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An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context

By

Badriah Alkhannani

**A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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Abstract

The Arabic language and the Islamic faith can be considered the cultural centres of life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). However, English has often been linked to modernisation and development. The KSA is one of the countries that is in possession of oil reserves, and most of laborers that work in this area are native English speakers or English-speaking Saudi nationals. This economic development has increased the demand for English language acquisition by Saudi citizens. As a result, the English language has become very important in the KSA. Therefore, there would presumably be support for and interest in gifted English language learners (GELLs). However, there are concerns about supporting GELLs in the KSA. The focus of gifted education has remained on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. While the acknowledgement of gifted learners within STEM subjects and the considerable educational efforts that are being made to support them are a positive development, these efforts need to extend beyond STEM subjects to the rest of the subjects. For example, there is a paucity of research investigating the best practices for identifying and supporting GELLs in the Saudi Arabian context.

The current study focuses on four aspects of teaching GELLs: teacher attitude, the identification of GELLs, practice and support for GELLs. Teacher attitude underpins the learning and teaching process and appears to be closely linked to identification. The government of the KSA requires that schools identify gifted learners, so understanding how teachers and head teachers identify gifted individuals, particularly GELLs, is an important aim of this study. Strategies for supporting gifted learners are widely used in STEM subjects in the KSA, but little is known about how or even if English as foreign language (EFL) teachers utilise such strategies for GELLs within the classroom. The current study seeks to better understand classroom practice for GELL in the EFL classroom in the KSA. There is a need to ensure that the support offered to GELLs is appropriate, so exploring the views of GELLs in EFL classrooms concerning the kind of support they perceive they require and the kind of support they perceive they currently receive is an important aspect of the study. This study presents findings from: a) a questionnaire that was completed by 100 EFL teachers, b) classroom observations of 10 EFL classes, c) 10 semi-structured interviews with head teachers, d) 10 semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers and e) four focus group sessions held with groups comprising five GELLs each in six Saudi female secondary schools in Almadinah City.

The findings of the questionnaires filled out by EFL teachers indicate that many of them hold positive attitudes towards GELLs, though these views do not always translate into practice. The analysis of the data gathered through the classroom observations demonstrates that the most relevant teaching practices currently used by EFL teachers in this study relate to curriculum planning and delivery in their EFL classes. The findings also suggest that EFL teachers are the primary identifiers of GELLs, which is problematic because a lack of official documentation combined with EFL teachers' beliefs and attitudes may result in the potential mis- or nonidentification of GELLs. The views of the GELLs who participated in the focus group sessions show that additional support regarding EFL classes is required, including, for example, the development and provision of more interesting and relevant topics and resources. Throughout the thesis, the role of the teacher is identified as crucial for offering appropriate learning experiences for GELLs. One major recommendation of this study is the need for the development of effective teacher education and training in both teaching the English language and teaching gifted learners (including GELLs). This training could occur on two levels. First, this training could occur during initial teacher education to ensure that ideas about supporting the learning of all are included in courses. Second, this training could occur as a part of continuing lifelong professional development to all educators. In this way, teachers and head teachers will continue to engage in learning about learning once they are practicing teachers. In order to the policy and practice to support GELLs, head teachers and teachers need the autonomy to manage different aspects of school, including classroom practice, pedagogies and curricula in order to meet the needs of learners, including GELLs.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Table of Contents	iii
Lists of Figures.....	viii
Lists of Tables	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
Declaration	x
Abbreviations	xi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction and Background.....	1
1.2 EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLs.....	8
1.3 Teaching Practices: Differentiated Instructional Strategies by EFL Teachers.....	9
1.4 EFL Teachers' Identification of GELLs	11
1.5 Supporting GELLs in an EFL Setting.....	12
1.6 The Aims of the Study	13
1.7 Research Questions	13
1.8 Research Design.....	14
1.9 The Structure of the Thesis	14
Chapter Two: Saudi Educational Context.....	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 Historical Background of the KSA	16
2.3 Education System in the KSA.....	17
2.4 General Education System in the KSA	20
2.4.1 Pre-school Level	20
2.4.2 Primary School Level.....	21
2.4.3 Intermediate School Level	21

2.4.4 Secondary School Level.....	22
2.4.5 The Nature of the Curriculum in General Education	24
2.5 Gender Segregation.....	25
2.5.1 Education for Females in the KSA.....	25
2.6 Teachers of Islamic Culture	26
2.6.1 The Role of Teachers in the KSA’s Education System	27
2.6.2 The Role of Head Teachers in the KSA’s Education System.....	28
2.7 Historical Background of Foreign Language Taught in the KSA.....	29
2.7.1 The Importance of Teaching English Language in the KSA	30
2.7.2 Teaching English Language in the KSA.....	31
2.8 Gifted Education in the KSA	34
2.8.1 Identifying Gifted Learners in the KSA.....	40
2.8.2 Provision of Gifted Education in the KSA.....	41
2.9 Obstacles to Gifted Education in the KSA.....	46
2.9.1 Academic Research about Gifted Education in the KSA.....	49
2.10 Synthesis of the Chapter.....	51
Chapter Three: Literature Review.....	52
3.1 Introduction.....	52
3.2 Defining and Conceptualising Giftedness.....	52
3.3 Strategies for Identifying Gifted Learners and GELLs.....	60
3.4 The Characteristics of Gifted Learners and GELLs.....	67
3.4.1 The Characteristics of GELLs.....	69
3.5 Teachers’ Attitudes towards Gifted Learners and GELLs.....	70
3.6 Classroom Organisation.....	74
3.7 Provision for Gifted Learners and GELLs in Schools	75
3.8 Holistic Support for GELLs	81
3.9 Implications for GELLs	83
3.10 Synthesis of the Chapter.....	84

Chapter Four: Design and Methodology of the Study	86
4.1 Introduction	86
4.2 Research Approach	87
4.3 Research Tools	89
4.4 Study Population and Sampling	90
4.5 Ethical Considerations	91
4.6 Instrumentation and Data Collection	92
4.7 Questionnaire	92
4.8 Classroom Observation	94
4.9 Interview and Focus Group	97
4.10 Data Analysis	99
4.11 Pilot Study	102
4.12 Validity and Reliability of the Study	103
4.13 Synthesis of the Chapter	105
Chapter Five: Analysis of the Quantitative Data (Questionnaire and Classroom Observation)	106
5.1 Introduction	106
5.2 The Findings of the Questionnaire	106
5.2.1 Cognitive Ability	108
5.2.2 Social Issues	112
5.2.3 Leadership	114
5.3 The Findings of the Classroom Observation	115
5.4 Synthesis of the Chapter	121
Chapter Six: Analysis of the Qualitative Data	122
(Interviews and Focus Groups)	122
6.1 Introduction	122
6.2 Emerging Themes from Head Teachers	122
6.2.1 Government Policy Limitations	123

6.2.2 Decision-Making and the Power of Teachers in the KSA	127
6.2.3 Authority and Influence of Examinations	131
6.3 Emerging Themes from EFL Teachers	133
6.3.1 Barriers for EFL Teachers: A Lack of Cultural Relevance of Arabic to English	134
6.3.2 Government Curriculum Limitations	137
6.4 Emerging Themes from GELLs	140
6.4.1 The Professionalism and Identity of EFL Teachers	141
6.4.2 Fear and Apprehension in GELLs' Efforts to Learn English language	144
6.5 Synthesis of the Chapter	146
Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations	148
7.1 Introduction	148
7.2 What are the Attitudes of English as Foreign Language Teachers towards Gifted English language Learners in Saudi School and Classroom Settings?	148
7.2.1 The Importance of Professional Training	152
7.3 How Do English as Foreign Language Teachers' Differentiate Instructional Practices to Meet the Needs of Gifted English Language Learners in their Classrooms?	154
7.3.1 The Importance of Administration Engagement	157
7.4 How Do Head Teachers and Teachers as a Foreign Language Identify Gifted English Language Learners in Regular Saudi Classrooms and Schools?	159
7.4.1 The Importance of Modifying the Saudi Gifted Community	162
7.5 What are the Views of English as Foreign Language Teachers and Gifted English Language Learners on what Support Gifted English Language Learners Need in School Generally and in English as Foreign Language Classroom Specifically?	164
7.5.1 Importance of School Support	166
7.6 Conclusion and Recommendations	168
7.6.1 Recommendations	169
7.7 Limitations	170
7.8 Recommendations for Future Research	172
7.9 Contribution to Knowledge	173

8. References	175
9. Appendixes.....	225
Appendix 1: The Teacher Questionnaire	225
Appendix 2: Classroom Observation	227
Appendix 3: Teacher Interview.....	231
Appendix 4: Head Teacher Interview	233
Appendix 5: Focus Group	235
Appendix 6: Plain Language Statement for EFL Teacher	236
Appendix 7: Plain Language Statement for Head Teacher.....	239
Appendix 8: Plain Language Statement for Gifted English Language Learners' Parents.....	241
Appendix 9: Plain Language Statement for Gifted English Language Learners	244
Appendix 10: Consent Form for participants (EFL Teachers, Head Teachers and GELs)	247
Appendix 11: Consent Form for gifted English Language Learners' Parents	248

Lists of Figures

Figure.1. an account of male and female learners in all Saudi school levels in the period from 1974/5 to 2004/5.....	26
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Lists of Tables

Table1.EFL teachers' mode responses to the Questionnaire of the EFL Teachers' Attitudes.....	107
Table 2. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLS' Cognitive Abilities.....	108
Table 3. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLS' Social Issues.....	112
Table 4. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLS' Leadership... ..	114
Table 5. Mean Scores of the Classroom Observation Scales... ..	116
Table 6. Descriptive Statistics Results of Curriculum Planning and Delivery Scale... ..	117
Table7. Descriptive Statistics Results of Accommodations for Individual Differences Scale.....	118
Table 8. Descriptive Statistics Results of Problem Solving Scale... ..	118
Table 9. Descriptive Statistics Results of Critical Thinking Strategies Scale.....	119
Table10. Descriptive Statistics Results of Creative Thinking Strategies Scale	119
Table11. Descriptive Statistics Results of Research Strategies Scale.....	120

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Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Badriah Alkhannani.

Abbreviations

KSA	The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
EFL	English as a Foreign Language.
ELL	English Language Learners.
GELLs	Gifted English Language Learners.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.
KACGC	King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background

Interest in gifted education developed in many countries around the world at the turn of the twentieth century due to the many empirical and scientific advancements in education and psychology related to this topic during this time (National Association for Gifted Children, 2005). According to Siegle (2008), supporting gifted learners is important because they contribute to the development of the country through different endeavours. This premise forms part of the arguments proposed within this thesis. In practice, many countries support gifted learners in specific fields, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, which can contribute to the technological development of society through the creation of innovative workers (Batterham, 2000). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the Ministry of Education (2011) acknowledged the importance of meeting the needs of gifted learners, who are considered a sort of national treasure that should be supported to keep the country current with the changes occurring throughout the world. Al Qarni (2010) claims that although the Ministry of Education in the KSA issued regulations to identify and support all gifted learners in all subjects, gifted education in the KSA has focused on STEM subjects. Winebrenner (2012) argues that gifted learners have exceptional abilities in any area of learning. Different authors, educators and researchers have defined this in different ways (cf. Terman and Oden, 1947; Marland, 1972; Gardner, 1983; Renzulli, 1986; Kaufman and Sternberg, 2008; Subotnik et al., 2011). Supporting gifted STEM learners is important, but gifted learners across all learning areas and subjects, including subjects like languages, should be supported according to their needs and abilities.

The English language is one of these subjects, and it is the focus of this study. During this century English language has gradually began to dominate many significant areas of life including the international political, academic, science and diplomacy fields (Crystal, 2003). In fact, English has become one of the vital languages in many aspects of globalisation processes, economy, military and culture in a number of countries around the world (Richards, 2015). For example, the English language is used frequently as a foreign language in the KSA. Arabic language and the Islamic faith can be considered as the cultural center of life in the KSA (Rashid and Shaheen, 2002); however, as a result of globalisation and the

expanding horizons of new technologies and economic development in many fields, English has become an important language in the KSA (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

The discovery of oil in the KSA played a huge part in this transition, as it was necessary to communicate in English for economic and political purposes. English Language Certificate qualifications are now required in order to work in most careers in the KSA. English is now taught as a compulsory subject in Saudi schools from the sixth grade and many courses such as medicine are now taught in English in Saudi universities (Al-Johani, 2009; Rahman, 2011; Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). As a result, the Saudi government is highly focussed on improving the level of understanding of English language for its citizens and has heavily invested in a range of scholarships in many different English-speaking countries, such as Canada, UK and USA. In addition, a number of Saudi learners have enrolled in many English institutions around the KSA and many Saudi parents are spending a great deal of money to educate their children in English-speaking countries (Rahman, 2011). In spite of this recognition of the importance of the English language in the KSA, Saudi learners, including gifted learners, are faced with many obstacles relating to the standard of teaching the English language in the KSA and the failure to recognise English language learners' needs and abilities. This is a serious problem that has been widely raised among university academics and researchers (Rahman, 2011).

During the last two decades, education more generally in the KSA has experienced a number of notable developments (Aljughaiman, 2010). The Saudi government has committed to improving and building up the quality of education so that Saudi education meets national education needs and has something to offer to every Saudi learner, which should provide equality and excellence in the education system's processes. In this context, equity can be defined as support for each learner so that they can attain a good standard of education, whereas excellence is regarded as improving the learning capacities of learners so that they can maximise their learning potential. In other words, retaining the rights of learners to get the most appropriate education that is suited to their mental capabilities and potential (Ravitch, 1995; Schleicher, 2014; Aljughaiman, 2010).

In order to acknowledge this development, educational authorities in the KSA have begun to support gifted learners, treating the education of gifted learners as an important aspect of the development of quality education (the Ministry of Education, 2011). However, the concept of giftedness is not new for Saudi society (Alamer, 2010; Al Qarni, 2010).

Although limited literature has explored how gifted individuals were identified and supported in the Arab Islamic world before the establishment of schools, Alamer (2010) claims that there is evidence that religious institutions played an essential role in developing Islamic concepts of giftedness within Saudi society.

Many researchers (see, for example, Freeman, 2005; Sternberg, 2007; Grubb, 2008) have argued that conceptions of giftedness have related mainly to how specific cultures and societies acknowledge and view the concept. AlFahaid (2002) claims that one factor that affects individuals' perceptions is religion, which is a major factor in the KSA. Culture and the Islamic religion in the KSA are considered one component (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The Islamic perceptions of giftedness influence the attitude of the whole society (Alamer, 2010). Religious institutions have traditionally encouraged and supported giftedness when it does not have any negative effects on religion and culture (Alamer, 2010). For example, during the first half of the twentieth century, Saudi education mainly focused on memorizing the holy Quran and learning poetry, history and basic maths rules in mosques or traditional institutions known as *katatibs* (Al Qarni, 2010). Teachers were respected because they were clergymen. Despite their simple methodologies, these institutions tried to support gifted learners by applying psychological and educational principles, including individualization, respecting individual differences, and financial and emotional encouragement (Adas, 1998), which are principles that are explained further in chapter two. Although these practices helped shape Saudi Muslims' conceptions of giftedness, these practices evolved over time. The Saudi education system is now being impacted by international conceptions and practices; gifted education in the KSA has started to adopt new models and perspective from the West (Al Qarni, 2010).

There is no global agreement on the definition of the term "gifted" (Terman, 1916, 1922, 1925, 1954; Terman and Oden, 1947, 1959; Robinson and Clinkenbeard, 1998; Valdés, 2003; Sternberg and Davidson, 2005). At the same time, there is no valid or reliable single method to identify gifted individuals; every method comes with some advantages and disadvantages (Harrison, 2003; Davis and Rimm, 2004; Freeman, 2005). According to Subotnik et al. (2011) and Freeman (2005), the concept of giftedness is a controversial issue; many researchers have tried to understand and explain the concepts of giftedness through the development of different theories and models. Terman (1916), for example, presented a simple model of the conceptions of giftedness; this model was mainly based on the intelligence concept and used a score as its identification method: the intelligence quotient

(IQ). A number of other models expanded on various areas of the potential for giftedness, such as creativity, leadership, visual arts and academic performance (see, for example, Marland, 1972; Gardner, 1983; Renzulli, 2002). To illustrate this, Renzulli's (1978) model presented giftedness as a combination of three clusters: above-average ability, creativity and task commitment. Another model introduced by Sternberg (2003) described giftedness as the synthesis of wisdom, creativity and intelligence. Instead of relying only on IQ test scores as an identification method, these models highlighted multidimensional measurements of high ability, including both specific and general abilities, and the importance of both environment and personality on development ability (which are discussed further in chapter three).

In accordance with the enrichment triad model developed by Renzulli, some gifted programmes within the KSA have applied enriched gifted programmes to support gifted learners (Aljughaiman, 2007). Since Renzulli's model is multidimensional, it identifies gifted learners through different kind of assessments to assess the creativity and intelligence of gifted learners (Renzulli, 1986). To support gifted learners, this model emphasises the teacher's role in increasing gifted learners' creative productivity by properly planning learning situations, such as through inductive thinking skills or real problem solving. This model considers not only academic ability but also creative and artistic abilities (Renzulli, 1986; Renzulli, 1978).

Conceptions of giftedness within Western culture differ to some degree, suggesting that concepts of giftedness in another culture might also differ from Western concepts. Thus, some Saudi researchers (see, for example, Al Qarni, 2010; Aljughaiman, 2007; Alamer, 2010) have attempted to determine whether the gifted programmes in the KSA can identify and support gifted learners through models like Renzulli's model or through Saudi's own conceptions and perceptions. They found that although the Saudi education system has adopted some international models and concepts, some Saudi teachers still adhere to Islamic conceptions of giftedness. For example, in his study, Alamer (2010) found that Saudi teachers stressed memorization as the main characteristic of gifted learners. This focus on memorization could have originated from the perception that a person who could memorize the Quran or Hadith would be appreciated not only in school but also throughout the whole society (Alamer, 2010). This result is similar to the results of a study by Koura and Al-Hebaishi (2014), who looked at a cohort in Saudi Arabia who "were identified and selected as gifted after passing a standardized ability test administered by the National Center for

Assessment and they were considered as the top 5% of the total number of tested sample” (p. 52). The role of religion in the KSA helped shape society’s conceptions of giftedness and persisted through the adoption of Western models of giftedness, so any giftedness models applied within Saudi society should consider the influence of Saudi culture and religion.

As a result, the working definition of giftedness used in this study is a synthesis of the definitions from the literature. The definition includes the potential and exceptional abilities of individuals (Simonton, 1994, 1999, 2010; Dweck, 2009) that need to be developed within and across various domains through training and interventions (Lubinski, 2010a, 2010b; Park et al., 2007; Winner, 1996; Kaufman and Sternberg, 2008; Subotnik et al., 2011). This definition also aligns with the Islamic conceptions of giftedness (Adas, 1998; Alamer, 2010). A gifted individual is one who has potential abilities across any domain and area of learning who benefits from society and societal support and who has some responsibility for their own development.

Further development in the Saudi gifted education sector has taken place as the government of the KSA established a gifted programme (MAWHIBA) in 2001 supported by King Abdulaziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (KACGC) in order to meet the needs of gifted learners. The KACGC is the largest foundation that supports gifted education in the KSA. It is managed by a board of directors, which consists of princes, ministers, businessmen, and eminent specialists. The KACGC aims to co-ordinate and supervise gifted education. The foundation has members who represent different professional councils in the field of gifted education, including the American National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) (Aljughaiman, 2007). In spite of this development in terms of acknowledging gifted education in the KSA, the majority of subjects which are provided for gifted learners are focussed on STEM subjects, and lastly, all other subjects (Salwe, 2007). In addition, most of Saudi research studies focused on these areas, for example, Alarfaj (2011) has conducted research into gifted programmes in the KSA, but these results do not incorporate gifted English language learners (GELLs). Therefore, the status and experiences of GELLs still remains unknown and additionally, there are a limited number of resources available to support GELLs and ensure that they maximise their potential in language learning (Salwe, 2007).

The significance of learning English is recognised by Saudis to a great extent. A great deal of importance is placed on learning and teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (see, for example, Rahman, 2011; Alfahadi, 2014; Al-Seghayer, 2014; Alrashidi and Phan, 2015; Alrabai, 2014), and a significant amount of literature relates to teaching gifted learners, though this is not necessarily focussed in the KSA (see, for example, Winebrenner, 2001; Borland, 2003; Davis and Rimm, 2004; Subotnik et al., 2011; Al Qarni, 2010; Alamer, 2010; Aljughaiman, 2010). This research collectively offers a theoretical framework about the education of gifted learners and teaching English language. However, most of the literature has addressed these two areas, English language learners and gifted learners, in separate studies, which has led to conflicting results pertaining to GELLs. The few studies that have addressed GELLs have not synthesised the two sets of findings (English language learners and gifted learners) in a way that supports EFL teachers who have GELLs in their regular classrooms.

Meeting the needs of GELLs who speak at least two languages (there are some learners who speak more than two languages) is considered quite challenging and has been addressed in a number of studies, such as those by Kitano and Espinosa (1995), Matthews (2006) and Harris et al. (2009). These studies investigated gifted English language learners whose native language is not English and who were living in English-speaking countries, such as the United States. There are also a limited number of studies that have investigated GELLs whose native language is not English and who were living in non-English-speaking countries, such as those by Yunus et al. (2013a) and Yunus et al. (2013b), who conducted their studies in Malaysia. These studies employed different perspectives and applications compared with the studies conducted on learners living in English-speaking countries because the context, culture and use of the English language in non-English-speaking countries are all different. Research on GELLs in Arab countries generally and in the KSA specifically is very limited.

In order to understand GELLs in Arab countries, for example in the KSA, it is useful to conduct a study involving EFL teachers, head teachers and GELLs. The KSA offers an ideal context for study. The literature surrounding gifted education emphasises the influence of teachers on the improvement of gifted learners; a teacher can impact a gifted student's learning and can develop a gifted learner's potential (McBee, 2006). In the KSA, teachers are not only considered a source of information but are also expected to play an important role in recognising and improving the abilities of their gifted learners (Oyaid, 2009). Through exploring EFL teachers' views, head teachers' views and the views of GELLs

themselves, this study will help in gaining insight into the experiences of GELLs in EFL classrooms and to the learning experiences in Saudi classrooms. This will enable the implementation of training courses for EFL teachers that would help them teach GELLs more effectively. This study would enhance the standards and performance of English language teaching and promote the teaching of EFL learners and GELLs in the Saudi context. It would also highlight any pertinent issues related to teaching GELLs, which may help inform future researchers, professionals and experts in the field of gifted education and those who are concerned with addressing these issues.

According to Vialle et al. (2001) and Geake and Gross (2008), every school should have a clear understanding of the strategies that are used to identify gifted learners in their schools. Generally, provisions provided to gifted learners vary according to many aspects, such as different gifted programmes, task type, grouping and seating arrangements (Callahan, 2001; Litster, 2004). Thus, Subotnik et al. (2011) claim that researchers disagree about the best strategies and provisions to support gifted learners. Some researchers (see, for example, Robinson et al., 2007; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2009) have suggested that strategies such as explorations, inquiry or problem-based learning are useful to support all learners, not only gifted learners. Other researchers (see, for example, Braggett, 1997; Kulik and Kulik, 1992; Sayler and Brookshire, 1993) argue that the provision of gifted programmes should be adjusted according to major aspects, such as the environment and teaching and learning processes. The learning environment is an important part of the support of gifted learners' interests. This procedure can be implemented through acceleration processes or grouping. Teaching and learning process can involve curriculum differentiation that ranges from slight to major modifications of the curriculum, including amendments to the curriculum's skills, content and processes. Such curriculum modifications should promote the abilities of the gifted alongside enrichment or extracurricular activities that broaden the attitudes, knowledge, application and thinking skills to a degree of complexity appropriate to the learners' developmental level. However, the provision of support to gifted learners in the KSA relies on three main strategies: enrichment, acceleration and ability grouping. (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). These strategies are discussed in more detail later.

