاي انت متوقع

ف اقولك اخوي كان مستنكر يعني الفراق و الله يخليك اجلسي و بلاش و ما ادري ايش

فكنت اقله من جدك انت من جدك قاعد تضايقتي ليه ؟

فكان اللي هو ما يبغي و مهو حاب و انا كنت عام

فقلت لك it's a personal issue اكثر من انها رفض بشكل عام

لانه الكل في عائلتي الحمدالله بالعكس متعلمين و محبين للتعليم و السفر و الثقافه و القراءه و لكل حاجه يعني

فما كانت انو هذا

مع انه مجتمعنا في الطائف قبلي جدا و متحفظ جدا و بدوي جدا بس ما ابغى اقول رجعي جدا

يعني كانت عندهم وش اللي تروح و تجي مسافره الحمدالله

و بعد وفاه والدنا هي اشياء بطبيعة الحال جدي مره استصاب وجدتي مره شالت هم

و العيال هنولي من يربيههم و ال

الآن لما كبرت انظر له انه كان شيء بسيط بس يمكن في هذاك الوقت موضوع جلال

كيف ارملة عندها خمس عيال اكبرهم خامس ابتدائي

آه ذكرتي و الله ايام استعدادنا للبعثه و المقاضي و شنطه البهارات و شنطه القهوة و جدتي

تفاصيل كثيرة

اتذكر لما كنا هناك السعوديين كنا ك community واحد

ف اتذكر البنات يقولون فيه وحده هي و اخوها و معهم جدتهم

البنات اللي في المعهد

لانو انا معهدي على لاهويا بيتش على شاطيء

فمكان المعهد مره جميل فكانت جدتي تجي معنا الصباح

تخلي تجلس في الكافي اللي فوق الين وقت البريك احنا نجي نجلس معاها

في البريك كذا عشر دقائق كذا الين نخلص نرجع كلنا سوا

لانو كمان كنت اخاف عليها تجلس لحالها لانه ما تعرف تتكلم ما وين تروح و ين تجي وش تسوي

فكانت هي جزء صراحه في بدايتي مره جميل

يعني شوفي هو حاجه part of it cultural thing

زي اللي كنا نسمعهم لا والله و ليش امريكا ليش ما يدرسون هنا

و غربه يعني مفهوم الغربه و الابتعاد و هذا

لانو انتي عارفه احنا دايما بطبيعتنا هنا very family oriented كثير

و very attached الين الوحده تكبر يصير عمرها اربعين خمسين سنه و هي مع اهلها

قراراتها كذا و بنفس الوقت كمان انه لا يوجد سيطره و لا يوجد خيارات

و لا يوجد شخصيه للمراء هاذي ادعاءات غير صحيحه البتة هي الاساس و هي المسيطر

و هي القائد و هي ال leader في بيتها

و بعد بيتها اللي هي small unit في ال society

حتى الرجال later on ما يعزم و لا يروح و لا يجي الين ما يشاور اهله و لا زوجته و لا حريم بيته هاه انتو موجودين

ودكم نعزم فلان بكره وكم نطلع مكه بكره

بالعكس هي من باب الدلال و الراعيه و الشيم العربيه الجميله

انا حتى كذا لما يكون فيه discussion كذا مره عن هذا الموضوع

اقول بالعكس I did not find it مشكله

It is not a problem for me

لانه حتى البنت لما يكون عندها ابو او اخو احنا ما نتكلم عن ال individual cases فيه حالات فرديه

و لكن البنت بالزن بالدلع بالمحاوله بالرغبه مره و مرتين و ثلاثه بغض النظر عن العوائق

اما انه تكون العائله او المحرم المسؤول عائق او سبب لا

الدليل انه في ال recent years اتحلل هذا الموضوع تماما و ما عاد صارت فيه

الوحده خلاص totally مستقله تماما تماما تماما

تقدر تروح تقدر تختار وظيفتها تقدر تستأجر تقدر تسوق تقدر تخلص كل اشغالها بسيارتها ببطاقه احوالها المدنية

اشياء كانت الامور تمشي وفقا لاجراءات معينه على حسب اجراء معين

فعلا لحمايتها و لسه موجوده في هاذي الثقافه

سمه ايجابية اكثر من انها سلبيه و لكن ب focus حق ال

media او الشغله اللي هم اشاعوها ركزوا عليها و سوو عليها emphasis in a negative way

و بالتالي اصبحت سلبيه و اصبح الكل يتكلم عنها بطريقة سلبية " oh you are not allowed to drive "

احنا we are not allowed to drive بس عابشين و مبسوطين

و كل بيت فيه سواق و احيانا سواقين و احيانا فيه ثلاث اربع عيال يودون و يجيبون

ما كانت issue يعني يوم ما كنا نسوق ما كنا معرقلين في البيوت

لا كنا نطلع و نتسوق و نساfer و نشرب و ننعزم و نروح زواجات ما كانت عائق

هي مسأله اجرائية وفق قانون

لكن تصويرها في الاعلام و ال media و ال other cultures اتو وش ذا الحق

انا كنت اقول اتو تبون سواقة بس فيه حقوق ثانيه انتي اولي انك تاخذينها كمطلقة ترعين اولادك او كارمله

ولا لا لا هاذي الاولى انك تطالبين فيها من انك انتي تسوقين