In the KSA, the Ministry of Education and KACGC (MAWHIBA) have given the responsibility of identifying gifted learners to schools so that teachers and head teachers can identify and understand the abilities and characteristics of gifted learners in accordance with the education policy of the KSA, improve the educational experience of gifted learners and

subsequently move gifted learners on to the MAWHIBA programme Centres (Al Saif, 1999; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). According to the Ministry of Education (2005), head teachers are involved in improving the educational experience of all gifted learners: “Schools have to be aware, notice and nominate, gifted learner’s characteristics and abilities in different areas according to their interests” (p. 12). Therefore, head teachers’ views regarding the identification strategies used to recognise GELLs in schools and to explain the interactions between teachers and head teachers should be examined. Such an examination would highlight the specific elements that school administrators consider to be necessary for the provision of appropriate learning opportunities for GELLs. It would also provide information that could be used by policymakers for developing policies intended to recognise and support GELLs in the KSA. Finally, an examination of school administrators’ views concerning GELLs may highlight any knowledge gap that currently exists in the Saudi government policies.

Gifted learners may experience some difficulties in having their special learning needs met, which could make them experience underachievement, frustration and boredom (Crocker, 2004; Dweck, 2006; Winebrenner and Brulles, 2012). Reis and Renzulli (2010) argue that gifted learners need support within regular classes to have their needs met. In the KSA, where the official language is Arabic and where English language abilities may still be considered limited, examining GELLs’ needs could be important and indeed English language learners (ELLs) could face some difficulties in EFL classes, such as anxiety, feelings of isolation and inattention (Rhodes et al., 2005). Therefore, exploring GELLs’ views regarding the types of support they need in their EFL classrooms should be addressed because these views would contribute to the existing data on the topic and provide relevant information, which would confirm and support the importance of meeting the needs of GELLs in English language learning settings.

1.2 EFL Teachers’ Attitudes towards GELLs

Investigating teachers’ attitudes towards gifted learners could be an important consideration when addressing how to develop gifted education programmes (Davis and Rimms, 2004). In fact, prior to committing to a specific gifted education programme, asking, “What is our attitude towards gifted pupils?” is essential (Davis and Rimm, 2004, p.55). Some researchers have asserted that teachers’ knowledge about giftedness is directly related to their attitudes and beliefs about gifted learners (Collins, 2001; Clark, 2002). AlFahaid (2002) claims that

one of the main concerns with the Saudi education system has been the negative attitudes of teachers towards gifted learners and their negative perceptions of the services provided to these learners.

In the KSA a number of studies have been conducted regarding teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners, such as those by AlFahaid (2002), Al-Makhalid (2012) and Al Garni (2012). These studies discussed the implications of teachers' attitudes on teacher training, knowledge improvement and teaching practices specifically related to gifted learners. None of these studies addressed the attitudes of EFL teachers towards GELLs. Brown's (2012) findings however; indicate that teachers' attitudes could be important factors in English language classes. Negative attitudes could affect teacher's perceptions of ELLs abilities, while positive attitudes could promote ELLs' abilities (Brown, 2012). Examining EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs could therefore be important in order to improve the educational experiences of GELLs.

1.3 Teaching Practices: Differentiated Instructional Strategies by EFL Teachers

VanTassel-Baska et al. (2005) argue that teachers' behaviours and instructional strategies applied within classroom have a direct effect on the learning process of gifted learners. In spite of this, there are few differences between the instructional strategies applied to gifted learners and those applied in regular classrooms (VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2005). They suggest that there are many obstacles blocking the differentiation of the instructions used within regular and gifted classes, including teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners and a lack of knowledge of teaching practices and classroom management strategies (VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh, 2005).

The literature has reported that Saudi gifted learners are required to be labelled as a gifted by their school. Once labelled as gifted, STEM learners are supported and enriched by the MAWHIBA gifted programme centres (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007), which are detailed in chapter two. Within regular Saudi schools, there are three main strategies for educating gifted learners that have been issued by the MAWHIBA programme: enrichment, acceleration and ability grouping (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). Al Kaldi (2002) argues that the enrichment strategy is the most flexible and practical approach to gifted education in the KSA. According to Callow (1994), the main goal of enrichment is to expand

the curriculum through extensive tasks for gifted learners and to challenge gifted learners with different topics, activities, experiences and creative opportunities. Within the Saudi context, the main aims of this strategy have been to investigate the potential of gifted learners in a strategic and systematic way by challenging them and enriching their educational experiences in their regular classes; this strategy is enhanced by a flexible teaching and learning environment (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). According to Robinson et al. (2007) and Robinson et al. (2000), enrichment strategies are useful for all learners. However, the enrichment strategy has only been applied in the KSA for gifted STEM learners within science and maths classes in regular schools (Al Qarni, 2010).

Acceleration is the second strategy applied within Saudi schools (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). Brody (2004) explained that the main idea of acceleration is to speed up gifted learners' work so that they are ready to move to the next stages of their education ahead of the rest of the class. Subotnik et al. (2011) suggest that there are at least two premises to acceleration: gifted learners can process information more rapidly than their peers, and gifted learners have advanced levels of content in specific subject areas. Colangelo et al. (2004) and Vialle et al. (2001) claim that for acceleration to be effective in practice, schools should have clear instructions and criteria for identifying gifted candidates for acceleration, and teachers should have sufficient knowledge regarding the needs of gifted learners to place learners appropriately. There are many strategies to promote acceleration, including grade skipping (earlier access to any school level), which is applied in the KSA (MAWHIBA, 2007). In the KSA, acceleration has not been very effective for gifted education due to ambiguous policies, unclear instructions, legislative difficulties related to the implementation of these strategies and untrained school staff who have been unable to implement this strategy effectively (Bushnak, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010).

The third strategy applied to gifted learners within the KSA is ability grouping (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). The main idea of ability grouping is to place gifted learners together in groups that are divided according to the abilities of the learners within the groups to present challenges that are appropriate for each group's abilities (Kulik, 1992; Plucker et al., 2010). Ability grouping allows teachers to divide learners into groups so that learners can work together and support each other according to their abilities. This strategy is divided into whole-class strategies, which include multilevel classes and full-time ability grouping, and small-class strategies, which include cluster grouping, cross-grade grouping, within-class grouping, pull-out programmes and mixed-ability cooperative grouping (Gray et al.,

2009). Some researchers found this strategy to be a useful way to evaluate the achievements of gifted learners, their social relations (see, for example, Rogers, 2002), and their attitudes towards learning (Neihart, 2007) and to reduce the feeling of boredom that gifted learners often experience (Rogers, 2002). Other researchers have argued that while gifted learners benefit from ability grouping, other learners are disadvantaged by it (Oakes, 1985). Ability grouping has not been effective in practice in the KSA despite some individual efforts to apply it to some gifted programmes within regular schools (Al Qarni, 2010). In his study, Al Qarni (2010) argues that “ability grouping remains a neglected area in the teaching of the gifted children in Saudi Arabia...although a few efforts to introduce this concept may occur at individual centre level” (p. 67), which makes evaluating this strategy within the Saudi context difficult.

An understanding of these three strategies could reveal how EFL teachers differentiate their instructional practices to meet and support the needs of GELLs, so these strategies should be addressed. In particular, Al-Magid (2003) underlined a number of important factors that restrict the development of gifted learners within regular classrooms in the KSA, including the teaching practice itself and teachers’ unwillingness to modify the curriculum in order to meet the requirements of their learners’ abilities.

1.4 EFL Teachers’ Identification of GELLs

Teacher identification is considered one of the most appropriate ways to identify gifted learners (Davis and Rimm, 2004). Classroom teachers should be able to recognise and identify gifted learners because teachers can observe learners over a long period of time during classes (Gray et al., 2009). Szymanski and Shaff (2013) suggest that teachers should be able to recognise learners’ needs regardless of whether learners are in English language classes or in gifted programming.

Gray et al. (2009) argue that teacher identification of gifted learners consists of more than the use of instruments and the completion of checklists. This process relies more on the knowledge and experience of professional teachers, so whether regular teachers are qualified to identify gifted learners effectively is a debatable issue. There are many obstacles that could prevent teachers from identifying gifted learners. According to Gray et al. (2009), unqualified teachers might not be able to identify gifted learners because they lack the knowledge or experience to recognise gifted characteristics and abilities, so unqualified

teachers could misidentify such learners. In classes with large numbers of learners, especially in design, technology and English language classes, teachers are not always able to spend as much time as they would like individually focusing on each learner to identify or support them (Heppner, 2007; Balchin, 2007).

Some researchers (see, for example, Alamer, 2014; Al Qarni, 2010) suggest that a number of Saudi teachers in regular classes are not well qualified or do not have enough experience to recognise gifted learners and are therefore incapable of improving the potential of these learners. With a particular focus on EFL teachers, Al-Johani (2009) evaluated the Saudi educational system, concluding that many EFL teachers are not professionally trained and that EFL teachers need to utilise different teaching methods in order to deal with ELLs effectively in Saudi schools. Al-Johani (2009) claims that most EFL teachers dominate the learning process as the main source of knowledge, failing to provide real-life situations and examples within regular EFL classes.

In 2005, a specific instruction was introduced by the Saudi government to classroom teachers for identifying all gifted learners in their classes in all subjects, and classroom teachers were expected to have complete awareness of these instructions and to apply this knowledge in their classrooms (Ministry of Education, 2005). According to the education policy in Saudi Arabia, “It is important to use appropriate methods to identify and nurture gifted learner and their abilities through specific standards issued by MAWHIBA, teacher evaluations, notice and nominate gifted learner’s characteristics and abilities, or through their academic achievement” (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). In relation to this, this study aims to investigate how EFL teachers and head teachers identify GELLs in EFL settings and schools in accordance with these instructions.

1.5 Supporting GELLs in an EFL Setting

Supporting gifted learners is considered to be an essential requirement to ensure their academic success, and the support provided to these learners must be suitable for each individual gifted learner (Sanders and Horn, 1998; Stambaugh, 2001). Neglecting the needs of gifted learners could result from ambivalence towards these learners, a low level of understanding of their needs or less preference being given to gifted learners than other learners in schools, which could all affect the emotional and academic needs of these learners (Webb et al., 2007). Teachers could need to highlight the difficulties and the strengths and

weaknesses of gifted learners (Gavin et al., 2007). An understanding of these elements should have positive implications for teacher education and for the practical implementation of the skills required to teach gifted learners. Within regular Saudi classrooms, teachers are responsible for supporting gifted learners according to learners' abilities (Ministry of Education, 2005; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). Therefore, an understanding of the types of support GELs need is necessary in order to enrich their education.

1.6 The Aims of the Study

The aims of the following research are ambitious and multifaceted and look to provide as full a picture as possible of GELs learning experiences by including contributions from head teachers, teachers and GELs themselves. This study aims:

1. To explore English as foreign language teachers attitudes towards gifted English language learners in English as foreign language settings
2. To find out how English as foreign language teachers differentiate instructions in their teaching practices in English as foreign language classrooms to maximise the abilities of gifted English language learners.
3. To find out how English as foreign language teachers and head teachers identify gifted English language learners in the regular English as foreign language classrooms and schools.
4. To identify English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners views on what types of support gifted English language learners in school and in the EFL settings need.

1.7 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above-mentioned aims, the research will seek answers to the following key questions:

1. What are the attitudes of English as foreign language teachers towards gifted English language learners in Saudi school and classroom settings?
2. How do English as foreign language teachers' differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of gifted English language learners in their classrooms?
3. How do head teachers and English as foreign language teachers identify gifted English language learners in regular Saudi classrooms and schools?
4. What are the views of English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners on what support gifted English language learners need in school generally and in English as foreign language classroom specifically?

1.8 Research Design

The current research was conducted in the KSA, in Almadinah City. It was designed to examine the perception of EFL teachers, head teacher's views and GELL's views in six Saudi female secondary schools. Its respondents include 10 secondary school EFL teachers and 10 head teachers who expressed their opinions by mean of interviews and four focus group sessions held with groups of five GELLs each. Questionnaires were also completed by 100 EFL teachers. Additionally, 10 EFL classes were observed.

The design implemented in this research comprises mixed methodologies, which combines both qualitative and quantitative data. The attitudes of EFL teachers in respect of GELLs were examined through a quantitative questionnaire whereas the teaching practices of EFL teachers were analysed by using classroom observation scales. A qualitative interview methodology was implemented to identify the knowledge of EFL teachers and head teachers. Qualitative focus group methodology was conducted with GELLs. This research design is discussed in Chapter four in more depth.

1.9 The Structure of the Thesis

The Study is structured in the following order:

- a) **Chapter one:** Introduction that gives the background to and describes the importance of this study.
- b) **Chapter two:** Background and overview of the education system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- c) **Chapter three:** In-depth literature review of giftedness; including the conceptions of giftedness, characteristics of gifted learners and GELLs, gifted identification, teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners and GELLs, provision for gifted learners and finally the implication for the education for GELLs.
- d) **Chapter four:** Research methods and methodology consisting of mixed methods reviews, data collection, research design, method of data analysis and utilisation of research instruments.
- e) **Chapter five:** Data analysis results arising from questionnaires completed by the EFL teachers and classroom observations conducted in 10 EFL classes
- f) **Chapter six:** Data analysis arising from qualitative interview and focus group data analysis completed by participants.
- g) **Chapter seven:** Analysis of the study findings and summary of the principal findings, implications and discussions. Discussion of the study limitations, predictions for future research and plan of the framework used for the development of GELLs in the government run schools of the Saudi Arabia.

Chapter Two: Saudi Educational Context

2.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter aims to provide background information about the KSA where this study was conducted. The second section provides an historical overview of the education system in the KSA. The third section presents the general education system in the KSA starting from preschool and then secondary school. In the fourth section female education and gender segregation are discussed. The roles of Saudi teachers and head teachers are illustrated in the fifth section. The sixth section focuses on teaching EFL in the KSA and includes the historical context and the importance of EFL. An overview of gifted education in the KSA is discussed in the seventh section, which includes the contexts, systems, identification measurements and provision of gifted education. This background is then used in the final section to identify the primary challenges that occur in gifted education in the KSA.

2.2 Historical Background of the KSA

The KSA was established in 1932 by King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud and has been described as a relatively new nation that has strong Islamic and Arab traditions (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). The population of the KSA increased at a rate of 1.62% in 2015 and currently stands at around 31 million; there are a total of 31,015,999 male and female living in the KSA (General Authority for statistics in Saudi Arabia, 2016). In terms of its geographical area, the KSA is considered to be the largest country in the Middle East and covers approximately 80% of the whole Arabian Peninsula (Jeffrey, 2002; Alsharari, 2010). It should be noted that since being prospected for oil in 1933 and since oil was discovered in 1938, the economy of Saudi Arabia has been heavily dependent on crude oil industries as its main source of income (Madini, 2005; Al-Rasheed, 2010). This has resulted in the KSA being considered as one of the most important oil producing nations in the world. The KSA ranks as the world's largest petroleum exporter (Rashid and Shasheen, 2002; Hussain, 2016).

In 2016, Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud developed Saudi Vision 2030 as an initiative to reduce the KSA's dependency on oil. Vision 2030 was devised to assist Saudi Arabia's ongoing development using the three major areas where the kingdom holds distinct

competitive advantages. Under Vision 2030, the KSA will continue its important role in the Middle East due to the country's Islamic and cultural Arab authority. The Vision will promote a sustainable and increasingly varied economy through Saudi Arabia's investment influence. The KSA will also aim to provide a bridge between Asia, Europe and Africa and continue to stimulate global trade by means of its geo-strategic positioning. In short, the three focal areas of Vision 2030 are to secure the KSA as an aspiring nation, a flourishing economy and a vibrant society (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). The educational policy supports the national aspiration outlined.

The official language of the KSA is Arabic and the state religion is Islam (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). Consequently, the Arabic language and the Islamic faith can be considered as the cultural centre of life in the KSA (Al-Rasheed, 2010). General society in the KSA has been developed and inspired by the principles of Sunni Islam and this system of thought aims to hold the foundational and fundamental Islamic sources (Terrill, 2013). The KSA holds an important position in all Islamic communities. It is widely considered to be the heartland of Islam since the KSA has the two holy cities for all Muslims, which are Makkah and Al-Madinah (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). Muslims value Makkah because it is where the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) was born. The Holy Mosque found in Makkah contains the Holy Qabaa and five times a day around one billion Muslims over the world turn to the Holy Qabaa to pray. In addition, Makkah takes part in a range of religious activities and every year more than two million Muslims participate in the Islamic pilgrimage (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

Al-Madinah is the other holy city in the KSA where the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) lived and died. The most important feature of the City is the Al-Haram Mosque, which is large enough to hold one million worshippers. After Makkah, Al-Madinah is the second most popular place for Muslims around the world to visit (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010; Al-Rasheed, 2010) and this city is the focus of the current study. Religion clearly has a key role in the KSA's authority, permeating society, health, economy, national security and provision of education as a way of life.

2.3 Education System in the KSA

The Saudi government centralised administration of education in the KSA. Thus, all educational policies are governed and controlled by the Supreme Committee of Educational.

The Supreme Committee of Education was established in 1963 and is the highest authority supervising education in the KSA. The objectives of the Supreme Committee are to oversee educational affairs in the KSA, guide educational plans, curricula and syllabuses and to provide assessment systems and teacher training (Ministry of Higher Education, 1980; High Committee on Education Policy, 2002).

In 1970 the KSA's educational policy was created and became the primary basis of education around the KSA (Alesa, 2008). The first principle that defines education policy in the KSA is to believe in God, the Prophet Mohammed and the Islamic religion. The second principle is to accept the Islamic principles in relation to the world, human beings and life. The third principle is to ensure that the education system provides suitable education and that individuals have a duty to learn and be educated. The fourth principle requires that females are granted the same educational opportunities equivalent to their male counterparts. The fifth principle indicates that educational policies are balanced between the provision of educational achievement and economic policies such as development of the Saudi nation and industrial growth. The final principle explains that all of these policy objectives are based on the requirement that all educational systems, institutions and classes are undertaken in the Arabic language (Ministry of Education, 1980).

The above information is intended to highlight the basic underlying philosophical approach that defines policy in this area. The Higher Committee for Educational Policy in the Ministry of Education (1980, p.10) states the purposes of education in the KSA as such:

1. To enable learners to understand Islam in a comprehensive and correct manner.
2. To spread the Islamic faith and provide learners with Islamic values, principles and beliefs.
3. Provide learners with a range of essential skills and knowledge in order that they become productive and constructive individuals.
4. Prepare learners to become good citizens, build their community and develop the Islamic culture. It is clear that creating good citizens and emphasizing socialization are the main purposes of education in the KSA.

The administration of education in the KSA is conducted by three main government authorities. Each one of the three authorities has an emphasis on specific aspects of the educational system in the KSA. The first authority is the Ministry of Education, which was founded in 1953. It offers general education free of charge to all citizens of both genders. This authority has a number of responsibilities such as providing and supervising the general education system in the KSA. This includes pre-school, primary, intermediate and secondary education, education for those with special needs, the education of adults and teacher training (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006).

The Ministry of Education is responsible for training school staff through the Department of Training, which was established at 1975. There are 42 training centres throughout the different regions of the KSA (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). The main goal of these centres is to provide training for all school staff members, including teachers and head teachers. Different types of training programmes are provided by the Ministry of Education, including a management and leadership programme, general educational programmes, information technology programmes, intellectual skills programmes and a special education programme (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006; Aldolaimi, 2006).

The Ministry of Higher Education is the second authority, which was founded in 1975 in order to monitor higher education policies. This authority is concerned with teacher training in colleges, supervising universities around the KSA and managing international scholarships for Saudi learners (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for the practical training of teachers while they are studying their specialist subjects, such as Arabic, history or English, at colleges or universities (Ministry of Education, 2002). The third authority is the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training, which was established in 1980. This Saudi educational authority is concerned with industrial, commercial and agricultural educational in addition to being connected to technical foremanship studies and commercial experience (Ministry of Education, 2007).

The Saudi government has centralised and governed all the educational sectors in the KSA (High Committee on Education Policy, 2002). To understand the perspectives of the participants (head teachers, EFL teachers and GELLs) concerning GELL support, attitudes, identification, and teaching practices, the historical centralisation of education in the KSA should be examined. This study will result in an understanding of the relationships between

each group of participants and between the participants and the centralised policy issued by the Saudi government.

The Saudi education system is rooted in the teachings of Islam, and the standard language used in this system is Arabic. Indeed, teachings of Islam and the use of Arabic in the Saudi education system are among the main principles of Saudi educational practice (Ministry of Education, 2004). Understanding the KSA's social and cultural background is useful to understand the context of the KSA, so the literature review, data analysis and discussion of this study's findings synthesise such an understanding.

One of the main aims of Vision 2030 has been to reform the education system in the KSA to align the system with market demands, economic growth and national wealth (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). Al Shemary (2008), Rahman (2011) and Mahboob and Elyas (2014) claim that English being the only foreign language taught in Saudi schools is an indicator of the importance that the Saudi state places on that language as a tool for economic advantage. The difficulties, the challenges and requirements that impede the progress of English language learning for ELLs, including GELLs, in the KSA should be recognised so that the Saudi government's goals can be met. To meet the goals of Vision 2030, the education system of the KSA needs to be reformed to support all learners, including gifted learners and GELLs. This reform could increase the number of graduates contributing to the economy in the KSA and could allow GELLs to contribute to the work of future scientists and researchers who work collaboratively in international consortiums that use English as their dominant language. Thus, this shift in Saudi educational policy may lay the foundations for new ideas and new ways of thinking within the Saudi education system, which should improve support for all learners, including GELLs.

2.4 General Education System in the KSA

The general educational system in the KSA is multi-track and operates on a variety of levels; it includes pre-school, primary, intermediate and secondary school levels (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013).

2.4.1 Pre-school Level

Attendance at pre-school level is free for children but is not compulsory. It is separated into numerous phases: from 2-4 years (infant), 4-5 years (nursery) and 5-6 years (preliminary). The main objective of this school level is to provide children with the necessary skills and basic knowledge to help them succeed in the proceeding levels of schooling (Ministry of Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2011).

2.4.2 Primary School Level

There is compulsory attendance for male and female learners from age 7 to age 12. The primary school level contains six graded phases. The main aims of this school level are to improve learners physical and mental foundational skills, to encourage learners to take on responsibilities and be aware of their duties, to increase the learners' identity to their religion and country and to increase the learning motivation among these learners (Ministry of Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2011).

The nature of the curriculum specifications and the number of lessons in a particular subject are different according to the grade level. In primary school, the learners study a range of subjects including Arabic, Islamic culture, mathematics, sciences and EFL (from grade six). In this stage, learners' achievement is dependent upon teacher assessment, if teachers do not notice any disparities in learners' knowledge, they are usually moved on to the next graded phase automatically. Teachers teach a range of subjects in the first three graded phases of primary school and normally most of them are graduates from The College for Teachers or Intermediate Collage, both of which are governed by the Ministry of Higher Education. It is usually the case that the teachers teaching from the fourth phase will possess a university degree and will normally teach only their specialist subject. This is also the case with elementary and secondary schools (Al-Salloom, 1995; Bin Salamah, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2008).

2.4.3 Intermediate School Level

The next compulsory level in the KSA education system for both genders is the intermediate school level. This level includes three graded phases and learners are aged between 13 and 15 when they attend. The main aims of this level of education are to provide the learners with appropriate knowledge according to their age, to enable learners to learn the basic

concepts of modern science and the arts, to help learners develop independence in searching for knowledge and improve mental abilities among them, to encourage learners to increase their sense of responsibilities, to be aware of their duties and to increase their identity to Islam and the Saudi nation (Ministry of Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2011).

In intermediate school the learners continue to build on their sense of knowledge gained in the primary grades and study a range of subjects including Arabic, IT, English, Islamic culture, mathematics, sciences, geography, history and the arts. In addition, home economics is included for female learners. To progress to the next graded phase, all learners have to successfully pass examinations in all of the subjects in the two semesters during the academic year. Learners who do not pass either the first or second semester have to re-sit them before they can progress to the new grade level. If the learner fails to achieve the minimum marks after two attempts, he/she will have to repeat the same grade level for a second time. Although they do not attend any further classes and are only permitted to retake the exams (Al-Salloom, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2008; Oyaid, 2009).

2.4.4 Secondary School Level

Learners attend secondary school between the ages of 16 to 18 once they have graduated successfully from elementary school. Secondary school has three graded phases and attendance is compulsory for both males and females. The secondary school level is concerned with developing the skills of learners in a number of ways in order to effectively prepare them for entry into higher education. It attempts to support all learners including gifted learners and aims to offer differential learning to learners of different abilities. It also seeks to enhance the independence of scientific thought and encourages analytical and mental skills in scientific fields such as searching, referencing, analysing and practicing the academic process. The aim is to encourage learners to develop productive skills in their free time, which could enhance their skill-set and general character. Particular emphasis is also placed on literacy, improving the general understanding of foundational concepts in the core disciplines and finally, enhancing learners' identities to Islam and the Saudi nation (Ministry of Education, 2014; UNESCO, 2011).

As previously noted the secondary school level is divided into three graded phases; in the first grade the subjects are the same as before; Arabic and English language, Islamic culture, historical studies, geography, mathematics, humanities, IT and home economics (for female

learners). Learners must pass all exams at the end of each semester of the year and will be re-examined if they fail in any of the exams. In the final two graded phases, learners study a more limited range of subjects and develop the skills of their choosing; they are required to choose an arts track or a science track. The science track emphasises the study of mathematics and sciences and the arts track emphasises the study of Arabic literature, humanities and arts (Ministry of Education, 2008; Oyaid, 2009).

It is important for learners to consider the career opportunities that are available in the KSA labour market before selecting a track. Aljabri and Alahmadi (2012) explain that male Saudi learners usually tend to choose the science track while female learners will normally choose the art track. In fact, the science track offers more job opportunities for male learners and is usually supported by family and the government. The amount of work opportunities available for women in the scientific field could be limited. For example, females are not allowed to study or work in the petroleum and minerals industries in the KSA.

Learners must graduate successfully from every graded phase by passing a series of exams and performing to a specified standard. Following secondary school, learners will be offered a place at the university or college of their choosing, depending on their performance in exams (second and third grades of secondary school). Learners are graded on their general ability in their final examinations (Oyaid, 2009; Al-Salloom, 2004).

In order to improve the quality of the educational system in the KSA, the Tatweer Project, known as “The General Project of Curriculum Development”, was established in 2007. Its main goal is to develop and reform the educational standards and provide the facilities necessary to improve secondary school learning environments. Secondary school learners can choose whether to attend a traditional school (as explained above) or a modern school offering the Tatweer Project (Meemar, 2014). The educational system in the KSA is centralised and the curriculum traditionally does not encourage self-learning, technical skills and critical thinking among Saudi learners. The Ministry of Education in the KSA noticed that there was a need to improve the Saudi educational curriculum taught in public schools (Tatweer, 2011). The Tatweer Project gives teachers a degree of freedom in the classroom such as modifying contents, organising the classroom and using a variety of activities and resources according to the learners’ learning abilities. It also enables head teachers to contribute to decision-making in schools in order to improve the educational experience of Saudi learners. Similar to university learners, learners in these schools have the freedom to

choose their modules, enrol in a summer semester and arrange their own timetables (Tatweer, 2011).

The Tatweer Project's launch in 2007 involved 50 secondary schools (25 female and 25 male) in different areas around the KSA as a pilot stage. After evaluation, it was found that generalising the project to apply to all Saudi schools was difficult due to the programme's high cost in providing every school with highly advanced technologies. The pilot stage was then modified to a system of three stages. The first stage ran from 2011 to 2012. The main aim of this stage was to choose and develop a model of changes and train staff to handle this model (Tatweer, 2011). The second stage, from 2012 to 2014, aimed to support the previously defined model for change, apply it in selected schools and supervise its practice. As reported by Meemar (2014), 900 Saudi schools applied the Tatweer Project in 2014. The final stage started in 2014 and will finish in 2017. By the end of the final stage, all secondary schools across the KSA are expected to have applied the Tatweer Project (Tatweer, 2011).

2.4.5 The Nature of the Curriculum in General Education

As mentioned earlier, the entire education system in the KSA including the administration sectors is highly governed by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has a Curriculum Department that sets the curriculum, specifies the subjects and issues standard textbooks for every school grade across the KSA. The nature of the curriculum specification and the number of lessons in a particular subject are different according to each grade level. The Ministry of Education provides a unified curriculum and a specified group of textbooks to accompany each curriculum. These are prepared, designed, printed, published and passed to the schools around the KSA every year by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2008). The Ministry of Education provides the teachers with specific teaching textbooks with different pedagogies for learning and teaching practices in all subjects for all school levels (Alshumaimeri, 1999).

All textbooks are provided free for primary, intermediate and secondary school levels and are shared by both genders. In addition, every age group in each educational level has an associated curriculum and course related reading material, this material is updated on an annual basis, according to the changes that occur in the economic, political, cultural and social arenas. The various curriculum subject areas and textbooks are designed in accordance with relevant topic areas for the learners. A great deal of importance is placed on the content

of these textbooks and as such, teachers are encouraged to follow the curriculum very closely. Further, teachers, head teachers, parents and learners in the educational process are not in a position where they can be involved in, or influence, any area of the education delivered in the KSA (Bin Salamah, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2008).

2.5 Gender Segregation

The culture and religion of the KSA follows the precepts of Islam, the Quran (the holy Book of Islam) and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) (Abudabbeh, 1996). Both the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad believe that education and learning should be compulsory for both genders and according to Islam, females have rights that are equal to males. Although women are considered as equal, they are not viewed the same politically, or by society in general. Islam explains that women are allowed to labour in an agricultural, industrial, or commercial role when this does not involve mixing with foreign males or have a negative effect on their family or on their own person (AlMunajjed, 1997).

Following the instructions of the Quran, both boys and girls attend segregated schools in the KSA. Al-Kahtani et al. (2006) argue that gender segregation is common in almost all levels of Saudi education. All learners follow the same curriculum, sit the same examinations and all lessons are conducted by teachers of the same sex as their learners. In some circumstances, women are allowed to receive instructions from male teachers, for example, via media broadcasting, using closed-circuit television or to attend some exclusive classes that require the use of male tutors such as in the field of medicine (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006; Alaugab, 2007).

2.5.1 Education for Females in the KSA

Female education in the KSA was founded in 1959 when the General Presidency of Girl's Education was established (Sayegh and Rahman, 2009). It was controlled by the Department of Religious Guidelines to ensure that female education in the KSA stay with its main purpose, which is "to enabling her to develop in an appropriate Islamic way; this enables the girl to become a productive and useful citizen, an effective mother, and to become active in teaching, nursing and medical practices" (Al-Salloom, 1995, pp. 19-20).

In 2002 the General Presidency of Girls' Education was combined with the Ministry of Education to become one ministry. Thus, both males and females have the same level of education provision and opportunities for outcomes (Hamdan, 2005). The number of female learners educated, the number of schools, universities and other educational institutions for female education in the KSA has increased rapidly over the years in all areas such as education, science, religion, arts, English, psychology and home economics. In other words, the only university that Saudi women cannot attend is the King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) (Hamdan, 2005). The pies charts presented below (Figure 1) show the noticeable difference between the numbers of learners in all Saudi schools levels in terms of gender for the period from 1974/ 1975 to 2004/ 2005.

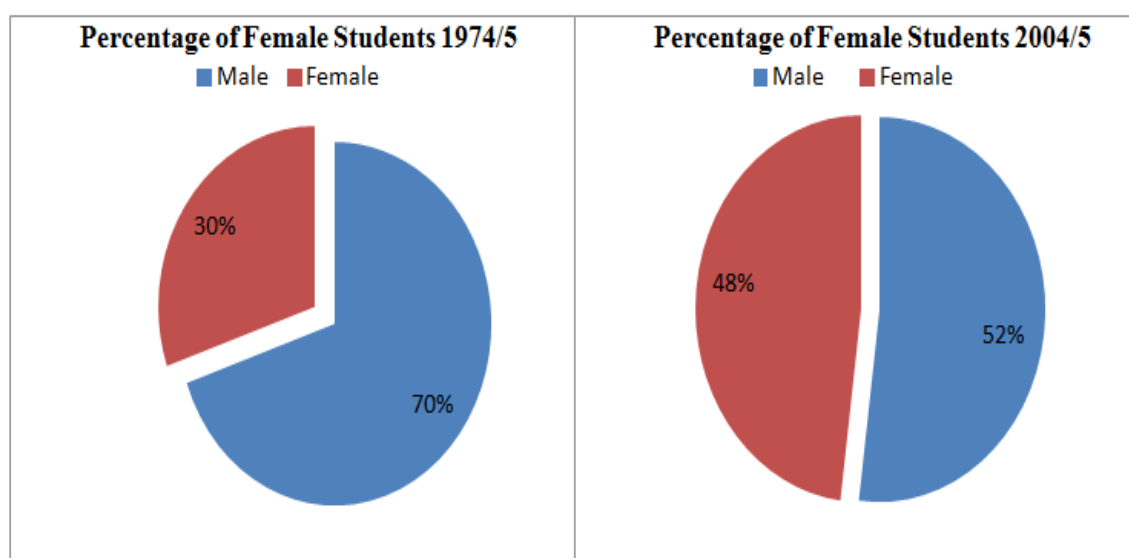


Figure.1. an account of male and female learners in all Saudi school levels in the period from 1974/5 to 2004/5. Adapted from: SAMA, Ministry of Education, 2008, p. 376

2.6 Teachers of Islamic Culture

The teacher is a respected person in Islamic society. The Quran states that learners should always act respectfully to teachers and “.... should not make the calling of the teacher among you as if you are calling one another” (Sura An-Noor (24) Ayah (63)). Teachers also have some responsibilities in Islamic society. They need to be gentle instructors who can educate their learners giving access to essential knowledge and they need to be good role models for the learners in order that they follow their behaviour.

Teachers in Islam are not only a source of information but also act as guides who build their learners' personalities and improve their abilities (Khan, 2014). The Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) states, "Teach without chiding...teachers are preferable to the scolders". He also said: "Use leniency to those whom you teach and those who teach you" (Bukhari). The teachers also have some instruction from God in how to deal with learners, as follows: "As part of the mercy of God you deal with them gently; if you were severe and hardhearted, they would have broken away from you" (Sura Al-Imran (3) Ayah (159)).

The Quran guides teachers to be kind and encourages them to maintain a positive attitude toward all learners. This is also supported by Khan (2014) who believes that it is important for Muslim teachers to have a positive attitude in order to improve the academic experience of their learners. Although, even if some Saudi teachers follow these instructions in dealing with their learners, but that does not mean that all Saudi teachers follow these instructions in dealing with their learners.

2.6.1 The Role of Teachers in the KSA's Education System

In 2006 the Saudi government introduced the slogan that "Every Child Needs a Teacher" to promote teachers and reaffirm the message that teachers are necessary for educating society (Al Shaer, 2007). The Ministry of Education also marks the importance of the role of the teachers every year by hosting the international "Education for All week" (Al Shaer, 2007).

The general role of Saudi teachers is to educate learners according to the curriculum provided by the government, a curriculum that reflects cultural beliefs, values and the way of life. It is the teachers' responsibility to deliver the objectives of the curriculum and prepare learners for the next, higher level of education, ensuring that their learners possess the required level of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Teachers are required to use the textbooks produced by the Curriculum Department of the Ministry of Education. Homework assignments are usually provided in the form of questions that the teacher can set for the learners after each lesson and that are based on the content of the textbook. The homework set by the teacher will vary according to the different grades that range from low to high levels. Teachers also have the responsibility of devising examination questions and setting exam papers for their learners, which are also in accordance with the curriculum provided

by the government and which also reflect cultural beliefs, values, the way of life and learners' comprehension levels (Ministry of Education, 2008; Oyaïd, 2009).

In the KSA, secondary level education is considered to be the most important phase due to the fact that all learners follow the same curriculum in their first year but are given options to choose the specific track that they want to study in their second and third years (Oyaïd, 2009). Thus, in secondary level education, the teacher's main duty is to plan and timetable the delivery of the syllabus, as provided by the Ministry of Education. From the beginning to the end of the academic year they use textbooks that contain different activities for learning and teaching in every class and for every subject. Observing their learners' performance and abilities in all areas and also being involved in setting exam papers are just some of the duties required by teachers who are teaching learners at this stage of their education (Bin Salamah, 2001). Alhareth and Al Dighrir (2014) claim that the assessment processes of secondary and higher education rely heavily on the teachers. Oyaïd (2009) observed that teachers under the guidance of the school head teachers write the final examinations in secondary schools. These varieties of duties reflect the importance of the teacher in continuing the educational process within Saudi schools. It is assumed that classroom teachers take cognisance of these responsibilities and have sufficient knowledge to deal with such duties effectively.

2.6.2 The Role of Head Teachers in the KSA's Education System

The general role of head teachers as required by the Ministry of Education is to manage all administrative, educational and social affairs within their schools. Some of their main responsibilities include ensuring the Islamic faith and its rules are applied in schools, supervising the day-to-day operations of the school and motivating teachers to prepare classroom schedules. Head teachers must ensure that all teachers possess the knowledge and skills necessary to understand their individual learners so as to provide a supportive learning environment for them. Head teachers must arrange regular meetings with staff to make sure they understand the implications of the Ministry of Education's regulations and policies and fully conform to them. They are expected to regularly observe teachers' performance in the classroom and sign off their work on a daily basis. Finally, they are required to monitor the running of exams in the school and observe test results in accordance with Ministry regulations (Ministry of Education, 2008; Ibn Dohaish, 2005). It is expecting that head

teachers aware of these roles and cover sufficient knowledge for the school administration and grant wider power to take decisions within schools.

2.7 Historical Background of Foreign Language Taught in the KSA

As stated earlier, the official language of the KSA is Arabic, which is also the language of the Quran (Rashid and Shasheen, 2002). Turkish was the first foreign language to be taught in the KSA. This occurred as a result of the Turkish invasion, following which the Turkish language was included in the Ottoman controlled schools. The majority of the public refused to attend these schools or even speak the language because this was considered as the language spoken by the oppressor of the Saudis, the language of invaders. The Turkish language ceased to be spoken in the KSA when the Ottoman Empire collapsed in 1914 (Al-Ghamdi, and Al-Saddat, 2002).

Over time the feelings towards teaching and learning foreign languages began to change. This was due to the rapid growth and development of the KSA economy, which occurred following the prospecting for oil in 1933, the major driving force behind the economic upturn (Al-Ghamdi, and Al-Saddat, 2002). Thus, the KSA required a robust education system with institutions that could provide Saudi citizens with the necessary skills to travel to the West to further their education and deal effectively with foreigners coming to work in the KSA's oil industries. As a result, the Scholarship Preparation School (SPS) was founded in Makkah in 1936 to meet these requirements. SPS is officially regarded as the first school to teach foreign languages, with English language being the first language to be introduced to the KSA. Qualified EFL teachers from Egypt worked in this school and as such, the syllabus and the curriculum of the school was formulated and closely based on Egypt's education model (Al-Ghamdi, and Al-Saddat, 2002; Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). In 1950 the Ministry of Education introduced English language as a compulsory subject to be included in the secondary school curriculum. In 1958 the systematic study of English language commenced at the elementary level of the educational system (Al-Abdulkader, 1978; Al-Shammary, 1984).

2.7.1 The Importance of Teaching English Language in the KSA

As a result of the discovery of oil in 1933, the KSA has been dependent on a range of foreign-owned companies and the relationships with these international companies remain crucial for the economic success of the KSA nation (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014). In the KSA, there was dependence on foreigners in many vital industries and companies, for example Al-Braik (2007) argues that in 1978 around 90% of the workforce of all the major institutions in the KSA, such as food establishments, hospitals and shopping malls were foreigners.

There have been many important and effective foreign-run companies, such as the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), established in 1933, which have substantially influenced the KSA economy. In fact, up until 1988, this company was majority-owned by American stakeholders and was generally operational in accordance with the demands of the US population. It is presently owned by the KSA government although the majority of its employees are foreigners, thus any advice in relation to technical matters is sourced in the USA (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014) which make the use of EFL very important in this field.

EFL is also highly connected to the establishment of the military presence in Saudi Arabia as the KSA obtains expansive quantities of American arms and also receives military advisors from the USA dating back to 1948 (Cordesman, 2003). So the use of EFL is considered as essential in the military field. Additionally, EFL is used as the training language for many occupational areas in the KSA, such as Saudi Airlines and the Saudi Telecommunication Company (Mahboob and Elyas, 2014).

The importance of EFL is recognised by Saudi citizens to a great extent and it is seen as a necessary requirement to attaining higher education, international communication and business development. Many scholarships are offered by the KSA government for studying abroad in different English-speaking countries, such as Canada, the UK and the USA. A number of Saudi parents are also sending their children to English-speaking countries in order to improve their level of understanding of English language (Al Shemary, 2008; Rahman, 2011).

2.7.2 Teaching English Language in the KSA

EFL has been used in business settings since the KSA's discovery of oil in 1933, but it was only introduced as an educational subject by the government in 1950 (Al-Shammary, 1984). Saudi Education Policy states the general objective of teaching EFL in the KSA as "furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them to acquire knowledge and sciences to their communities and participate in the spreading of Islam and serving humanity" (Al Hajailan, 2003, p. 23). This policy confirms the importance of teaching and learning EFL in the KSA, it recognises the language as an international communication tool with significant influence in political, economic and scientific fields. English is the only foreign language taught in primary (from grad six), intermediate and secondary schools as a compulsory subject in the KSA's education system.

Al Hajailan (2003) claims that through the history of EFL being taught in the KSA, two curriculum documents were created in order to meet the primary objective of teaching EFL. The first consists of two series, the first of which was drafted in 1987 and aimed to provide the foundational basis for all textbooks associated with teaching EFL. The second series from these documents, called 'English for Saudi Arabia', was developed in 1989 by a team of authors working with King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM). The Ministry of Education asked KFUPM to prepare the EFL curricula in light of the university's successful EFL programme for Saudi learners seeking employment in ARAMCO.

Elyas (2008) argues that these early curriculum documents did not meet the government's main objective of improving EFL language ability among Saudi learners. The reasons for deeming the original curriculum documents as insufficient are uncertain, though there was a debate as to whether KFUPM could effectively boast a valid EFL curriculum for Saudi learners when women are not allowed to enter or be part of the university. It was also questionable how KFUPM staff could understand the needs of female EFL learners when women were not permitted to make decisions in developing the curriculum. Thus, voices among Saudi citizens called for the reformation of the EFL curricula to improve the standard of English among all Saudi learners.

In relation to this, the Higher Committee of Education attempted to improve the KSA policy of Education, including its EFL expectations (Alshumaimeri, 2003). The Ministry of

Education explained that the overall goals of teaching EFL in Saudi Arabian schools were to improve learners' linguistic abilities for communicating in situations (both routine and professional) with English speakers and to promote learners' awareness of the benefit of learning EFL to improve cognitive and problem-solving skills, as well as to further the spread and understanding of Islam abroad and encourage global cooperation, tolerance and mutual cultural respect among different nations (Ministry of Education, 2005). These goals include the importance of keeping the teaching and learning of EFL within the boundaries of Islamic religion, which forms the main component of Saudi society, while also emphasising the need to understand, respect and accept other cultures for the purpose of international development. It is clear that the Ministry of Education introduced these goals to establish a careful balance between the two ideals.

The second document associated with teaching EFL was created in 2000 by the Department of English in the Directorate of Curriculum under the Ministry of Education. The Ministry established a modernised curriculum that involved introducing instructional guides to English in intermediate school and in the last level of primary school (grade six) (Ministry of Education, 2004). The main focus of this curriculum was to base it in local Saudi culture while giving attention to western cultures, practices and habits. Elyas (2008) notes that previous curriculum documents paid no attention to American or western cultures, practices and habits, especially ones that were unacceptable in Islamic society, such as drinking alcohol. Due to the KSA's strong cultural differences from western cultures and the need to foster acceptance and tolerance of other cultures, the KSA government cautiously introduced this new document. Currently, no evaluations of this second document are available, so it would be interesting to review whether the curriculum actually promotes EFL development among Saudi learners and is accepted by Islamic Saudis as well as international audiences.

The primary objective of teaching EFL in secondary schools in the KSA is to ensure learners attain a level of skill such that they are able to use the allocated materials effectively and communicate with other individuals using English, both verbally and in writing (Ministry of Education, 2002). Because English has a heavy presence in higher education (after secondary) both in universities abroad and in many Saudi institutions (such as medical schools), it is important that the curriculum prepares EFL learners to use the language effectively in such activities as giving a presentation or writing an essay.

Most EFL teachers in the KSA are Saudi citizens and usually they have no previous experience or training in teacher education. The majority of Saudi EFL teachers have graduated from the schools of education at Saudi universities or colleges with a bachelor's degree in English. (Alfahadi, 2014). While pursuing their bachelor's degrees, future EFL teachers theoretically study English language subjects, including translations, linguistics and applied linguistics, throughout the degree programme. However, there is only one semester of practical experiences associated with this (Ministry of Education, 2002). Albedaiwi (2014) and Al-Seghayer (2014) claim that the training for EFL teachers in the KSA is insufficient. They argue that EFL teachers normally graduate from universities and colleges with limited practical training. According to Al-Seghayer (2005), this single semester of training is inadequate for training EFL teachers appropriately.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in addition to the role played by the Ministry of Higher Education, the other authority responsible for training school staff is the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education trains EFL teachers, like other teachers, through the Department of Training's centres, which were established in 1975 and have aimed to provide Saudi EFL teachers with the different teaching practices to improve the standard of teaching English within Saudi schools (Ministry of Education, 2002). The Ministry of Education has taken some steps to improve EFL teacher training in the KSA. For example, in 2000, the Ministry of Education cooperated with both the US embassy and the British Council to train Saudi EFL teachers in different teaching methods to help improve English teaching standards (Ministry of Education, 2004). According to Al-Hazmi (2003), this programme helped improve the teaching attitude of many EFL teachers and enabled them to use technical teaching methods. This cooperation aimed to train 600 EFL teachers and supervisors, which did not cover all EFL teachers in the KSA. However, 60 of the expected EFL teachers did not attend this three-day training programme in 2002 (Al-Hazmi, 2003), which possibly indicated that some EFL teachers might refuse to attend this training or change their teaching practice. Parts of the KSA are geographically distant from this training area, Riyadh. Therefore, the ability of some EFL teachers to attend this training programme is problematic. The lack of EFL teacher training and knowledge might have been why the Ministry of Education centralised English language classes, but the consequence of this decision has made EFL teachers rely on textbooks. According to Albedaiwi (2014), whether the Ministry of Education in the KSA trusts the qualifications of Saudi EFL teachers is unclear; having centralised EFL textbooks with poorly trained teachers would be better than having no EFL textbooks with poorly trained teachers.

Saudi EFL teachers teach from a set syllabus at every graded stage, using a clear guide with deadlines issued by the Ministry of Education (Fishman et al., 1996). In the KSA schools, EFL teachers typically require three materials to teach their EFL classes; namely, teacher textbooks, student textbooks and workbooks. The two EFL teacher textbooks, 'English for Saudi Arabia' and 'Various English for Saudi Arabian Writers', include different pedagogies for learning and teaching EFL (Alshumaimeri, 1999). The curriculum outlines the objectives of each lesson as well as the allotted time for these lessons to be carried out (Al-Otaibi, 2004; Almutairi, 2008). The Ministry's centralisation and heavy dependence on the provided textbooks combined with EFL teachers' lack of experience make an inquiry into how well the teachers are able to support GELL in this environment significant.

2.8 Gifted Education in the KSA

Some researchers (see, for example, Adas, 1998; Alamer, 2010; Al Qarni, 2010) have claimed that Saudi society is familiar with the concept of giftedness. In Arab culture, there are many terms, such as smart, super, genius, talented, gifted and exceptional to describe high-ability or exceptional individuals, which could explain the understandings and beliefs of Arab people about human abilities. Alamer (2010) claims that Arab culture believes that individuals' exceptional abilities make important contributions to the improvement of society. In his study, Alamer (2010) gave an example a gifted individual in Arab culture: a person who is wise and able to solve problems, such as those between tribes. According to Adas (1998) and Alamer (2010), Arabs have traditionally believed that giftedness is an innate ability that is also developed by society; thus, one of the main approaches used to support and educate gifted learners was sending their children to the desert to communicate with local people in the desert. Alamer (2010) and Al Qarni (2010) argue that this approach was intended to help gifted individuals strengthen their personality and become patient and fluent in language (which was one of the areas that Arabs considered important for gifted learners). Memory was also considered one of the important traits of gifted individuals within Arab cultures because Arabs relied on these people to transcribe their famous events and their history. Arabs also valued the arts, such as poetry, because poets were considered the voice of the tribe (Alamer, 2010; Al Qarni, 2010).

Alamer (2010) claims that these perceptions of giftedness continued even after the sixth century, when Islam spread among Arab culture. Many of these traits are appreciated in

Islam, such as wisdom, eloquence, courage and leadership. Islam praises those who try to develop their abilities. For example, in the Quran, Allah asked, “Are those equal, those who know and those who do not know?” (Al-Quran, Al-Zumar, 9), which was intended to encourage the understanding and exploration of the abilities of gifted individuals. Many religious institutions – *katatibs* – and mosques became responsible for improving the abilities of gifted individuals (Adas, 1998). The role of religious institutions has been influenced by the Quran’s instructions to motivate and evaluate gifted learners, which are necessary activities to promote the abilities of these learners. On an individual basis, many religious institutions have rewarded gifted learners with more responsibilities or scholarships to travel to the developed areas of that time, such as Iraq (Baghdad) and Damascus, to pursue more knowledge in order to maximise their abilities. These institutions also applied some psychological and educational principles, such as financial rewards or emotional encouragement, and respected gifted individuals’ differences in abilities in different areas, such as poetry, history or language (Alamer, 2010; Adas, 1998).

Since Saudi Arabia is a completely Muslim Arab country, these factors have all shaped Saudis’ perceptions of gifted education and gifted individuals. These perceptions have influenced social attitudes towards giftedness. There is no clear evidence in the literature about how these religious institutions identified, educated and supported gifted learners. However, Al Qarni (2010) claims that the support and care of gifted learners remained the responsibility of religious institutions on an individual basis until the establishment of schools in the KSA. The KSA began taking scientific steps to support gifted learners when the Cabinet of the KSA recognised the need to identify and support gifted learners within Saudi society in 1969 (Al-Nafea et al., 1992). The Cabinet of the KSA formulated a policy that contained a number of important legislations that were related to the development of gifted learners. For example, Rule 57 states that “it is very important to discover and identify the gifted learners among all Saudi young children and youth, nurture them by all means to unveil their potentials, and pay extra attention and efforts to provide them with special programmes and appropriate opportunities that can be integrated easily into the Country’s Public Educational System” (Ministry of Education, 1969, p. 16).

Although, no serious action was taken until 20 years after the formulation of this policy, from 1990 to 1996, King Abdul Aziz’s City of Science and Technology, with cooperation from the Ministry of Education and the General Presidency for Girls’ Education, introduced a project for extensive national research entitled Identification and Care for Gifted Students

(Bondagjy, 2000). By 1996, the following items of education legislation for gifted learners in the KSA had been issued:

1. To write the theoretical framework for studies relating to gifted learners, including appropriate ways of educating them.
2. To develop a range of tools to identify gifted learners, including identification techniques formed in reference to the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking, the Scales for Rating the Behaviour Characteristics of Superior Students (SRBCSS), IQ measurement experiments and the Wechsler test for individual intelligence (WISC-R).
3. To create appropriate enrichment activities that meet the needs of gifted learners (Al-Makhalid, 2012).

To implement these items of legislation, between 1997 and 1999 the Ministry of Education launched the Identification and Fostering Programme in select Saudi schools. The programme was initially only offered to male learners in 1997, with the female programme beginning in 1998. The objectives of the programme were to improve school settings, design specialised services for gifted learners, provide suitable programmes to support the requirements of gifted learners, incorporate enrichment activities and to train teachers to deal with gifted learners effectively. The programme and its outcomes were a critical step for the development of gifted education in the KSA, and led to such initiatives as the King Abdul Aziz and His Companions Foundation for gifted learners, known as MAWHIBA.

The current gifted education system in the KSA is based on the King Abdul Aziz and His Companions Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity (KACGC) MAWHIBA model in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. The King Abdul Aziz and His Companions Foundation for gifted learners, though it was more widely known as the Foundation for Giftedness and Creativity, was established in 1999 (Alqefari, 2010). It was established to identify and support gifted learners in the KSA to reach their full potential (MAWHIBA, 2007). There are a series of aims that the KACGC is required to meet. These include; a) developing a range of tools to identify those learners who fall within the definition of giftedness in the KSA in all areas, b) creating appropriate enrichment programmes that links

best practice to specialist work and education and c) educating the wider society of the need to support those considered as gifted and of the importance of these children to the success of the national future, economic activity and wealth creation (MAWHIBA, 2007). The first aim may well explain the rise in the number of those identified as gifted within the KSA in recent years, although this is specific to maths and science and not for other subjects such as English language learning.

Despite these aims, the KACGC and the Ministry of Education have not closely followed any specific theory or model. Al-Makhalid (2012) and Al Qarni (2010) argue that the reason that these organisations have not followed one theory or model is that the KSA has incorporated many international models. These Saudi researchers argue that giftedness is a dynamic concept that reflects changes in a society's needs, so adopting one model or theory that is flexible and that incorporates Saudi culture, society and community would be difficult. Further, Aljughaiman (2005) and Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013) claim that instead of developing a definition that reflects Saudi conceptions of giftedness and Saudi social needs, the KSA adopted its definition of gifted learners from Marland's (1972) definition of gifted and talented learners, which was used by the National Association for Gifted Children in the US, though some details of the definition were changed when the definition was translated from English to Arabic. This is also acknowledged by some international researchers (see, for example, Phillipson, 2007; Cramond, 2004) who determined the role of culture in giftedness. Cramond (2004, p. 15) questioned, "Why should giftedness be defined the same way in China and Beirut? The music, food, art, alphabet, predominant religion, and other cultural aspects are very different and so should be taken into consideration when developing policy and planning learning experiences."

However, the KACGC and the Ministry of Education adapted the Renzulli's Enrichment Triad Model as the main component of gifted programmes (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). Some Saudi researchers (see, for example, Aljughaiman, 2007; Makhalid, 2012) have claimed that there is limited research and literature justifying the adoption of Renzulli's model within Saudi gifted programmes. However, the main concept of Renzulli's model is that gifted behaviours reflect interaction between three main traits: above-average ability, creativity and task commitment (Renzulli, 1978, 1986), which are discussed in chapter three. For the educational field, Renzulli developed the ETM (Renzulli, 1977), with which the creative productivity of gifted individuals can be promoted and nurtured in different areas of interest, and then, gifted individuals can be trained to select

their own areas of interests (Renzulli and Reis, 1994;1997). The implantation of this model within the KACGC and the Ministry of Education are discussed later in this chapter.

Members of the KACGC represent various professional councils regarding the education of the gifted, including the American National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC). The Foundation received a high level of global attention and acclaim, and many important international institutions, such as John Hopkins, Oxford, Cambridge and Texas universities, pledged to provide the Foundation with information and resources to support its work (Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). It is noteworthy that these are all western institutions operate within distinct cultures. Recognising this, the KSA has made efforts to modify any instructions, such as modifying identification, coming from these institutions in the KACGC so as to be relevant to Saudi society. It is still questionable whether the practical application of these instructions has succeeded within Saudi culture. This also supported by Al Nafa'a (2000) and Al-Zoubi and Bani Abdel Rahman (2016) who argue that the main obstacle to implementing legislation related to gifted education in the KSA is the inability to apply scientific standards and testing related to Saudi culture to the topic.

In addition to the KACGC, the Ministry of Education provides special education programmes throughout the whole of the KSA. Because gifted education is a type of special education, the Ministry created an independent unit to supervise the effectiveness of gifted education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). The Ministry also established the General Administration for Gifted Students (GAGS) in 2000 (Al-Makhalid, 2012) to manage gifted education programmes in the KSA. Within the GAGS, the Ministry of Education created the Gifted Education Care Centre to oversee the educational, psychological and social care of gifted learners. In its duties, the General Administration established 31 gifted education care centres for boys and 20 centres for girls across the KSA. By late 2004, 264 male and 97 female learners had enrolled in the programme as gifted learners (Bushnak, 2007). Bushnak (2007) observed that most gifted education in the KSA focuses on male gifted learners and agreed that there is current imbalance in favour of male learners.

The Ministry of Education, supported by KACGC, introduced six Primary Centres for Gifted Education. These centres—established in the central cities of Riyadh, Madinah, Jeddah, Taif, Dammam and Al-Hassa—use enriched activities to support and improve gifted learners' abilities in applied science. The centres also were given the role to teach their entire

communities to recognise the nature of giftedness (Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). In parts of Saudi Arabia geographically distant from these centres, however, the ability of gifted learners to attend targeted programming poses a problem. The common result is the exclusion of geographically isolated gifted learners from suitable programming. A more inclusive option would be to station trained and qualified staff to run similar programmes at schools rather than at external centres so as to reach even the farthest villages or to improve gifted education within regular schools and within regular EFL classrooms in the KSA.

To meet gifted learners' needs, the Ministry of Education ran a training programme in 2001 for only STEM teachers under the special education programme. This programme aimed to train teachers about the various elements of giftedness, including identification methods; an introduction and background of giftedness (theories and models); the different types of gifted learners in different fields; the development of enrichment programme for gifted learners; how to help parents recognise their child's abilities; using teaching strategies to develop gifted abilities, such as seminars on brainstorming; and using methods to improve gifted learners' thinking skills, such as problem solving (MAWHIBA, 2007; 2012). The Ministry of Higher Education, which is responsible for training teachers at colleges and universities, ran a one-year programme aimed to train all students about gifted education (Ministry of Higher Education, 2006). However, this programme ended in 2007 for no obvious reason and has not been replaced with another training programme (Al-Makhalid, 2012; Bushnak, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007).

Despite the training emanating from these authorities, the lack of consistently available effective training regarding gifted education in the KSA is apparent. Al Qarni (2010), in a study that evaluated gifted programmes in Saudi Arabia, found that gifted training needs to be reliable and ongoing to be effective in practice. He claims that there was no prior preparation for the teachers responsible for gifted learners when they were studying at Saudi colleges and universities. He also claims that the in-service training programme that the Ministry of Education provided for teachers when they were hired did not qualify or prepare these teachers appropriately. One possible reason that this training was not applied effectively could be that the Saudi gifted education system has adopted many models and practices from the West without connecting these models with these training courses (Al kaldi, 2002).

Another possible reason for the ineffectiveness of this training is the inability of the training programme centres to cover and train all classrooms teachers. Al Qarni (2010) claims that a number of interviewed teachers of gifted STEM classrooms confirmed that they had not received any type of training regarding gifted education. In addition, these training programmes have only been available for classrooms teachers. Head teachers were not included in the gifted programme training, which is surprising given their responsibility to identify and support gifted learners within Saudi schools and ensure that no gifted learners are disadvantaged or excluded (Ministry of Education, 2005; Al-Ghamdi, 2007; Alqefari, 2010; Al Qarni, 2010). Finally, Al Qarni (2010) found that this training programme was only provided to teachers of gifted STEM classrooms teachers, and this training was not even effective for training these teachers to meet gifted learners' needs or use different teaching strategies and appropriate identification methods.

2.8.1 Identifying Gifted Learners in the KSA

Gifted learners have been defined by the Ministry of Education as “those who have extraordinary abilities or have a unique performance over their peers in different fields which are valued by society” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 112). The Ministry of Education identify gifted learners in public school subject areas, namely the natural and applied sciences, electronics, computer science and inventing, only then to be followed by all other subjects (Salwe, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). In order for a learner to be labelled as ‘gifted’, he or she must be identified by one or more teachers in the school (Al Qarni, 2010). The learners should also meet one or more of the following specifications modified by the KACGC and applied by the General Administration for Gifted Students to be relevant to Saudi society and culture (Bushnak, 2007). These specifications are:

- Marks in academic achievement tests of 90% or higher
- A score in the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children – Revised (WISC-R) of 124 or higher
- Excellent performance on the Torrance Tests for Creative Thinking figural test (TTCT) score of 124 or higher
- High mental ability test scores (Bushnak, 2007).

Different criteria are used to identify gifted learners. The criteria defined by the Ministry of Education, on which the tests used to identify gifted learners are based, include

creativity, leadership, general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitudes and talent in the visual or performing arts (Ministry of Education, 1998).

The Ministry of Education has required schools to test and identify gifted learners using tests written in Arabic. The nature of these tests are outstanding test scores in science and mathematics exams, outstanding test scores in science subjects (not less than 90%), outstanding test scores in mathematics subjects (not less than 90%), evaluation of learners by their regular teachers, outstanding academic achievement scores (not less than 90%), outstanding test scores on the mental abilities test (both collective and individual), outstanding test score on the TTCT and an outstanding test score on the WISC (MAWHIBA, 2007). Some of these tests that were adopted from the West, such as the TTCT and the WISC, were translated to Arabic language and formulated to suit Saudi society by the KACGC (Al Nafa'a, 2000). Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013) argue that these identification tools are comparable to those used by international institutions. Despite being utilised in the KSA, whether the tools effectively identify gifted Saudi learners has not yet been determined. The KSA should consider whether it needs to reform its gifted education system according to its own cultural and societal needs.

2.8.2 Provision of Gifted Education in the KSA

There have been three main strategies for educating gifted learners in the KSA, including a mixture of enrichment, acceleration and ability grouping strategies (MAWHIBA, 2007). According to Aljughaiman (2007) and Makhalid (2012), there is limited research justifying the origin of these three strategies within the KSA. However, these researchers claim that the use of these strategies is rational because these strategies are comparable to those used by comparable international educational institutions, such as those in the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

Enrichment. The KSA's enrichment strategy was established in 2001 by the Ministry of Education to enhance the quality of gifted education (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). According to Callow (1994, p. 15), "Enrichment is taken to mean the widening of the curriculum by means of additional activities or subjects, and may involve the study of some topics to a greater depth than is normal for the age group". This strategy has formed the key element of gifted education programmes in the KSA to enrich the academic performance of

gifted learners by delivering essential knowledge in an enjoyable way (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007).

Robinson et al. (2007) and Robinson et al. (2000) argue that enrichment strategies are useful for supporting all learners, not only gifted learners. Renzulli and Reis (1994) and Reis and Renzulli (2010) argue that the enrichment model can be applied inside the classroom, where teachers can differentiate and adopt extracurricular activities. This approach can also be used outside the classroom, where enrichment deals with exclusive, separate classes that are specifically designed for gifted learners and taught by trained “gifted specialists”. These separate classes are intended to progress and nurture children’s interests in different areas (Renzulli and Reis, 1994; Ferguson, 2006). One concern about enrichment is that while gifted learners are sometimes put into special classes, in these classes, all gifted learners experience the same enrichment task at the same time, irrespective of their individual needs, abilities, and interests. This practice seems to ignore the heterogeneous nature of learners. If gifted programmes offer gifted learners, whether inside the class or in special classes, specific enrichment curricula and activities according to their individual intellectual interests and needs, then the enrichment model would be an effective form of organisation to promote giftedness.

The ETM developed by Renzulli is the foundation of enrichment strategy currently employed in the KSA (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). According to Renzulli (1986) and Renzulli and Reis (1994), the ETM includes three main types. Type I enrichment includes general extracurricular activities and aims to introduce learners to different events, areas, subjects and activities that are not normally found in the curriculum. Type I enrichment is generally provided by regular teachers in regular classes. Teachers’ role in this model is designing learning experiences that allow gifted learners to become involved with research and investigation activities in any area of interest (Renzulli and Reis, 1994). Type II enrichment is also applied the regular classrooms and includes grouping activities, in which gifted learners obtain instructions from teachers that allow these gifted learners to investigate their areas of interest more deeply, improve their critical thinking and increase their awareness of other group members’ perspectives. Renzulli and Reis (1997) claim that teachers are an important part this model, especially in the design of learning situations (e.g., real problem orientation and inductive thinking skills). However, Al Qarni (2010), in his evaluation study on gifted education in the KSA, claims that many of the teachers in the KSA do not have enough of the training needed to support and apply these kinds of

enrichment activities appropriately. Furthermore, one of the main aims of these types of enrichments (I and II) is to offer gifted learners enrichment activities that are suited to their individual interests. Within the Saudi context, these types of enrichment have been provided according to gifted interests only in maths and science areas, and gifted interests in other areas, such as art or language, have been ignored (Al Qarni, 2010).

Gifted STEM learners are supposed to be labelled as “gifted” by their schools and to be enrolled into centres administered by the MAWHIBA gifted programmes (MAWHIBA, 2012; Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). These centres apply Type III enrichment in order to support gifted STEM learners. Type III enrichment provides support for gifted STEM learners, who concentrate on investigating a self-selected area. Basically, Type III enrichment’s main aims are to encourage learners based on their own interests, creative thinking and task commitment (Renzulli and Reis, 1994;1997). In the KSA, the main approach used by the MAWHIBA programme centres has been to apply Type III enrichment to support gifted STEM learners through out-of-school programmes (MAWHIBA, 2012; Aljughaiman, 2012). This enrichment programme has taken place over four weeks in the summer. The main aim of this programme has been to improve the social, personal, cognitive and emotional skills of the gifted learners who attend. The target sample of this programme has been identified by their schools from primary fourth to secondary school levels. This programme has partnered with local and international universities to support these gifted STEM learners. For example, there have been 27 domestic summer schools in STEM subjects, and 22 different research centres and universities have supported these schools by helping with planning and providing resources, experiences and supervision for these programmes. Around 1,400 gifted learners attended this out-of-school programme by the end of 2010 (MAWHIBA, 2012; Aljughaiman, 2012), and 2,589 gifted learners in 84 different cities around the KSA attended this programme in 2012 (MAWHIBA, 2012).

Several Saudi studies (see, for example, Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013; Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012) have argued that this enrichment programme could improve gifted learners’ attitudes and motivation towards learning. However, according to Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013), there has been limited research evaluating Type III enrichment programmes. Although many gifted learners have attended this programme, all these learners were identified as gifted STEM learners; gifted learners in other subjects did not attend. Although governmental policies in the KSA have been formulated to support all gifted learners in all areas (including English), as mentioned in the first chapter, the practices

of these policies have focused primarily on applied science and do not provide GELLs with the equal support and training they need.

To evaluate the KSA's enrichment strategy, Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012) conducted a study to determine how well enrichment programmes develop the creative, practical and analytical abilities of gifted Saudi learners. They noted that most enrichment programmes aimed to enhance the educational experiences of gifted learners by "increasing their interest in schooling" (Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012, p. 154) and focused mainly on academic achievements rather than the social and practical aspects necessary for achieving success in daily life. The results of this study revealed the need for enrichment programmes to nurture all aspects of a student's life: social, mental, academic and practical (Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012). While the presence of high test scores may be a valid determiner of gifted learners, these scores should not be the only measure by which gifted learners are recognised or assessed. Not all gifted learners express their abilities best through formal examinations and academic achievements; learners who have difficulty performing well during examinations due to other social and emotional issues are at risk of losing recognition and support within the current system (Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012).

After spending 15 years training science teachers in the KSA, Alarfaj (2011) reviewed the in-school enrichment programmes and offered warnings about the many potential problems resulting from gifted learners being unsuitably supported to in regular classes. Alarfaj (2011) carried out a collection of interviews and questionnaires with the learners, teachers and supervisors involved in the programme at various levels. The results of the interviews suggest that the level of thinking applied in regular classes under the programme was insufficient to support gifted learners and that the curriculum topics were not relevant to the learners' daily lives and environments. These findings demonstrate that gifted learners in regular schools need more enrichment. The biggest issue is that activities provided in the enrichment programme failed to provide relevant and interesting and challenging topics to stimulate gifted learners' abilities. Gifted learners should engage with activities that are interesting and relevant to them. This problem occurs when there is a lack of specialist contributions by expert staff to the design of adequate topics and activities and when unqualified or inexperienced teachers have to deal with all learners, including gifted learners (Alarfaj, 2011).

Acceleration. The second strategy, acceleration, has been defined as “educational intervention that moves students through an educational programme at a faster than usual rate or younger than typical age” (Colangelo et al., 2004, p. 5). Acceleration can be categorised into two models: subject-based acceleration and grade-based acceleration. The first model provides young gifted learners with advanced placement around a particular area, while the second model allows a gifted learner to skip a number of academic years within the educational system (Schiever and Maker, 2003).

Authors such as Archambault et al. (1993) and Colangelo et al. (2004) argue that acceleration is one of the best practices to meet the needs of gifted learners. Acceleration could increase the motivation and the learning process among gifted learners; reduce the amount of routine activities and repetitive tasks, with which gifted learners usually become bored; and increase their enrichment experiences by involving them in advanced tasks above their chronological age level but alongside peers of a similar cognitive age (Renzulli et al., 1982). Neihart (2007) and Freeman (2010) argue that one of the concerns regarding the acceleration model is that it acknowledges the intellectual and academic aspect of the gifted while potentially ignoring the physical and emotional or even social development of the gifted. Subotnik et al. (2011) suggest that applying acceleration could have a positive impact on gifted learners but noted that acceleration is not usually used within schools due to scheduling difficulties, such as sometimes requiring learners to leave the school building to acquire needed services. Colangelo et al. (2004) illustrate this situation by giving an example of learners in elementary school attending math instruction in middle school. There are many ways to apply acceleration, including grade skipping, early graduation from high school and early entrance into college (Brody and Benbow, 1987). Grade skipping was introduced in fewer than 5% of schools in the KSA, but the strategy was abandoned after only two years (MAWHIBA, 2007; Alzhrany, 2010). Within the Saudi context, the acceleration strategy was not very effective due to its ambiguous policies and unclear implementation instructions. The programme was further negatively affected by the lack of qualified or adequately trained teachers and experts within the KSA who could apply this strategy effectively (Bushnak, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010).

Ability Grouping. According to Kulik and Kulik (1992) and Gray et al. (2009), ability grouping involves grouping learners together for instruction according to their ability. Colangelo et al. (2004) argue that ability grouping has the potential to improve gifted learners’ average outcomes, increase their motivation and promote the idea of working on a

team between them. According to Rogers (2002), there are several different grouping ability options, which can be divided into two groups. The first category involves whole-class strategies that include two kinds of grouping: multi-level class and full-time ability grouping. The second category involves small-class strategies that include five kinds of grouping; within-class grouping, pull-out programmes, cluster grouping, cross-grade grouping and mixed-ability cooperative grouping (Rogers, 2002). According to Feldhusen and Moon (1992), grouping heterogeneously gifted groups and providing them with cooperative learning leads to low achievement and motivation and poor attitudes toward school. Smith and Sutherland (2003, 2006) argue that in order to promote the academic achievement of all pupils, including the gifted, grouping practices should be flexible with no rigid tracking and should allow for movement between groups.

A pull-out programme with different-grade grouping has been implemented throughout regular schools in the KSA; this programme primarily served to enrol gifted learners in a regular classroom for two hours a day for three days a week at significantly fewer hours than the norm (MAWHIBA, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010). Al Qarni (2010) point out that although ability grouping was officially introduced in the KSA, it has been neglected due to staff shortages and the overall inability of the teachers involved to implement the strategy accurately. Evaluating the strategy is difficult because it has not neither been applied appropriately nor been in place long enough to measure its effectiveness and limitations adequately. Still, some individuals are making the effort to apply the strategy in gifted centres in major cities (Al Qarni, 2010).

2.9 Obstacles to Gifted Education in the KSA

The attempted implementation of the aims of the Ministry of Education and the KACGC caused many challenges in gifted education. The primary issue was a result of the limited nature of the legislations and policies connected to gifted education itself. This is due to the fact that historically, the Ministry of Education and the KACGC found it difficult to establish clear standardised regulations for gifted education and, in addition, found it difficult to meet the requirements of gifted learners in the education system (Muammar, 2006). The obstacles to the progression of gifted education programme have been commented on by numerous scholars (see for example Al Kaldi, 2002; Muammar, 2006; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010)

Al Kaldi (2002) claims that there are no comprehensive written programmes for Saudi gifted learners although there is still legislation in place that encourages schools to implement appropriate programmes for gifted learners. The provision of education and regulations for gifted learners in the nation appears to be insufficient and includes shortcomings such as the overreliance on international identification measurements. One of the obstacles to be overcome is the need to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the KSA's gifted education systems (Alqefari, 2010).

Muammar (2006) explains that one of the main barriers to gifted education in the KSA is the difficulty in defining the term 'giftedness'. As such, the conceptualisation of giftedness in the KSA policies still remains a debatable issue. Bushnak (2007) agreed with this argument, adding that the programmes offered are limited in scope because they concentrate only on enhancing scientific and technological skills, most often among male learners. Further, Aljughaiman and Ibrahim (2009) argue that the enriching programmes aimed at supporting giftedness are only applied once the learner has completed elementary school. This is important to note as this process does not account for high-performing younger learners, nor does it extend to other subject areas such as English language learning.

Another concern comes from the general Saudi teaching administrative sector that could affect the support provided for gifted learners within schools, which is centralised by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education controls all matters related to the education process in the KSA (Alajaj, 2001). There is no real indication that head teachers' important feedback and opinions regarding educational processes have been considered, nor any appropriate teacher training programmes put in place. Head teachers need to be given more freedom and authority to make decisions within their schools. In addition, Alsharari (2010) argues that many Saudi head teachers do not possess the necessary qualifications for the school administration sector. Perhaps most revealing, Al-Sahlawi (2001) conducted a study that assessed the needs of 67 head teachers in the KSA. This study concluded that there are needs in the areas of decision-making, problem-solving skills, dealing with teachers, coping with current school administration technology, coping with modern teaching and learning practices, encouraging teachers to learn and improving administrative processes without centralising the Ministry of Education, which were all issues the head teachers identified as major problem areas.

Hanoreh (2003) claims that Saudi schools have not performed effectively in promoting gifted education and have not supported gifted learners in the development of independent cognitive capacities. In particular, the foundational education system in the KSA has not supported gifted learners because schools rarely implement the role and responsibilities given to them (Al-Ghamdi, 2007). Consequently, all learners, not only the gifted ones, may be at risk of failing to receive support from their schools. Another challenge involves the lack of adequate equipment in Saudi schools, such as school buildings, facilities, music rooms, furniture and other equipment (Al Saif, 1999). Al-Ghamdi (2007) and Alqefari (2010) maintain that schools are responsible for identifying and developing gifted learners even if the education system does not support gifted programmes, and even if school equipment is not sufficient for these purposes. This opinion does not, however, change the fact that the lack of equipment compounds the problem facing Saudi teachers charged with improving the academic experience of gifted learners.

Al-Magid (2003) identifies a number of other such limitations. These limitations include the teaching practice itself, teachers' unwillingness to modify the curriculum in accordance with the requirements of their learners' abilities, teachers not motivating learners in such a way that they feel unafraid to ask questions and contribute to the lessons and, finally, teachers not utilising modern technologies, such as computers, to encourage their learners (Al-Magid, 2003). Al-Magid (2003) suggests that using a variety of new recourses, such as technology, could be embraced because they could provide teachers with an added degree of freedom in the classroom to develop memorable learning experiences for all learners, not only gifted learners.

Other obstacles include teachers who lack the necessary skills to identify gifted learners, teachers not being appropriately trained to teach gifted learners and schools using curricula not designed to support gifted individuals (Al Qarni, 2010). McBee (2006) comments on the lack of specialist and expert staff to design and implement effective gifted programmes, which in turn has a negative impact on the development of gifted learners. Studies on how to deal with gifted learners have provided recommendations as to how gifted learners should be taught in schools. For example, Al Qarni's (2010) study calls for the provision of appropriate training for all supervisors and teachers in order to furnish them with the required level of knowledge and skills to teach gifted learners. This suggestion can also be extended to include training for dealing with any learners—not just gifted learners—who struggle

under the current systems in Saudi schools. The most significant challenge, however, is that of insufficient training about teaching practices.

Ali (2000) claims that there are some activities that could be associated with teaching practices in the KSA, such as problem solving and independent thinking models; however, gifted education in the KSA seems to have neglected these areas. While current school curricula and the observed shortage of technically skilled individuals to effectively aid the development of gifted learners are significant obstacles (Ibrahim, 2002). Alarfaj (2011) points out that one of largest shortcomings of the KSA curricula is that teachers have to follow the curriculum rigidly and are unable to make any modifications to their lesson plans. Especially with the current EFL curricula, EFL teachers are expected to follow every unit in their EFL textbooks as outlined by Ministry policy. Consequently, they are left with insufficient time to apply gifted programmes, and learners receive no credit for completing extracurricular activities. Teachers may use some extracurricular approaches such as options, challenges and counseling as suggested by Freeman (2002) that could improve gifted learner's abilities.

Another primary challenge that serves as an obstacle in the attempt to identify the plans of the KSA gifted learners relates to lack of family support in order to acknowledge their child's abilities (Al-Ghamdi, 2007). Al-Alola (2004) explained that worldwide, the majority of gifted systems underline the family contribution component in the delivery of this type of educational service. Despite this, the role that the family can play in organisation, implementation and even the supporting of gifted programmes in the KSA is not valued enough (Al-Alola, 2004). This reduces the opportunity that gifted learners have to express their future aims and their overall ambitions. As this may negatively affect their confidence and could cause frustration, anxiety, worry and low self-esteem in learners, this can sometimes result in psychological problems that often impact upon these gifted learners and they can have a severely damaging affect. As a result, this lack of encouragement, support and acknowledgement of their gifts can often lead to indifference in the learners.

2.9.1 Academic Research about Gifted Education in the KSA

Numerous studies have described the challenges that arise when attempts are made to address the gifted education system in the KSA due to the lack of sufficient research and

ambiguous policies being used to evaluate it (see Almarae, 2003; Muammar, 2006; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). In particular, the English language literature provided for the learners within gifted education in the KSA is considered to be more limited than the literature relating to general education (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Further, it should be noted that there are not enough studies that relate to gifted learners in the KSA. Muammar (2006) and Al Qarni (2010) underlined the role that the KACGC and the Ministry of Education have played, stating that these organizations should support and manage a comprehensive gifted education programme and fund new research for the education of gifted learners in the KSA in order to address the very small number of empirical studies that presently exist in relation to gifted education programmes in the KSA.

Similarly, Suliman (2006) claim that there have been few scientific studies concerning the education of gifted learners in the KSA. He draws attention to the fact that this notion was supported by the introductory speech given at the Gifted Regional Science Conference, which was conducted in Jeddah, in the KSA (26-30/8/2006). The primary finding of this talk concluded a small amount of research studies have been conducted in relation to gifted learners in Arabic countries due to the fact that there is a lack of planning for conducting empirical research and funding in the area of gifted education. Although a number of organisations exist within the region (see for example The Arab Council for the Gifted and Talented) who promote the idea of giftedness, usually through conferences. In spite of this it would appear that there is insufficient coordination and integration between Arabic scientific research institutions resulting in a lack of a thorough empirical database relating to gifted learners. A lack of Arabic staff that can be called upon to identify gifted learners by employing a range of modern technologies and approaches and additionally by conducting deep-rooted and experimental research studies contributes to the problem and a communication gap exists between the researchers and those who make decisions. With particular reference to GELs, most studies that have been carried out in relation to GELs in the KSA have been conducted on a more focused scale, relating to either the teaching of EFL or the teaching of gifted learners, and most of this literature has addressed each side in isolation. There is little literature available on GELs and researchers have not synthesised the two sets of findings in a way that supports EFL teachers when they have GELs in their regular EFL classroom.

2.10 Synthesis of the Chapter

The Saudi education system is centrally planned and controlled by the state. Through the Supreme Committee for Educational Policy and the Ministry of Education, education policies are directed and are cascaded down to ground level. This approach has offered Saudi society a clearer and more determined policy that seeks to offer education to citizens and this is being done without the involvement of head teachers, teachers, learners or their parents when it comes to making decisions about the education processes implemented within Saudi schools.

Additionally, whilst EFL teaching can be traced back to the 1930s, real educational change has occurred recently through the convergence of ideas and an increase in the formalised trading conditions with the English-speaking countries. Saudi policy in these areas has increased to the point where EFL teaching is a central plank of educational practice and can be found in a number of organisations, even if there are a few low voices that hold a negative attitude towards learning and spreading the English (Western) language through the Islamic society in the KSA.

Despite the recent implementation of the gifted programme (MAWHIBA), which tries to identify, develop and increase the amount of gifted learners around the KSA, the programme remains in an unsteady and fluid state due to the lack of clear legislation and policies. The programmes that exist are related to math and science and rarely concern EFL. In respecting all of these elements there is need to further develop the provision for English gifted learners and desire to consider GELs in the context of the KSA education system.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the literature on giftedness to support the development of this study's methodology and research tools and to answer the study's research questions. In this chapter, the proposed origins of giftedness and the various conceptions of giftedness are discussed. The relevant descriptors and characteristics of gifted learners in general and GELLs in particular are reviewed. The methods used to identify gifted learners and GELLs are scrutinised. Teachers' attitudes, towards gifted learners in general and GELLs specifically, will be examined. Consideration will then be given as to how this affects provision and support for gifted learners. Finally, the implications for the education of GELLs will be considered.

3.2 Defining and Conceptualising Giftedness

Subotnik et al. (2011) argue that different and specific gifted domains should be acknowledged as this would lead to different developmental tracks that could harness giftedness to improve society. However, defining giftedness has long been a controversial issue internationally (see, for example, Harris, 1868; Galton, 1869; Binet and Simon, 1916; Terman, 1916, 1922, 1925, 1954; Terman and Oden, 1947, 1959; Robinson and Clinkenbeard, 1998; Valdés, 2003; Sternberg and Davidson, 2005). One of the things that makes giftedness difficult to address effectively and define appropriately is the increasing number of differing definitions of giftedness and the interchangeable use of the terms that refer to or describe individuals with exceptional or outstanding performances, including expert, genius, gifted, and talented (Robinson et al., 2000).

As mentioned in chapter 1, an individual's conception of giftedness depends on how the society of which that individual is a member perceives giftedness (Freeman, 2005). Grubb (2008) argues that the meaning of giftedness is different and flexible according to cultural and social interests. As discussed in chapter 2, the KSA is an Islamic country, and from an Islamic perspective, giftedness is a gift from God that should be cared for by society. In Islam, a gifted person should be given the opportunity to develop their gifts. Before the KSA established schools and adopted Western models of education, gifted individuals in this

society were supported by religion institutions (Adas, 1998). After establishing schools, the Ministry of Education adopted many approaches from international institutions (Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). These institutions come from different cultures and histories and so it is important to think about how to modify the ideas paying attention to Saudi culture.

In relation to international literature, Kaufman et al. (1986) asserted that giftedness research can be divided into three major approaches to interpreting the origins of giftedness: genetic factors, environmental factors, and a combination of both these factors. Early researchers in the field (for example, Harris, 1868; Galton, 1869; Binet and Simon, 1916; Terman, 1916, 1922, 1925, 1954; Terman and Oden, 1947, 1959) equated giftedness with high intellectual abilities. According to this view, giftedness is viewed as a genetic, innate quality of an individual. These researchers sought to develop ways of identifying this innate ability through cognitive assessments or IQ tests (Intelligence Quotient). According to this perspective, one characteristic of gifted individuals is their ability to process reasoning abilities that ensure their success in all academic domains and throughout their life.

By the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, this view of innate ability was being challenged (see, for example, Renzulli, 1977; Freeman, 2005; Sternberg, 2005b; Worrell, 2010). Researchers argue that there was a need to broaden the debate beyond this narrow view, claiming that high academic achievement requires more than innate intellectual ability. Environment, which might refer to school, family, or community, for example, was considered an important contributor to the development of abilities. This is reflected in populist writers such as Gladwell (2008), who argues that environment was crucial and more important than innate ability. In addition, Borland (2003) argues that an environmental approach to meeting gifted needs was the most important factor. This approach would promote gifted individuals' abilities, emphasise the power of self-conception in relation to educational culture, and acknowledge the roles of educators and gifted individuals in the education of gifted learners.

According to Borland (2003, 2005, 2009), giftedness is more a social construct than a fact of nature. He argues that instead of focusing on the concept of gifted children, the focus should be gifted education. Borland (2005) claims that instead of labelling learners as gifted or not gifted, gifted education should offer appropriate intellectual challenges that include all learners, which would be advantageous to all children—not only gifted learners. In short, Borland (2005) argues that the concentration of giftedness should be shifted from being to

doing. Similarly, Dweck (1986, 1999, 2006) challenges the idea that gifted children are naturals and therefore do not need to develop their abilities through study or practice.

Dweck (1999) claims that viewing intellectual ability as a gift reduces learners' motivation when they encounter setbacks, while viewing intellectual ability as an ability that needs to be developed enables learners to be effective when facing difficulties. Dweck (2006) also point out that outstanding academic achievement requires more than intellectual ability. Although some researchers (see, for example, Simonton, 1994, 1999, 2010) have argued that outstanding achievement could begin with demonstrated potential, Dweck (2006) argues that developing giftedness through the acquisition of psychological and social skills is necessary for gifted learners to develop. However, these views of giftedness may be difficult to implement in the Saudi context. Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012) claim that gifted education in the KSA focuses on academic achievements and labelling learners as gifted or not gifted rather than the social and practical aspects of gifted learners described above.

Taking both genetic and environmental factors into account, Gibson (2011) claims that working memory capacity and overall intellectual capability are heritable but that learning is improved through practice. Gibson argues that practice and education are important aspects of improving performance. Giftedness should not be viewed as solely innate since practice can compensate for and overcome the limitations of genetic abilities. In other words, both the genes and the environment of gifted students play roles in the emergence and development of giftedness. For example, a child who is born and grows taller than their peers may do so because of having naturally tall parents. However, even if those naturally tall parents also play basketball at a high level, the child will not necessarily become a top-level basketball player. The child will need to learn the sport, the required skills, and the rules of the game and to practice alongside team members to achieve a high level of play. Gibson (2011) believed the combination of innate abilities and support, training, and motivation influences the success of exceptional individuals.

Considering these complex and possibly interrelated understandings of giftedness, scholars (see, for example, Taylor, 1978; Renzulli, 1978; Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1985; Gagne, 2000) have proffered a multidimensional understanding of giftedness. These multiple dimensions have brought more flexibility to the term and more attention to the uniqueness of the gifted who have different qualities, such as memory, creativity, and motivation (McClellan, 1985).

A multidimensional understanding of giftedness has also moved the identification of giftedness beyond the unidimensional approach of testing. Recent scholars have generally viewed giftedness as the potential and exceptional abilities that individuals develop to levels significantly above those of their peers within and across various domains. This multidimensional view of giftedness has given rise to a variety of models that try to explain giftedness. Some of these key models consider gifted development and are related to practice, with one model being adopted in the KSA (Aljughaiman, 2007).

With the three-ring model, Renzulli (1977, 1978, 2005) distinguished between two types of giftedness: schoolhouse giftedness (high IQ and aptitude scores) and creative-productive giftedness (high-level performance and the ability to produce innovative ideas). This model considers not only intellectual or academic ability important for the manifestation of giftedness but also the contributions of psychosocial variables (Benbow et al., 1991; Gottfried et al., 2005). Renzulli argues that psychological characteristics such as creativity, motivation, and task persistence are essential for creative productivity (intellectual or academic ability). Kaufman and Sternberg (2008) argue that this perspective is a systems-based approach by which giftedness is viewed as a system of total operations that depend on a network of interacting psychological variables that produce a range of creative behaviour.

The three-ring model (Renzulli, 1977, 1978, 2005) defines giftedness as the interaction of three clusters: creativity, task commitment and well above-average ability. Renzulli divided above-average abilities into general ability and specific ability. General ability is related to processing knowledge, abstracting ideas and dealing with new experiences. Specific ability is related to gaining knowledge or specialist expertise within particular areas, in a limited number of activities, within a limited amount of time, and in specific areas. Task commitment is related to the motivation and drive towards a particular activity or task and often manifests as hard work, perseverance, and self-confidence. Creativity is related to flexibility, the originality of thoughts, and the willingness to take risks. Renzulli argues that when these clusters interact with each other, they significantly affect the development of giftedness; all the characteristics from these three clusters must overlap to produce gifted behaviours and create productivity. The prevalence of one cluster alone would not make any difference in the behaviours of gifted individuals, because each of these traits fills a particular role in the development of gifted behaviours and their interaction with the

environment; however, these clusters do not need to be equally prominent (Renzulli, 1977, 1978, 1986; Renzulli and Reis, 1997).

Although some researchers (see Benbow et al., 1991; Gottfried et al., 2005) argue that Renzulli's model considers the contributions of psychosocial variables in the manifestation of giftedness, there is evidence of innate ability in this model. Renzulli refers to the general or specific ability of individuals whose performance is amongst the top 15-20%. In fact, one may question if such a category of individuals can be described as gifted where there is a reliance only on statistics and norm-referenced based assessments. In addition, giftedness is said to occur where the three clusters interact. Within this model a gifted individual has to be already demonstrating their "giftedness" before it is recognised. There is therefore potential for any one of the dimensions to be missing, if this happens, a gifted individual could be considered to be an underachiever. Gifted learners could be underperforming or underachieving at school or in any other setting and, with this model, these learners would not be recognised as 'gifted' and would therefore not be offered opportunities to develop their abilities.

Renzulli developed the enrichment triad model (Renzulli and Reis, 1997; Renzulli, 1977, 1976) to promote educational circumstances that produce the environment that stimulates interactions between the three rings. As discussed in chapter 2, this model has been adopted in the KSA by the MAWHIBA gifted programme centres to support STEM gifted learners (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). According to Renzulli (1986), these three clusters need to be acknowledged during the identification process and the provision of resources and support need to be provided through gifted programmes. However, whether this model is relevant in the Saudi environment is debatable. One of the issues with adapting this model within the KSA is the testing of creativity; the creativity to which Renzulli refers may not have the same meaning within Saudi culture. In his evaluation study of gifted education in the KSA, Al Qarni, (2010) claims that instead of adopting creativity tests from international institutions, the KSA should be modified reviewed and develop new ones tests to suit Saudi Arabian conditions. This issue can be found in the literature with researchers, such as Guilford (1967) and Torrance (1969), claiming that there are concerns about how creativity is identified. According to these researchers, the main issues with the identification of creativity are the ability of divergent thinking tests to evaluate creativity accurately and the link between the assessment of divergent thinking and creative criteria. Thus, how creativity would be tested should be considered when applying such a model within Saudi context.

The enrichment triad model is a multidimensional model based on a number of contributing dimensions that require different assessments for identification (Renzulli and Reis, 1997). However, in the KSA, the gifted identification process relies mainly on test score results in the maths and science subjects (Aljughaiman, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010). This model emphasises the teacher's role in promoting creative-productive giftedness by designing learning situations that foster skills such as inductive thinking skills and real problem solving (Renzulli and Reis, 1997). However, Al Qarni (2010) claims that teachers in the KSA are not sufficiently qualified and trained to identify gifted learners, design such learning situations, or recognise the abilities of these learners. Thus, adopting such a model in the KSA should be carefully considered since this model was developed in international institutions, which can have contexts that greatly differ from Saudi society and culture and even if these tests are culturally appropriate, teachers do not know how to administer them.

Gardner (1983) influenced the education process when he considered individuals' abilities from a more domain-specific perspective through his Multiple Intelligences model of intellectual ability (Gardner, 1983, 1993, 1999). In his book *Frames of Mind*, Gardner suggests that 'multiple intelligences' are not non-static abilities that are hierarchically nested under a general factor, rather each is an independent cognitive system in its own right (Gardner, 1983). In fact, Gardner considers intelligence to be a bi-psychological opportunity to evaluate information, which can then be used within a cultural environment to overcome or develop products of worth to that culture. Individuals could improve their abilities through genetic inheritance and opportunity provided by environment (Gardner, 1983, 1999). Waterhouse (2006) believes that Gardner's models in need of more concrete evidence and empirical findings in support of the model.

Tannenbaum's star model (1986, 2003) is another model of giftedness that suggested five social and psychological links between promise and fulfilment that interact to produce high levels of productivity or a gifted individual: "superior intelligence, exceptional special aptitude, non-intellective requisites, chance and environmental influences". This model necessitates the interaction between these factors, especially chance and environmental influences. Thus, natural aptitude, together with both intrapersonal and environmental factors, can be affected by chance. However, it puts a heavy burden on individual learner variables, such as the role of the environment or gifted education programmes. This model

offers one way combining sociological and psychological factors to develop gifted education practices.

By modifying Renzulli's three-ring model with his multifactor model of giftedness, Mönks (1992) added environmental factors (peers, family, school, etc.) to the three psychological factors suggested by Renzulli (creativity, motivation, and exceptional abilities). Mönks believed that giftedness can be well understood and addressed from such a perspective, because judging with any certainty whether giftedness is inherited or acquired is difficult, and educators need to be balanced and consider all possibilities and variables to deal with gifted individuals successfully. This model considers the environment, innate ability, and the role of the school in the process. According to this model, three important social environments—peers, school, and family—influence an individual's competencies. In particular, exceptional abilities, motivation, and creativity develop an individual's interactions with these three types of environments. Mönks and Mason (2000) claim that addressing the concept of giftedness requires an understanding of a specific research goal, the educational context in which it was used, and practical considerations of developmental theories. According to this perspective, the environment acts on individuals in ways that help or hinder an individual's competencies. Developing the school environment becomes a critical factor in the implementation of this model and once again the teacher plays a central role in identification and provision.

Sternberg's (2003) WICS model stands for Wisdom, Intelligence and Creativity, Synthesised model suggested that giftedness in wisdom, intelligence, and creativity could be developed by expertise and that individuals are not born gifted. In short, giftedness involves interaction between an individual's genes and environment (Sternberg 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2006). According to this model, not only intelligence and creativity play important roles in giftedness but also wisdom, which could be a valuable trait among individuals in society. Sternberg (2004) argues that to be wise, individuals are expected to practice intelligence to acquire tacit knowledge about themselves, others, and situational contexts. Sternberg (2004) claims that this tacit knowledge would be procedural, pertinent to the attainment of valued goals, and typically acquired within a domain through mentoring or experience. Using this type of knowledge would help to attain a common good and to adapt, shape, and select real-world environments. Sternberg (2000) suggests that both nature and nurture allow some individuals to engage more effectively than others in tasks that are relevant to the development of expertise. Thus, Sternberg and Grigorenko (1997) suggest

that gifted models need to consider both genes and the environment, because nature rarely works independently from nurture or vice versa. Although this model explains the importance of interaction between genes and the environment, the model does not readily address methods of identifying or instructing gifted learners (Heller, 2003).

An individual's ability and interest in a certain domain and the appropriate coaching are considered important for the positive development of giftedness (Renzulli, 1978; Tannenbaum, 2003; Simonton and Song, 2009). Two researchers who incorporated this into their models are Feldhusen (2005) and Gagne (2005, 2009). Feldhusen (2005) argues that to attain expertise, an individual's nature helps that individual master a field's procedural and declarative knowledge through continued practice. To synthesize the various models of giftedness, Feldhusen (1998; 2005) formulated a developmental model of giftedness based on talent development. To illustrate this model, Feldhusen included domain-specific abilities that were determined naturally with the acknowledgement of the emergence and development of the specific abilities through the facilitation of experiences within a particular sociocultural context (Feldhusen, 1998; 2005). Such experiences would be culturally relevant and offer opportunity for the learner to discover, explore and develop their abilities. This model should be the focus of educators aiming to maintain and promote individuals' giftedness. In accordance with this perspective, giftedness appears more in childhood than adulthood and is recognised differently across the different domains and time periods in which they appear due to developmental factors and skills (Feldman, 1986; Simonton, 1997, 2007; Subotnik and Jarvin, 2005).

Gagne (1985, 2000, 2005; 2009) emphasised the talent-development process through his Differentiated Model of Gifted and Talented (DMGT). In this model, the difference between the "gifted" and "talented" as words and terms are highlighted. Gagne's model reports on the environmental influences such as home and school, non-intellective variables such as motivation and temperament, and learning, training, and practicing, that transform basic, naturally determined "gifts" (intellectual, creative, sensorimotor, etc.) into specific talents (language, science, mathematics, art, music, leadership, etc.). Smith (2004) argues that this model emphasises the development of talents more than defining the concept of giftedness.

Ziegler (2005) and Ziegler and Phillipson (2012) argue that the models that focus on environmental factors do not have the ability to clarify the development of giftedness such as the DMGT model (Gagne, 2004). Zeigler suggests this is due to the fact that the relationship between gifts and achievements is not apparent. Ziegler (2005) and Ziegler and

Phillipson (2012) in the Actiotope Model of giftedness argued that giftedness is a system that has directed goal actions in relation to skill development. In this model, in order to promote excellence, it is the interaction between the individual's actions and environmental variables that are important (Ziegler, 2005; Ziegler and Phillipson, 2012). Although, it is not always clear how to apply this model in practice (Sutherland, 2012).

It can be seen that a range of models exist. The context in which any model is used is important as this will go on to affect how the model translates into practice and this will in turn influence identification and provision. While these models have been helpful in offering ways to think about giftedness, there is still debate around how to effectively identify and support gifted learners.

3.3 Strategies for Identifying Gifted Learners and GELLs

The identification process has developed within and across various societies through time. For example, previously in the West the gifted were identified through the use of uni-dimensional cognitive measures on a large individual basis (case by case) (Terman, 1925; Hollingworth, 1942; Pressey, 1949; Terman and Oden 1959). Changes in testing that occurred include group and specific abilities testing (Keating and Stanley, 1972) which influenced gifted programmes especially in terms of enabling the measuring of individuals' intellectual abilities as well as the psychological differences between the gifted. The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale was one of the first intelligence tests used to identify gifted individuals (Terman, 1916). This orientation in defining and identifying giftedness was followed by a classification: for example, those above 135 were described as "moderately gifted", above 150 as "exceptionally gifted," and above 180 as "severely and/or profoundly gifted individuals according to their scores on the tests (Webb et al., 1982). Many researchers argue that this perspective relies more on academic achievement than intellectual ability (see for example Winner, 1996; Freeman, 2005) however; any IQ or IQ type tests have at their roots the idea that there is general intelligence (g). This view has gained traction in society and so remains popular in the general population (Subotnik et al., 2011).

Scholars who describe giftedness as high exceptional inherited ability may view high IQ scores as an appropriate method for the identification gifted. They believe that giftedness is a single entity, equating giftedness with high IQ (Kaufman and Sternberg, 2008; Subotnik et al., 2011). The description of gifted individuals in this view is determined on the basis of

their intellectual abilities (Robinson and Clinkenbeard, 1998; Neber and Schommer-Aikins, 2002). Standardised test results, such as intelligence tests, commonly known as IQ tests have long been used to determine the cognitive abilities of a learner (Renzulli, 2004). Some researchers (see Renzulli 2002, 2005) have subsequently contested this position arguing that IQ tests alone are not able to determine intellect, especially in individuals who underachieve in the standardised IQ tests.

There is also some concern about using IQ tests in the context of Saudi Arabia due to the country's distinct cultural and linguistic base as asserted by Al Qarni (2010). IQ tests are argued to be cultural biased; it could be difficult for all gifted learners from different cultural groups to be successfully identified using IQ systems (Davis and Rimm, 2004). Davis and Rimm (2004, p.84) stated that "Culturally different learners do tend to score, on average, about one standard deviation (15 points) lower than middle-class students on standardised intelligence tests" and "... if IQ testing is part of the selection battery, there frequently is a built-in bias against minority and economically disadvantaged children". Ceci (2001) also criticise using IQ test as the only indicator of giftedness or intelligence due to its limitation in measuring practical knowledge, creativity, problem solving or verbal abilities of individuals. These criticisms of the way tests were used to identify intelligent children are valid; and Ceci (2001) suggests that alternative methods should take into account other more important variables. Ceci (2001) suggests identifying five areas of giftedness: a) General Intellectual Ability which can be measured by an IQ test, b) Creative Thinking and c) leadership where both can be measured through an observation scale of behaviour, d) Specific Academic Ability which can be identified through test scores standardised achievement tests, and e) Visual and Performing Arts which can be measured by a portfolio or audition. This way of identifying the gifted still relies to an extent on test scores, which have been criticised by the author himself.

Gray et al. (2009) claim that there are many types of standardised tests such as general intellectual abilities, which all have different objectives and are used for many purposes. For example, general intellectual ability tests are designed for school purposes and are divided into: individually administered tests which are conducted at a specific time with one specific person and group-administered intelligence tests which are conducted during set periods of time for a group of people (Gray et al., 2009). The Wechsler Intelligence Scale (WISC-IV) is one example of individually administered testing that is commonly used in many countries to identify gifted learners (Grubb, 2008). This type of testing is also used in the Saudi context

(Bushnak, 2007), which is the location of the current research. It is adopted from international institutions and has not taken account of the local Saudi context.

The achievement tests usually aim at measuring learner's knowledge and outcomes in a certain domain. The Scholastic Achievement Test (SAT) is one example of this type of test (Gray et al., 2009), which may be criticised for its cultural limitations and possible bias (Reynolds and Suzuki, 2013). As a result, this form of testing may not be effective in identifying gifted learners who do not speak English or who are grounded in a different culture and it may leave this important category of the gifted ignored. Incorporating items to test higher order thinking skills of the gifted such as analysis, synthesis, creativity and evaluation are actually possible in these tests especially in language domains and so achievement type standardised tests when used with other types of testing might offer useful information.

Another type of centralised test is the Test of Creative Thinking (Cromptley and Cromptley, 2000; Renzulli, 2002). In the Saudi context, this test is important, because Saudi regulations define the need to measure more than one facet of the creativity of the gifted (Bushnak, 2007). For example, the test should be interpreted in terms of product originality, a norm-referenced approach, a criterion-referenced approach, and the relevance of the results to the goals of the current gifted programme. In other words, while the test should measure the actual levels of giftedness in terms of creativity, it should also consider other important elements, such as society's willingness to deal with highly creative gifted learners. Creativity is important, and using a variety of testing methods might offer a good approach to evaluating creativity, but teachers need to know how to use and interpret the results of these tests. In addition, countries need to look at the origins of the test to ensure they are culturally relevant and contextualised. In the Saudi context, the language of the test to identify gifted learners is Arabic while English language is only used when identifying GELLs. Furthermore, validity of these tests needs to be assessed across fields such as arts and language. For example, the major purpose of this study is to shed light on GELLs, which necessitates using language indicators to identify GELLs in the Saudi context. GELLs in the KSA are normally identified when they attain high scores on their English language tests or when they are identified by their EFL teachers (Al Qarni, 2010). There are concerns about the validity of using these methods to identify GELLs' abilities effectively, which could put them at a disadvantage (Ford et al., 2002). There are some concerns about the reliability of GELLs' test scores; if GELLs need to reach a certain level of English proficiency to be classified as GELLs, test

scores might not accurately reflect their level of English proficiency. At the same line, these tests might not accurately reflect the actual intelligence level of GELLs. This realisation suggests that there is still a need for informal testing, such as surveys, observations, and nomination to identify the learning outcomes of the gifted instead of relying on only one method.

Another disadvantage of using standardised test scores to identify gifted learners is the ability of these tests to identify gifted underachievers. Reis and McCoach (2000) and Rimm (1995) pointed out that there is no global agreement on the definition of the term gifted and no valid or reliable single definition of gifted underachievement. However, according to many studies (see, for example, Butler-Por, 1987; Emerick, 1992; Rimm, 1995; Reis and McCoach, 2000) the most common component of the definitions of gifted underachievement is an inconsistency between ability and achievement. Siegle and McCoach (2002) argue that gifted learners who have high academic potential usually find performing at a level that matches their abilities to be difficult. According to Siegle and McCoach (2002), determining exactly why some gifted learners are underachievers is difficult, because underachievement occurs for many different reasons, such as physical, cognitive, or emotional issues; mismatch between gifted learners and school environment; and personal characteristics, such as low self-efficacy, self-motivation, or self-regulation.

Siegle and McCoach (2002) argue that supporting cases of underachievement requires different kinds of involvement. Thus, understanding and recognising the rationale for the behaviour of underachievers is necessary to intervene successfully in each case of underachievement. Some studies (see, for example, Butler-Por, 1993; Emerick, 1992) divided the available interventions for gifted underachievement into two types. The first type of intervention is counselling, which includes gifted individuals, groups or family members. The main aim of this intervention is to help gifted underachievers understand whether success is their goal and, if so, to help these underachievers reverse their counterproductive habits and cognitions (Butler-Por, 1993; Emerick, 1992; Siegle and McCoach, 2002). The other type of intervention is educational intervention, which involves full-time or part-time classes for gifted underachievers. Instead of following a traditional classroom organisation, these classes should create an appropriate environment in which the abilities of gifted underachievers can be stimulated, such as by creating student-centred classroom environments, by encouraging learners to use different learning strategies, by reducing the use of conventional types of teaching and learning activities, and by giving learners choices

and the freedom to exercise control over their atmosphere (Siegle and McCoach, 2002). In fact, the most effective intervention strategies should be developed according to the specific social and educational needs of gifted underachievers.

The concerns surrounding the use of a single method of evaluation have been recognised by many educational systems in many countries. In the UK, for example, to increase the validity of the gifted identification process, the use of many identification methods, rather than a single method, has been recommended (Colangelo and Davis, 2003). Smutny (2003) suggests that gifted identification should combine parental involvement, standardised testing, in-class observation, and the creation of an individual profile for the potentially gifted learners that includes their work, interests, and activities. Smutny provided no clear guidance for how such a programme would be designed or any results that support this approach. Despite this lack of detailed procedures, Smutny's view of the identification process has provided a comprehensive approach that uses combined methods, through which procedures can be tailored according to the factors relevant to different contexts.

Taking into account this multi-faceted approach, any effective gifted educational programme might move beyond identifying possible gifted individuals through testing their achievements or using standardised test alone and instead move towards more informal procedures such as observation of performance methods along a pre-identified period of time (Feldhusen, 2005). The process of identifying the gifted should also take into account cultural, societal and psychological variables and the effects of this process on both the individuals and the society. Several methods and procedures to identify gifted and talented learners have been suggested by many scholars (see for example Hunsaker, 1994; Galu, 1998; Worrell et al., 2001; Keen, 2002; Smutney, 2003; Bevan-Brown, 2004). These approaches share the use of multiple methods, such as portfolios, grade point averages, and input from peers, parents, teachers, and community leaders. Even if one of the MAWHIBA's aims has been to increase the societal awareness of giftedness and the involvement of parents in their gifted child's abilities (see chapter two), community leaders and peers are currently not involved in the identification of gifted learners. In other words, a teacher is the only one who can evaluate and identify gifted learners (Al Qarni, 2010). However, one of the educational aims in the KSA's Vision 2030 is for 80% of parents to be engaged in the school activities and the learning process of their children (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016), which should allow parents to become involved in identification process within Saudi schools.

The nomination of gifted individuals can be conducted by a range of stakeholders, including peers, parents, teachers, and the gifted individuals themselves (Gray et al., 2009). Teacher identification might be the most favoured of these methods since every teacher is in the position to observe learners' behaviours consistently over a longer period (Davis and Rimm, 1989; Gray et al., 2009). The prominence of teacher identification of giftedness raises a key question: How knowledgeable are teachers about the features and aptitudes of gifted learners? Jacobs (1973) found that most teachers lacked the knowledge required to identify gifted features accurately. Grubb (2008) suggests that teacher identification would be more valid if teachers received specific training to identify gifted learners. In fact, the teacher's role should go beyond identifying the gifted through only observation. Studies that have analysed teachers of gifted learners in the KSA (see, for example, Aljughaiman, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010) recommend training teachers to identify and enrich gifted learners within regular classes. According to some researchers (see, for example, Morris, 1987; Gross, 1999; Moon, 2002; Inan et al., 2009) having teachers with no appropriate knowledge and training identify gifted learners could result in a failure to identify gifted learners appropriately and to recognise their abilities, which would have negative implications for gifted learners' academic achievements and their social, affective, and cognitive development, which would disadvantage those gifted learners.

Identifying the gifted learners who have a second or foreign language is debated in the literature. Kitano and Espinosa (1995) raised some concerns about the identification of GELLs with limited English proficiency. They argue that GELLs' lack of proficiency in the target language should be compensated for by alternative procedures including providing interpreters at site during the identification process. This is supported by Frasier et al. (1995) who believed that educators should address GELLs' needs and find appropriate methods to identify the gifted. Consequently, they conducted a study to establish a special gifted features checklist known as Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviours (TABs), which has been recommended by researchers, such as Kitano and Espinosa (1995). The checklist could help teachers to recognise the abilities of learners with limited English proficiency as it offers educators essential information about minority groups of learners. Studies conducted in English-speaking countries offer an insight into practice (Irby and Lara-Alecio, 1996; Matthews, 2006; Harris et al., 2007).

The teacher is considered an important element of the improvement of gifted leaning potential (Coleman and Cross, 2001). Some studies (see, for example, Matthews, 2006; Harris et al., 2007) have claimed that improving teachers' training, knowledge, and expectations regarding gifted learners and particularly in relation to learners with limited English proficiency is important. Further, according to Irby and Lara-Alecio (1996), Matthews (2006), and Harris et al. (2007), teachers' self-confidence about their own abilities is vital when dealing with GELLs. Al-Seghayer (2014) claims that many EFL teachers in the KSA are not fluent in English and are not qualified in the field of teaching the English language for EFL learners (including GELLs). According to Al Qarni (2010), Saudi teachers should have the skills to recognise any hidden potential, need to be familiar with the features of gifted learners (including GELLs) in all subjects, should be able to provide challenges that adequately meet gifted learners' needs in the classroom, and should consistently support these learners regardless of whether the learners achieve high examination scores. In fact, it would be questionable if EFL teachers could have the relevant skills to support GELLs while some of them are not fluent in English language and not qualified in teaching English language within EFL classes. Furthermore, investigating how Saudi GELLs are identified through their schools and by their teachers would help improve the education of these GELLs.

The contexts in which some of these studies were conducted are very different than the Saudi context, where Arabic is the primary language and English is used as a foreign language. For example, Matthews's (2006) study is relevant to gifted learners who were migrants to the US, where English language used in schools and daily life (Matthews, 2006). However, there is limited literature specifically related to GELLs in Arab countries. Therefore, the studies discussed in this section could provide useful and comprehensive knowledge about identification methods that could be applied by Saudi teachers. The multidimensional approach to the identification of gifted learners offers all gifted learners the opportunity to be identified so that they can be provided with a relevant, affirming, effective, and meaningful learning environment. Equality in the gifted identification process would enable individuals of lower socioeconomic status and ethnic groups to be included in this process (Borland, 2009). Relying only on tests to identify giftedness may cause some groups to be excluded from this process. In contrast, multidimensional approaches allow teachers to interpret the information provided by assessments, so helping teachers understand gifted behaviours should help ensure that as many gifted learners are identified as possible.

3.4 The Characteristics of Gifted Learners and GELLs

Including or listing all the characteristics of gifted learners and GELLs covered by the literature is beyond the scope of this study. However, some of the general characteristics that have been observed and used as indicators of giftedness are discussed. The lists of characteristics of gifted Saudi learners seem to parallel many of the lists that have been generated elsewhere to explain general giftedness (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). Clark (2002) compiled a list of characteristics of academically gifted learners. These characteristics can be categorised into four groups: affective, cognitive, physical, and intuitive and social characteristics.

Affective characteristics refer to the unusual sensitivity of the gifted towards others and to the expectations of others (Clark, 2002). The gifted appear sensitive to their environment and highly idealistic, which may expose them to emotional problems that may require support from society (Clark, 2002). In fact, the gifted may develop emotional difficulties due to either society's negative stereotypes of them, such as viewing them as bookish, or positive stereotypes, such as being viewed as naturals (Dweck, 2006; Subotnik et al., 2011), which could lead to either ignorance of their gifts or an extreme appreciation of their gifts. To help the gifted overcome these potential psychological difficulties, their gifts should be fairly acknowledged, with their gifts being neither highly appreciated nor ignored.

Researchers suggest that cognitive features include high levels of information retention, comprehension, accuracy, logical argument, understanding of abstract concepts, curiosity, language development, verbal ability and verbal articulateness including fluency, linkage between unrelated ideas, ability to solve complex problems, have unusual interests, autonomy, and learning freedom in situations (Chuska, 1989; Silverman, 2000; Winebrenner, 2001; Clark, 2002; Kanevsky and Keighley, 2003; Davis and Rimm, 2004; Renzulli, 2005; Webb et al., 2007; Geake and Gross, 2008). While these features are unlikely to all be demonstrated through one person, they are considered good indicators of gifted learners. Some learners may be gifted in written skills such as writing an essay, but may not demonstrate a similar level when making a verbal presentation. Each activity requires different abilities and so teachers need to be aware of this when planning for learning.

According to the literature (see, for example, Silverman, 2000; Winebrenner, 2001; Clark, 2002; Gottfried and Gottfried, 2004; Szymanski and Shaff, 2013), the gifted may be

interested in social justice. This interest includes their strong leadership skills, their high motivation and self-need, and their ability to conceptualise and solve societal problems. However, the gifted may be more motivated by an area of their interest and mastery than a general motivation to solve a societal problem. While their high level of awareness regarding social problems may make them more responsible about solving them, the gifted are not necessarily more sociable than others. Leadership abilities are a feature addressed by Marland (1972), and these abilities refer to a gifted individual's potential ability to solve complex problems and to influence a person or group with specific views, actions, or decisions (Feldhusen and Pleiss, 1994). Bilsland (2004) argues that ignoring leadership characteristics in a gifted learner could reduce their leadership ability now and in the future.

As mentioned in chapter two, KACGC and the Ministry of Education are not closely following any specific theory or model. Some Saudi research (see Al-Makhalid, 2012; Al Qarni, 2010) claim that these organisations, have not been following particular characteristics of gifted learners due to the fact that the KSA has been adapting many international models that have a range of different characteristics. In spite of this, the Ministry of Education listed a group of characteristics of the gifted to ensure that children would be identified as gifted (Ministry of Education, 1998). This list outlined general intellectual ability, which was usually measured through test scores, in which the gifted were those who achieve above the average by two standard deviations. This list also highlighted specific academic aptitudes, which were measured through achievement tests in specific areas, such as arts, language, or mathematics. Finally, the list described creative thinking as the ability to take risks and enjoy working with complex ideas that have social value instead of simple ones. Learners could be identified as creative by demonstrating highly creative actions or by using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking.

Classifying the characteristics of the gifted as if they are one unit may mislead the gifted programme. Rather, each feature described or suggested above reflects only one domain that the gifted may master. Using the creative products scale, for example, to measure giftedness can uncover the elements included in the scale rather than those of the gifted. This is consistent with the findings of Renzulli (2005), Touron et al. (2005), and Aliza and Hamidah (2009), who asserted that, apart from learning very quickly and the having ability to understand abstract concepts, gifted learners are different from their age peers level and from each other in social, emotional, spiritual, psychomotor, and intellectual domains.

3.4.1 The Characteristics of GELLs

In relation to the focus of this study, ELLs are described as those who learn EFL in the Saudi context. ELLs are normally influenced by factors such as social context, the age range of the learners, and the personality and cognitive and affective behaviours of those involved in their learning (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000; Matthews, 2006). In the field of language learning, there is no agreement about to what being a GELL means. Skehan (1989) referred to individuals with special language learning abilities as having a “language aptitude,” which requires special language learning gifts, while Sparks et al. (2011) argue that learning a new language does not need any special abilities. Due to the complexity of defining giftedness, defining GELLs is equally difficult. One of the main difficulties with clarifying the meaning of GELLs is that this meaning could differ according to different social, cultural, and language influences (see Kitano and Espinosa, 1995; Clark, 2002).

Frasier and Passow (1994) and Frazier et al. (1995) conducted studies on students from various language backgrounds and found some common features among those for whom English was not their first language but who had been identified as gifted. These features included their leadership, unusual interests, high motivation, sense of humour, problem-solving skills, ability to recall information, and ability to find relationships between unconnected ideas. GELLs have been shown to enjoy higher thinking skills, to have a high aptitude for learning, and to possess advanced verbal abilities, which are all key factors in their ability to learn a foreign language rapidly (Matthews, 2006). GELLs enjoy an enhanced ability to process language rules and linguistic input and are better able than others to functionalise and incorporate most types of language learning strategies using various skills, such as rehearsal, memorisation, and cognitive strategies, including critical thinking and elaboration (Matthews, 2006).

The Iowa Department of Education and the Belin-Blank Center (2008) have developed a list of features of GELLs, most of which focus on “rapid learning, mathematical high ability, understanding other cultures, self-expressing one’s own and other cultures using switch mode of first and second language and a high capacity of translation skills” (p. 11). A learner with persistent abilities and practices can master most of these features. Therefore, the features of GELLs could be concentrated more on their potential and exceptional abilities, such as being able to deliver a speech in both languages at a significant level of proficiency or possessing evaluation abilities demonstrated through conducting interviews. This view is

consistent with that of Granada (2003) and Castellano (2003), who believed that GELLs, who normally express a degree of verbal articulation, can acquire a high level of competency in a second language rapidly and possess high levels of abilities in manipulating their first language.

The acknowledgement of the characteristics of GELLs should allow teachers to devise learning opportunities to further enhance these learners' English language development. The extent to which this happens may depend on, among many other factors, the teachers' attitude towards GELLs.

3.5 Teachers' Attitudes towards Gifted Learners and GELLs

According to Hogg and Vaughan (2005), attitude is "a relatively enduring organisation of beliefs, feelings, and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols" (p. 150). Alcock et al. (1997) explained that three types of components comprise attitude: a) an affective component, which involves a person's feelings or emotions about the attitude object, whether positive or negative; b) a behavioural component, which refers to the way a person's attitude influences how people act, whether through intentions or actions; and c) a cognitive component, which involves a person's beliefs, opinions, or knowledge about an attitude object.

Bohner and Wänke (2002) claim that there is a relationship between an individual's attitude and beliefs, and this relationship could be reflected by behaviours, though this relationship is complex and not usually consistent. To support the existence of this relationship, Gardner (1985, p. 9) indicate that "an individual's attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent". Eagly and Chaiken (1998) explained this relationship as an "intra-attitudinal structure", which is the persuasive impact of cognitive (belief), affective, and behavioural (the three components of attitude) information towards an attitude object. This impact suggests a relationship between belief, attitude, and behaviour.

According to Myers (2005), an individual's attitude can be identified and assessed through their behaviours. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) argue that this condition is related to predicting behaviours, stating that "an attitude towards a specific behaviour directed towards a given target in a given context at a given time should predict the specific behaviour quite well

because this attitude corresponds to the specific behaviour” (p. 167). Many researchers (see, for example, Ajzen and Fishbein, 1994, 2005; Ajzen, 2005) have claimed that if the measures of attitude and behaviour for the action and target elements are identical, attitudes will predict behaviour. These studies have argued that the precise prediction of specific behaviour can be found through the measurement of intention. A different assumption is engaged in the intention of an individual to react in a specific way to a specific act in a specific situation. This assumption suggests that individuals are influenced by their own beliefs and that their evaluations of the consequences of specific behaviours in specific situations are also influenced by both individuals’ normative beliefs and their motivation to comply with the norm (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1994, 2005; Ajzen 2005). Thus, some researchers (see, for example, Clark, 2008; Woolfolk, 2011) have claimed that teachers’ attitudes are an important area in educational studies that can be used to understand teachers’ beliefs and behaviours. Other researchers (see, for example, Ajzen, 2005; Woolfolk, 2011; Wilson 1990; Wood and Floden, 1990) have claimed that understanding teachers’ attitudes would contribute to an understanding of teachers’ planning, teaching practices, and instructional decisions. Therefore, understanding teachers’ attitudes towards gifted learners is useful for improving all areas of gifted education. Every gifted programme should begin with the question: “What is our attitude towards gifted children?” (Davis and Rimm, 2004, p.55).

According to Lens and Rand (2002), teachers with positive attitudes towards the gifted would effectively deal with this category of learners, especially because they would be more likely to identify gifted learners. Peterson and Colangelo (1996) and Schuler (2002) argue that these teachers might also think that their contribution was effective in terms of their teaching practices, without which giftedness may not emerge. These positive attitudes may also make teachers feel proud about themselves and their gifted learners and be well prepared for dealing with higher-level students (Peterson and Colangelo, 1996; Schuler, 2002).

Reeves (2006) found that teachers who were requested to notice the characteristics and abilities of gifted learners displayed more positive attitudes and appeared to provide a better level of support to these learners. According to Collins (2001), Clark (2002), and Bohner and Wanke (2002), teachers who hold negative attitudes towards gifted learners might be discriminatory against these learners, which would negatively impact the gifted learners of these teachers, causing them to feel that their abilities and behaviours, such as asking many questions during a lesson, are not acceptable.

Krashen (1985) and Levine and Lezotte (2001) argue that language learning could be affected by some key factors, such as anxiety, attitude, and competitiveness. The teachers, societies, communities, and school administrators who hold positive attitudes towards the English language would positively influence and improve learners linguistically (Levine and Lezotte, 2001). In particular, head teachers' attitudes can have a positive influence on school effectiveness for ELLs (Levine and Lezotte, 2001; Wrigley, 2000). According to Byrnes and Kiger (1994), teachers' attitudes towards GELLs play a crucial role in improving learners' performances. These attitudes can facilitate or hinder learning English and can have an emotional effect on learners who are anxious about learning English (Byrnes and Kiger, 1994; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). In fact, teachers have been shown to improve their attitudes towards ELLs when they understand ELLs' needs and learn how ELLs are influenced by teachers' attitudes and expectations (Youngs and Youngs, 2001). In this study, examining teachers' attitudes towards GELLs, especially in non-English speaking countries where English is considered a foreign language as in the Saudi context would help to understand how they think and feel about GELLs, which is one of the main objectives of this study.

Despite the multitude of research that has explored the attitudes of teachers towards gifted learners, these attitudes obviously vary. The findings of some studies suggest that teachers generally have positive attitudes towards the gifted (see, for example, Gagne, 1983; Watts, 2006; McCoach and Siegle, 2007). For example, Lassig (2003) used Gagné and Nadeau's questionnaire (1991) to investigate primary school teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners in South East Queensland, Australia. One of the main findings of this study was that teachers have a positive attitude towards gifted learners, but they do not support ability grouping and acceleration and are only minimally aware of the isolation felt by many gifted children. In contrast, some studies suggest that teachers appear to have comparatively negative attitudes towards gifted learners (see, for example, Colangelo and Kelly, 1983; Cramond and Martin, 1987). However, Kirk et al., (2009) and Song (2001) argue that few studies have found negative teacher attitudes towards gifted learners and their education; they argue that the reason for this general trend of positive attitudes towards gifted learners can be attributed to increased awareness of the individual differences between these learners and that the development of public school programmes for gifted learners may have played a role in this change.

A third group of researchers reported both positive and negative attitudes towards the gifted (Copenhaver and McIntyre, 1992; Megay-Nespoli, 2001). For example, in 2008, Donerlson investigated the attitudes of 40 regular teachers and 30 gifted programme teachers from urban elementary school districts towards gifted learners and gifted education. Donerlson (2008) used a quantitative design to determine whether there was a significant difference in the attitudes and beliefs of these teachers, which was accomplished using the 27 items on the Opinions About the Gifted and Their Education instrument, which utilised a five-point Likert scale. The findings of this study indicated that there were significant differences between the responses of regular teachers and gifted programme teachers on the most of items on the questionnaire. Donerlson (2008) concluded that the differences between the regular teachers and the gifted programme teachers was due to the lack of experience and understanding of the needs of the gifted learners on the part of regular teachers. However, Donerlson (2008) did not explain which teachers had more positive attitudes towards gifted learners.

Most of these studies used questionnaires to investigate teachers' attitude towards gifted learners. Many international studies (see, for example, Chipeco, 2004; McCoach and Siegel, 2007) and local Saudi studies (see, for example, Al-Makhalid, 2012) have also used questionnaires to investigate teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners. Johnson and Christensen (2008) argue that different characteristics, such as attitudes and perceptions, could be measured through questionnaires. According to Rojas and Serpa (2005), questionnaires are the preferred method for information collection, because through questionnaires, a researcher can compare, explain, and describe the attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour characteristics of the sample. The current study also used a questionnaire to examine EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs, however, the outcome of the questionnaire is not necessarily change anything in the classroom or translate into practice.

Some studies (see, for example, Lassig, 2003; Al-Makhalid, 2012) adapted Gagné and Nadeau's (1991) Opinions about the Gifted and Their Education instrument to measure teachers' attitude towards gifted learners. However, the questionnaire used in this study, which was developed by Geake and Gross (2008), was adapted to answer one of the main research questions: What are the attitudes of EFL teachers towards GELLs in Saudi school and classroom settings? Geake and Gross (2008) claim that the indicators in this quantitative could measure teachers' subconscious feelings towards gifted children. The main rationale behind using this questionnaire in this study was that Geake and Gross (2008) applied it in

different education cultures, such as the US, Scotland, and Australia. Thus, it would be useful to assess validity of this questionnaire in another context such the Saudi educational context. Further details are given in chapter Four.

In addition to the importance of the teacher's role and attitudes towards improving GELLs' performance, the entire school community should have similar positive attitudes (Matthews, 2006). Gifted education works as a complementary system in which all parties play an important role in the development of gifted learners. Perhaps due to their daily contact with GELLs, teachers are more salient than other parties. However, curriculum planners, subject supervisors, and other educators all have important roles in this regard.

3.6 Classroom Organisation

Urban (1993) acknowledged that there are various ways to provide gifted education, such as separate units, class, and locations. The focus of this thesis is practice within the regular classroom, so this section considers how best to organise GELLs within regular schools and classrooms, arguing that attention needs to be paid to the provision and experiences of gifted learners within the classroom and particularly to how teachers organise learning and utilise teaching practices within regular classrooms (Archambault et al., 1993). However, like identification, this concept comes with some issues. Teachers regularly prepare lesson plans to teach their class via whole-group instruction, which could improve the outcomes for all learners, including gifted learners (Rogers, 2002). However, Guskey (2007) argues that whole-group instruction is not the best practice within regular classes, because it cannot meet the range of abilities of all learners. Gray et al. (2009) suggest that organisational options for gifted programmes are usually classified under three main types: acceleration, enrichment, and ability grouping. These three options, which are considered as forms of organisation, have been discussed in chapter two.

Since there is evidence both for and against the various forms of organisation, many gifted programmes have implemented a variety of mixed forms to develop the abilities of gifted learners and cater to their needs as much as possible. For instance, Saudi Arabia utilises many strategies in their gifted programme but only in science and maths which are; ability grouping, enrichment and acceleration (Aljughaiman, 2007). The focus on mathematics and science in the KSA could mean that gifted learners in curricular areas other than science and mathematics are unsupported. Thus, there is need to acknowledge how teachers within

regular classrooms and across curricular areas differentiate instruction in ways that support gifted learners.

3.7 Provision for Gifted Learners and GELLs in Schools

Head teachers are involved in every area of school life. One important aspect is the connection between the head teacher and the teachers in the classroom, which is important because the head teacher often monitors practice and general school affairs to ensure that learning is effective (Leithwood et al., 2008) (see chapter 2 for further information about this practice in the KSA). Leithwood et al. assessed how involved teachers were in leading practice and discussed the classification between head teachers and teachers. In the KSA, the responsibility of supporting and identifying gifted learners belongs to the head teacher and the teachers. Oswald and De Villiers (2013) looked how at a school in South Africa supported gifted learners. They found that “school principals and teachers, are important proximal influences within the outer environment of gifted learners” (p. 7). Clearly, head teachers and teachers together can influence the school and the classroom. This means that both head teachers and teachers need to think about how they support and meet the needs of gifted learners (Wallace, 2006).

Many scholars (see Betts, 1985; Archambault et al., 1993; Renzulli and Reis, 1998; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2002) agree that supporting gifted learners through differentiated instruction is one of the most important options that schools and teachers can consider. With emphasis on gifted learners, Renzulli (2003) claims that the instructional strategies that teachers use rely more heavily on differentiated gifted educational programme options than on the use of differentiated instructional practices within regular classes. This situation has existed in the KSA, where the main support for the gifted programme has relied on the MAWHIBA programme centres. The strategies intended to support gifted education within regular classes—enrichment, acceleration, and ability grouping—are not very active and are considered only for gifted STEM learners (MAWHIBA, 2007; Aljughaiman, 2007). Thus, applying differentiated instruction to support all learners (including GELLs) in all subjects would be useful to support their needs.

Ford and Trotman (2001) argue that effective teachers in regular classrooms should be able to combine differentiated instruction and a wide range of materials and strategies to support the delivery process for gifted learners. Tomlinson (1999) clarified that differentiation is

neither an instructional strategy nor a teaching model. Rather, it is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that advocates beginning at the point where individuals actually are. In a similar argument, VanTassel-Baska et al. (2007) argue that regular teachers must think in three different ways simultaneously: a) to follow the lesson plan in accordance with the teacher–learner interaction model; b) to consider teaching to multifaceted objectives, such as teaching skills and concepts in the same moment; and c) to be aware of suitable feedback and response strategies and show a degree of flexibility in many areas, such as activity choices and questioning. Teachers also have to be involved in planning, assessing, and monitoring the learning process and must establish a connection between learners' previous and current knowledge, such as how today's class is linked to yesterday's class and how this topic will relate to tomorrow's classes (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007).

In relation to gifted learners, many researchers (see, for example, Silverman, 1980; Davis and Rimm, 2004) argue that some gifted learners have advanced interests, and they have described these learners as immersion learners, who have a high degree of motivation. According to Brown et al. (2005), learners' interests in their gifted field need to be addressed, as gifted learners commonly have unusual interests. In the same vein, Gottfried and Gottfried (2004) argue that gifted learners prefer to work with relevant contexts to establish links between ideas and make relationships with subjects from their own lives. Gottfried and Gottfried (2004) argue that motivating learners to read and learn in their own language is sometimes difficult, so the effort required to read in a second language is significantly greater. Therefore, English learners may need to work with interesting and relevant texts.

Curriculum differentiation that ranges from slight to major modifications of the curriculum, including skills, content, and processes, should match and promote the targeted abilities of the gifted through enrichment or extracurricular activities that broaden these learners' attitudes, knowledge, application, and thinking skills to a degree of complexity that is appropriate for their developmental level (Braggett, 1997). VanTassel-Baska (2000) argues that more attention should be paid to the gifted curriculum in regard to establishing inclusion in the curriculum so that the curriculum meets the needs of GELLs and encourages them to maximise their abilities. Ward (1980) point out that the educational experiences of gifted learners should provide them with individualistic situations and promote a challenging learning environment that is suited to their requirements. Tomlinson and Callahan (1992) introduced some important strategies and skills that the gifted need to develop inside regular classrooms, such as metacognition, inquiry learning, creative and critical thinking skills, and

higher-order questioning strategies, which should all be implemented within combined multifaceted curricula materials. However, few studies provide sufficient information about the differentiated instruction and teaching practices in the KSA, which support the need for the proposed study.

VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) carried out a meta-analysis of differentiated learning strategies. In their meta-analysis, they claim that there has been an uneasy alliance between key facets of educational reform in gifted education practice, such as assessments, ability grouping, and materials in classrooms. Thus, they emphasised teachers' need to be flexible when grouping gifted learners within classrooms. VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) also found that limited emphasis was placed on accelerative strategies in gifted programmes. They suggest that more attention should be paid to supporting gifted learners in their classroom through enrichment, acceleration, or ability grouping strategies, and the most effective teachers of gifted learners would utilise a variety of strategies and differentiated instruction to meet gifted learners' needs within the classroom.

VanTassel-Baska et al. (2007) also claim that one strategy that has been important for all learners is curriculum planning and delivery, ensuring that this strategy is applied to curriculum planning for gifted learners is also important. Curriculum planning and delivery reveal regular teachers' understanding of how to implement and utilise systematic planning and instruction. Curriculum planning can also help teachers to help gifted learners understand how they will perform and how this can directly impact their learning (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007). Sisk (1993) argues that effective differentiation starts with structured planning of a lesson; learners have to know the tasks, routines, outcomes, procedures, and expectations through effective classroom management. Similarly, teachers must know how to deliver every lesson effectively to ensure that each lesson develops the abilities of gifted individuals and encourages them to reach their potential (Tomlinson, 1999). In Saudi Arabia, teachers would have difficulty applying curriculum planning for learners (including gifted learners) due to the centralisation policy of the Ministry of Education, as mentioned in chapter two. However, reducing such centralisation would allow teachers to become more involved in curriculum planning.

Effective teaching and learning strategies for gifted learners include problem-solving skills, critical thinking skills, understanding and reasoning, and higher-order thinking skills and should consider the knowledge and experiences of the gifted learners to whom a strategy is

being applied (Tomlinson, 1999). Teachers could offer some open activities, such as open-ended questioning, and provide some tasks that challenge learners' thinking, such as graphic organisers, because gifted learners are often able to analyse, evaluate, and synthesise concepts at an advanced level (Tomlinson, 1999). Creativity, which is a topic that appears in many of the models for giftedness (see, for example, Renzulli, 1976), is often linked to open mindedness, and creativity can be encouraged through a range of activities that stimulate learners to share, inspire, and imagine unusual problems (Treffinger, 1995; Davis, 2001). Delcourt (1993) claim that employing brainstorming, problem solving, and lateral thinking activities promotes the creativity of the gifted. Gorgiladze (2005) and Doghonadze and Gorgiladze (2008) argue that utilising problem solving strategy in teaching EFL classes is important, it includes discussing professional problems through communication in the foreign language, discussion of texts dealing with problems or asking EFL learners to formulate grammatical rules from the given examples.

Moore (2001) argues that the instruction of creativity implies that creativity strategies can be taught in combination or separation with research strategies. Through this instruction, learners would have the chance to increase their creativity and critical thinking simultaneously (Moore, 2001). To facilitate this learning, teachers could provide a range of research techniques to build inferences, learn independently, formulate conclusions, communicate effectively with others, and collect information from many sources. Improving these skills within learners to an advanced level will result in the pupils becoming productive researchers (Reis et al., 1992; Moore, 2001; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2007). This strategy allows the basics of research skills and strategies to be taught, and these skills and strategies should be taught as early as possible, because they are not only effective learning tools but also basic thinking methods.

Differentiated instruction is important in EFL as well. For example, direct instruction would facilitate learning, feedback, and processing in English on the part of teacher and learners (Coelho, 2004). Robertson and Ford (2008) argue that the differentiated instruction should connect strongly with the learners' stages of language acquisition or learning. Robertson and Ford (2008) classified these stages as preproduction, early production, speech emergence, beginners' fluency, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. They claim that when dealing with EFLs, the content and language learning objectives of each lesson should be clearly explained. Robertson and Ford (2008) and urRahman and Alhaisoni (2013)

recommend that EFL teachers should use scaffolding instruction in EFL classes to build comprehensible input for their learners according to their levels.

According to some studies (see, for example, Rahman, 2011; Krashen and Terrell, 1983; Al-Seghayer, 2014), real-life examples should be used in EFL classes to create ample opportunities for ELs to acquire language skills effectively. These studies argue that employing real-life and meaningful activities and tools, such as talking circles, writing workshops, literature circles, or virtual environment classes, would be significantly effective for ELLs in EFL programmes. Researchers have noted that Saudi EFL teachers should pay closer attention to realistic situations and real-world examples (see Al-Seghayer, 2014). Krashen's (1985) hypotheses of learning argue that the optimal way of learning a foreign language is to facilitate communication between learners and their teachers. Thus, GELL should be given the chance to practice the language through activities such as creating real-life activities and incorporating critical thinking skills, including comparing, evaluation, and contrasting.

Using different types of instructional strategies would be useful in meeting the needs of all learners (including GELLs), and this differentiation of strategies promotes learners' knowledge and skills to their maximum levels. Kitano and Espinosa (1995) argue that using different strategies to support the achievements of GELLs is important. They suggest some instruction principles that teachers should consider when dealing with GELLs, such as the use of scaffolding instruction to build comprehensible input for their learners according to their level of proficiency. Teachers need to improve their level of thinking, increase their expectations of their learners, recognise their learners' strengths and weaknesses, and use different challenging experiences to meet their learners' potential (Kitano and Espinosa, 1995)

Despite the recommended use of differentiation by many authors, Eyre and Geake (2002) and Kim and Gentry (2008) claim that there are some concerns around differentiated instruction such as teacher training. In particular, professional training for teachers is very important so that they can deal with the needs of gifted learners effectively. Altayar (2003) criticises the preparation and training of Saudi teachers -whether in regular classes or in MAWHIBA gifted programme centres_ within the KSA. This researcher argues that many Saudi teachers possess limited skills that do not help them with lesson planning, classroom management, or the application of differentiated instruction. However, as shown in chapter

2, there are many changes required within the KSA in relation to teacher education if teachers are to become qualified to implement effective strategies.

According to Schlichter and Palmer (2002) such teacher training about gifted learners, if implemented, should be centred on some specific areas, such as training teachers to identify gifted learners appropriately and to recognise these learners' characteristics (see, for example, Schlichter and Palmer 2002; Feldhusen, 1997). The training for these teachers should include best practices and different teaching skills, such as stimulation, group projects, problem solving, or the teaching of thinking skills (Geake and Gross, 2008; Smith, 2002; Parks, 2005), and should train these teachers how to modify their curriculum, such as through curriculum compacting and extensions, to suit gifted learners' needs (Runzuli and Reis, 2008; Roberts, 2005). This training should also help these teachers plan and organise the learning environment, such as through managing cooperative learning and the selection and application of grouping methods (Hendricks, 2007; Rogers, 2002; Renzuli, 2003; VanTassel-Baska, 2003). Regarding modifying the education system in the KSA to address the aims of Vision 2030 (see chapter 2), EFL teachers should be prepared with professional training to use differentiation strategies which is important for supporting all learners (including gifted learners) in regular classes.

However, there is limited literature that systematically assesses the optimal implementation of best practice teaching strategies for gifted learners in regular classes. VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) claim that more investigations of the best practices in differentiation, valid classroom observation scales, and the best strategies teachers need to employ to elevate learning outcomes would be useful. Guskey (2000) and Kennedy (1999) suggest that data and evidence of classroom practices could provide a database on which future work with teachers can be based. Thus, using classroom observation in the current study would provide an opportunity to access the instructional experience of GELLs within the EFL setting. As mentioned in chapter one, being part of professional development that provides the critical knowledge to teachers would be helpful to gain insight about the quality of the learning experiences that are delivered to these teachers.

VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) claim that there is limited literature that addresses the classroom observation tools used in the gifted education area. Among the available tools is the observation scale developed by Feldhusen and Hoffman (1988). This scale has ten competence areas that gifted teachers are expected to cover, such as student involvement,

motivational techniques, teacher–student interactions, and teaching aids and materials. Another observation scale, which was developed by Westburg et al., (1990), is the Classroom Practices Record, the main purpose of which is to document types of differentiation activities, such as acceleration, ability grouping, questioning strategies, and higher cognitive process (Westburg et al., 1993). Cassady et al., (2004) also developed a comprehensive scale, the Differentiation Classroom Observation Scale. This tool has been used to document differentiation activities to examine curricular and instructional practices (Cassady et al., 2004).

Although there are a number of characteristics shared between these other observation tools and the COS-R, VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) claim that COS-R has different advantages. First, the literature describing this observation instrument focused on the differentiated instruction of gifted learners and effective teaching practices (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2003). VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) argue that the focus of the COS-R is teachers’ expected behaviours and the best practices identified by the literature on gifted education. The COS-R contains six scales of teaching behaviours, which are: curriculum planning and delivery, accommodations for individual differences, problem -solving strategies, critical thinking s creative thinking strategies and research strategies. In total, there are 25 subscales of expected teaching behaviours (See Appendix 3). Thus, by using this observation schedule in this study it would be able to examine one of the main aims: “How do EFL teachers differentiate instructions in their teaching practices in EFL classrooms to maximise the abilities of GELLs?” VanTassel-Baska et al., (2007) also argue that the COS-R has clear evidence of technical adequacy, which is an important feature of a sound instrument. The researchers mentioned that one of the important features of the COS-R is that the observation was developed for use in all classrooms and in many subject areas (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008), one of which is second or foreign languages, which the focus of this study. Finally, VanTassel-Baska et al., (2008) claim that the COS-R was used effectively in different countries with different racial, language and cultural contexts, such as the USA and Singapore, which could potentially make this scale more flexible for use in the KSA’s cultural context.

3.8 Holistic Support for GELLs

According to Maslow (1954), the links between learning and social and emotional wellbeing are well known, and the impact one can have on the other explains why gifted education

needs to think about these topics. The main idea of a holistic education is the development of an individual's social, artistic, creative, physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual potential. In other words, life-long learning; learning to know, to do, to be and to live together (UNESCO 1996). Neihart et al. (2002) classified the social and emotional developmental risks that gifted learners might face. For example, gifted learners face more concerns related to their academic advancements than others, and these concerns might appear different from the concerns of others (Neihart et al., 2002). This issue could be exacerbated in the KSA, where GELLs are especially vulnerable to social and emotional difficulties since few of their peers and family members use the English language. According to Neihart et al. (2002), gifted learners may face psychological concerns resulting from a feeling of some degree of underachievement, and these feelings may be transferred to avoidance or anxiety (Schuler, 2002; Reis and McCoach, 2000; Callahan, 1997). Niehaus and Adelson (2014) point out that there is limited research about how ELLs perceive their social and emotional difficulties, what they consider to be the best interpretations to support them, and what they consider to be the best practices to apply within English classes.

Yunus et al. (2013b), in a study of GELLs in Malaysia, found that GELLs might not have experience using English in appropriate situations (Yunus et al., 2013b). In this study, the learners experienced some language anxiety or underachievement. This feeling prevented them from acquiring the targeted language level to a high degree of proficiency. According to Mueen (1992) and Kanwal and Khurshid (2012), a learner's ability to speak English as a second language confidently could be lower than their ability to perform on written examinations because of the many areas that need to be considered when speaking. These areas may include shyness, hesitation, nervousness, a lack of confidence, and the fear of having to express oneself correctly. Adopting different approaches for both teaching and learning English could be a positive change for GELLs. GELLs could be encouraged to communicate and feel free to practice English to minimize such feelings. This approach was noted in another study carried out with Malaysian ELLs (Razak and Babikkoi, 2013), which focussed on the effects of using an oral communicative approach instead of traditional approaches, such as teacher-centralised classes and grammar–translation techniques. Razak and Babikkoi concluded that ELLs' motivation and attitudes towards English improved after they used the communicative approach, after which students engaged in English conversation more than they had previously and gained a greater level of fluency with speaking in English. In Razak and Babikkoi's study (2013), English language proficiency improved along with confidence after the communicative approach was used. Effective

teaching and learning processes impact learners and their wellbeing, which affects both learning and personality development (Winstanley, 2010).

3.9 Implications for GELLs

GELLs are an important category of gifted learners, and their gifts and talents should be acknowledged and developed by an effective gifted programme that is equal to other similar programmes regardless of whether they study English at their home in non-English speaking countries or as immigrants in a native English-speaking country. These learners possess a language aptitude to be intellectually creative and have the potential to contribute to the advancement of not only their own society but other societies throughout the world.

Thus, educators should establish a universal definition and precise description of the GELLs' qualities that accounts for elements of various learning environments where GELLs can express their intellectual and creative linguistic written or verbal abilities freely and fairly. In light of universal understandings of giftedness based on scientific empirical evidence, the identification process should be based on effective assessment methods that utilise a multidimensional approach. GELLs should be identified by informal procedures, such as the observation of performance methods, within a pre-identified period of time instead of using standardised tests alone (Feldhusen, 2005). Portfolios, grade point averages, and input from peers, parents, teachers, and community leaders are also be important for identifying GELLs. Teachers should improve their training, knowledge, and expectations of gifted learners, particularly in relation to those learners with limited English proficiency, to focus on these learners' potential, recognise any hidden potential, and provide challenges that adequately meet these learners' needs in the classroom by supporting them consistently, regardless of whether they achieve high examination scores (Hunsaker, 1994; Galu, 1998; Worrell et al., 2001; Keen, 2002; Bevan-Brown, 2004).

Teachers' professional development is also important in the identification of GELLs. It can also, increase positive teacher attitudes towards GELLs. These attitudes facilitate or hinder learning English and can involve emotional factors, such as anxiety (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Byrnes and Kiger, 1994). Professional development that focuses on effective learning and teaching and examines different practices and strategies will help to ensure high-quality instruction for GELLs so that they experience relevant, quality educational experiences.

Instead of only relying on STEM subjects (which are important subjects) in MAWHIBA programme centres, strategies supporting gifted learners could be used to include all learners in all subjects in their regular classes and in MAWHIBA programme centres. Teachers in all subjects (including EFL teachers) could be trained to identify, support and use different teaching practices to meet gifted learners needs in their regular classes so as not to disadvantage them. In relation to GELLs, the provision and support for GELLs could be employed in MAWHIBA programme centres, but also they could be useful strategies within regular classes so that all learners can be supported. Studying a foreign language could require collaborative efforts from gifted learners and all other educational parties. Therefore, providing GELLs with optimal learning environments and practices within regular classes and schools would help these learners achieve their learning goals and meet their special linguistic interests. Providing GELLs with a positive learning atmosphere requires the consideration of their individual social and emotional factors in light of well-established diagnostic procedures.

3.10 Synthesis of the Chapter

Giftedness has been discussed from the perspectives of its origins, definitions, and identification and the ways that support can be provided for ELLs. There is no consensus on the definition of giftedness in the literature. The controversy surrounding this term can be attributed to the various backgrounds of different scholars, educators, psychologists, and practitioners in the field. In addition, the debate on defining giftedness originated partially from the theoretical perspective followed by most scholars. In this study, giftedness can be considered an interdisciplinary term: some believe it is a biologically innate quality of some individuals, and others believe that people can be gifted due to developmental or environmental factors. For the purposes of this study, a belief that gifted individuals inherit genes that are influenced by appropriate environmental factors to produce giftedness underpins the study's arguments.

A range of views regarding the identification process have been discussed. To identify GELLs on the basis of the current literature would cause some concerns due to the lack of consensus on any one approach for identifying GELLs. These concerns include biases and social factors. For this reason, utilising a variety of methods could be most appropriate for identifying GELLs. Apart from employing the standardised assessment methods, including IQ testing, to identify GELLs, many alternatives might be appropriate including for engaging

the school community, which is represented by qualified teachers. A variety of methods applied appropriately in addition to achievement tests over a sufficient period and under equal procedures would be an effective integrated identification process. The identification process should also consider the multicultural aspects and the minority factors.

EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs have also been discussed. Teachers' attitudes have an important impact on the development of GELLs in terms of the promotion or endurance of their foreign language advancement. During their learning process, GELLs may be exposed to some concerns and problems, such as social, emotional, and academic achievement concerns. EFL teachers, in cooperation with other school parties, play a crucial role in helping GELLs deal with these issues.

Providing GELLs with an encouraging and supportive learning environment is crucial for the success of gifted programmes. Enrichment, acceleration, or any other strategy, including ability grouping, would be encouraged and accepted by the gifted. The most important factor for gifted programmes is offering gifted individuals the support, encouragement, and acknowledgment that they require. Head teachers and EFL teachers should take the most effective approach to provide for GELLs, which could include differentiated instruction in which the content, activities, learning processes, and teaching practices are all tailored according to the individual abilities of the gifted within a supportive, challenging, and interesting learning environment. Supporting GELLs socially and emotionally could be important to address their needs and improve their academic experiences.

Chapter Four: Design and Methodology of the Study

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four presents the methodologies utilised to answer the research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of English as foreign language teachers towards gifted English language learners in Saudi school and classroom settings?
2. How do English as foreign language teachers' differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of gifted English language learners in their classrooms?
3. How do head teachers and English as foreign language teachers identify gifted English language learners in regular Saudi classrooms and schools?
4. What are the views of English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners on what support gifted English language learners need in school generally and in English as foreign language classroom specifically?

The aims of the current study are to explore EFL teachers attitudes' towards GELLs in EFL settings, to find out how EFL teachers differentiate instructions in their teaching practices in EFL classrooms to maximise the abilities of GELLs, to find out how EFL teachers and head teachers identify GELLs in regular EFL classrooms and schools and, finally, To identify English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners views on what types of support gifted English language learners in school and in the EFL settings need. Thus. the first section of this chapter discusses the study's approach and the rationale for utilising mixed methods within this study. The next sections outline the research tools, study population and sampling, ethical considerations, instrumentations and data collection. The chapter then describes in depth the methods used in this study; namely, questionnaire, classroom observation, interview and focus group as well as data collection and data analysis. Finally, this chapter discusses the pilot study and the study's validity and reliability.

4.2 Research Approach

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore the context of GELLs' experiences in EFL classrooms. A mixed-methods approach has been defined as "a method, which focuses on collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5). Mixed-methods research could bring together the strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches, and it can compare and contrast the results to increase their validity and reliability, which, in turn, could improve the accuracy of the results. A mixed-methods approach can help researchers explain and interpret their findings, make generalisations, explore the phenomenon under study, and test instruments (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed-methods research can also obtain results that complete and complement each other, giving researchers a better understanding than either approach can provide alone (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Each approach has its own merits. A qualitative approach may flexibly explore phenomena and help gather in-depth knowledge and information (Bryman, 1988; Flick et al., 2004). According to Creswell (2007; 2009) and Delport and De Vos (2011), the procedures related to qualitative approaches are not as strictly formalised as those related to quantitative methods, and the scope of qualitative approaches is more likely to be undefined and employ a more philosophical mode of operation. Creswell (2007; 2009) and Kumar (2011) pointed out that a qualitative approach can present an in-depth analysis of the experiences of respondents. Furthermore, Willig (2001) argue that qualitative approaches are usually concerned with the participants' understanding of events from their perspective and how individuals make sense of the world.

A quantitative approach allows researchers to conceptualise variables and make formalised, empirical comparisons of results from large samples (Kealey and Protheroe, 1996; Creswell, 2009; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010; Kumar, 2011). Creswell (2007; 2009) and Kumar (2011) argue that the quantitative approach is formalised and explicitly controlled. According to Yauch and Steudel (2003), there are many advantages to the quantitative approach. For example, it can be managed and evaluated quickly, and the responses can be tabulated within a short timeframe. Furthermore, numerical data obtained through a quantitative approach

allows for comparisons between groups and the determination of agreement or disagreement between respondents.

One of the purposes for utilising a mixed-methods approach in the current study was this approach's complementarity nature. Greene et al. (1989) and Collins et al. (2006) argue that the mixed-methods approach's complementarity nature means that different approaches are used to examine different aspects of a phenomenon, producing an enriched and elaborated understanding of that phenomenon. In this study, the quantitative approach (the questionnaires and observations) provided an overview of common issues and practices from a large sample of teachers, while the qualitative approach (the interviews and focus groups) provided in-depth data and explored the academic experiences of the participants in their own social and cultural contexts. The quantitative questionnaire and observation examined EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs and how EFL teachers differentiated their teaching practices to meet the needs of GELLs. In addition, data from the qualitative interview and focus groups examined how EFL teachers and head teachers identified GELLs in regular Saudi classrooms and schools and explored GELLs' views about support they need in school generally and in the EFL classroom in particular. Collins et al. (2006) argue that utilising mixed methods in one study allows the maximum interpretation and understanding of the phenomenon being addressed. Thus, a mixed-methods approach in the current study would offer a more nuanced understanding of the teaching and learning process, gather rich data to answer the research questions and allow a more coherent picture to be drawn about the experiences of GELLs in EFL classrooms.

Another reason for combining the methods in this study is triangulation. Denzin (1978, p. 291) defined triangulation as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon". One triangulation method used in the current study is methodological triangulation and encapsulates two types of triangulation: between-methods triangulation and within-method triangulation. Between-methods triangulation is when quantitative and qualitative approaches are used together. In this study, a questionnaire, classroom observation, semi-structured interview and focus groups, were used together to allow for between-methods triangulation. This type of methodological triangulation prevents investigator bias, increasing the validity of the results (Denzin, 1978; Kimchi et al., 1991). This study also used some aspects of within-method triangulation, which refers to using different techniques within either the qualitative or the quantitative domain to collect and interpret data to increase the validity and reliability of the study. For example, the qualitative

methods of this study involved interviewing EFL teachers and head teachers about the identification process, which could help to increase internal reliability of the study (Denzin, 1978). The use of multiple methods seeks to understand more deeply the situation being considered. While Denzin argues that care needs to be taken when using triangulation (Denzin, 2012), he, and others (see for example Hesse-Biber, 2010; Mertens, 2011; Morse, 2011) still think it has much to contribute to the ongoing debate about qualitative research in the 21 century.

In short, the mixed-methods approach of this study could bring together the strengths of both approaches and allow the contrasting of results where appropriate, hence strengthening validity, reliability, and accuracy and enabling readers to understand and answer the key research questions and gain a comprehension picture of the state of GELLs in the Saudi context.

4.3 Research Tools

This study used four tools: questionnaires, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The questionnaire was conducted to examine the attitudes of EFL teachers in respect of GELLs. Classroom observation attempted to observe how EFL teachers differentiated their instructions in practice to meet the needs of GELLs within EFL classes. The rationale for conducting interviews with EFL teachers, head teachers was to identify these EFL teachers and head teachers' views about GELLs, as well as to find out how GELLs were supported within the school and within the EFL class from the educators' perspectives. The rationale for conducting focus groups with GELLs was to investigate what kind of support they are looking for as GELLs. The results obtained from these methodologies were then combined in an attempt to achieve a coherent picture of the experience for GELLs in the KSA.

Since the research was conducted in the KSA, it was necessary to translate the instruments into the Arabic language. However, this is not as straightforward as it sounds. In fact, there are many different types of translation, such as multiple-forward translation, back translation, translation review by bilingual judges, and statistical review (Maxwell, 1996). The translation process used in this study was the back translation technique, and this was selected due to its effectiveness in cross-cultural translations (Brislin, 1970). The effectiveness of the back translation technique can be seen in some studies within the same

context (Arabic context) (See for example Al-Makhalid, 2012). According to Brislin (1970), the back translation technique should follow many processes. First, the original transcript should be translated to the target language. Second, the grammar of the target language should be checked. Third, the target transcript should be translated back to the original language and the original transcript checked. Finally, pre-tests should be conducted before the main research commences. The translation process should start by selecting suitable characteristics for translators who are required to have a combination of the appropriate knowledge in both the English language and the target language and also to have some background knowledge or experience in relation to the target culture, as well as skills in research instrument development (Maxwell, 1996). Thus, three Saudi researchers who specialise in English/Arabic translation and also have in-depth knowledge of the development of research instruments from Tibah University, Almadinah City, were used for the translation process.

One researcher was tasked with translating the instrument from English into Arabic, whilst the results were given to a second one to evaluate the validity of the translation of the instruments and to also check for any grammatical mistakes. Finally, the third researcher was asked to carry out the back translation to the English language and to evaluate and compare the English version with the original. Some confusion occurred regarding some of the expressions used, and this led to different meanings and interpretations between the Arabic and English drafts. One example that faced the team when checking the accuracy of some terms is that, one of GELLs expressed that she wished her EFL teachers to be “stretchy” with her in the class. The word stretchy was not very easy to translate from Arabic to English with keeping the same meaning. After several efforts, these three researchers reached to agreement that “stretchy” could be the fitting word in English language.

4.4 Study Population and Sampling

The target population in this study was EFL teachers, head teachers, and EFL learners who have been labelled as GELLs by their schools and approved by the Ministry of Education as gifted in English language in the KSA. As all Saudi Arabian schools are gender segregated and as the researcher is female, she could only gain access to female schools. The researcher selected the region and the city based on her domicile and other practical factors. Among other features, the selected city contains one of the holy mosques and consequently is one of the biggest cities in the KSA. The researcher received the necessary permission to access six

secondary schools for girls in Almadinah City. The Ministry of Education in the KSA then chose the specific schools to participate in the study. The next stage involved narrowing the research sample down and selecting secondary learners with a higher level of skill in the English language, having studied it from the sixth grade. As such, those secondary learners were more experienced and were more likely to be able to express their needs and experiences better than younger learners.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

The researcher sought permission from the University of Glasgow as well as from the Ministry of Education in the KSA in order to access the secondary schools and conduct questionnaires, observe EFL classrooms, conduct interviews and focus groups. All the participants took part in this study on an entirely voluntary basis and were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Consent forms (See Appendix 10 and 11) were distributed, and thereafter the participants were informed of the goals of the study and advised as follows. They were free to stop participating at the study at any time, without having to provide any explanation or give any reason. Participants were reassured that questionnaires (See Appendix 1), classroom observations (See Appendix 2) interviews (See Appendix 3 for EFL teacher's interview and Appendix 4 for head teacher's interview) and focus group (See Appendix 5) did not contain any information that could potentially threaten the reputations or future careers of the Saudi teachers, head teachers or GELLs. The researcher would not to share any personal information, such as telephone numbers, addresses, or other details. They were also reassured that the data they were providing would be made anonymous, and any identifiers would be removed and replaced with code. Participants were also asked if they wished to withhold any information they considered to be intrusive or sensitive. Consent forms were attached to all of the questionnaires delivered to the participants and provided before each interview and focus group session, and all potential respondents were informed of the goals of the study. To avoid any interruption and increase privacy, individual interview and focus-group sessions were conducted in the head teacher's office or the school common room. Every interview and focus group session began with the researcher welcoming the participants and introducing herself. The participants in the classroom observations were also informed that their teaching and learning were being observed for academic research purposes alone.

4.6 Instrumentation and Data Collection

In each participating school, the initial activity was to ask the head teacher and the EFL teachers to read the Plain Language Statement (PLS- See Appendix 6 and 7) and to sign the consent form (See Appendix 10) indicating that they were willing to participate in the study. Thereafter, the researcher contacted the parents of GELLs to read the Plain Language Statement and obtain their permission for their children to participate (See Appendix 8 and 11). After parents' agreement, GELLs read the PLS and signed the consent form indicating that they were willing to participate in the study (See Appendix 9 and 10). One hour interviews were conducted with each head teacher and EFL teacher and one-hour focus groups were conducted with GELLs. The interviews and focus groups were carried out over a period of four weeks. EFL teachers also completed questionnaires lasting about 30 minutes so the researcher could explore their attitudes regarding GELLs. A time span of eight weeks was required to administer the questionnaires. Finally, classroom observations were conducted for around 45-minute to establish the classroom practices of EFL teachers in EFL classes. The classroom observations in this study took place over a period of two months. The first research tool, the questionnaire, is explained in detail in the following section.

4.7 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to achieve the first aim of this study, which focused on examining EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs. The questionnaire is considered to be an efficient method to measure different characteristics, for example beliefs, feelings, perceptions, or attitudes (Johnson and Christensen, 2008). Many existing studies that have successfully used questionnaires to examine teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners (Begin and Gagne, 1994; Chipego, 2004; McCoach and Siegel, 2007). In relation to this study, the questionnaire measured EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs in a Saudi context. In particular, this quantitative questionnaire afforded the researcher quick and convenient access to a large sample of participants to inform the data about the situation in the KSA pertaining to GELLs.

One hundred EFL teachers who all teach GELLs in participating schools completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire adopted in this study was originally designed by Geake and Gross (2008). Although some of the statements were original, Geake and Gross (2008)

obtained many of the 20 statements from the list of characteristics of gifted children supplied by Clark (1997). Adopting this questionnaire presented a good opportunity to assess and potentially extend the validity of the questionnaire in a new context (the KSA) since the original questionnaire was previously applied in three different countries with differing cultures, experiences and teacher demographics with gifted education (England, Scotland and Australia) (Geake and Gross, 2008). The original questionnaire used a semantic differential scale (good–bad, like–dislike, fair–unfair, strong–weak, and valuable–worthless). For the purposes of this study, this scale was changed to a Likert-type scale for two main reasons. First, according to Neuman (2000), a semantic differential scale has limitations because respondents are providing measurements of their attitudes based on subjective interpretations and self-reporting using the scale’s adjectives. Second, Neuman (2000) argues that differential scale questionnaires usually require complex analysis. Neuman argue that differential scales use material associations rather than cognisance of feelings, which is an obstacle to effective analysis of data. A Likert scale was used in this study because of its validity and relevance in studies of attitude and opinion (Dumas, 1999; Shaw and Pieter, 2000; Neuman, 2000). The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements, and participants were asked to make judgments about each statement. The 20 statements used by Geake and Gross (2008) were used in the current study without adaptation. Although the cultural context of the current study is different from the original countries that participated in Geake and Goss’s (2008) study, the statements all related to teachers’ attitudes. This is the focus of the questionnaire, so the statements were presented in their original form. A total of 100 EFL teachers completed the original questionnaire by rating their level of agreement with 20 items using a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree and strongly agree) (see Appendix 1).

The researcher did not lose sight of several challenges when using questionnaires, such as the potential for incorrect or inaccurate interpretation of questions, especially when a questionnaire is the only data-collection method (Cohen et al., 2007). Tashakkori and Teddle (2003) also raised another concern about using questionnaires: missing responses or low response rates to questions. In an attempt to counteract such potential problems, the researcher in the current study encouraged respondents to express their feelings and reassured them that there were no right or wrong answers to any of the questions asked. The researcher also informed all participants that the questionnaires were anonymised and that the identity of each respondent would remain confidential. Furthermore, respondents were

encouraged to ask for clarification of any misunderstood questions while the researcher was conducting interviews, focus groups and classroom observations in the schools.

Clearly, the questionnaire in this study could be an important research tool to give a general overview of GELLs in a Saudi context. The next section aims to provide information about the second research tool: classroom observations.

4.8 Classroom Observation

The purpose of utilising classroom observation was to achieve the second aim of this study, which focused on how EFL teachers differentiate their teaching instructions in EFL classrooms to meet the needs of GELLs. Classroom observation not only offers relation of teachers with their learners but also provides insight into the whole instruction process, which contains instructions goals, materials and resources, and assessment strategies at a specific time (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2005). Quantitative classroom observation in this study was intended to provide evidence of teaching practices implemented by EFL teachers in a Saudi context inside regular EFL classrooms. Classroom observation sheets served as a record for specific teaching behaviour.

Cohen et al. (2007) posited that observation has two main types: participant and nonparticipant. Generally, observing gifted learners' needs within regular classes should concentrate on good teaching, educational reforming, and finally differentiating high-ability learners (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2005). Thus, there is no need to become involved in any activities. The main aim of classroom observation in this study was to complete observation sheets and not to get involved in any activities or share information and knowledge in classes, so the type of observation used in this study was nonparticipant observation.

The classroom observation instrument used in this study was adapted from an original example developed by VanTassel-Baska et al. (2003), namely the Classroom Observation Scale–Revised (COS-R). There are many reasons for adoption of that specific scale. First, researchers have effectively used the instrument in different cultural contexts, such as the United States and Singapore (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008). This made it more flexible for use in the cultural context of Saudi Arabia. Second, the authors tried to develop the classroom observation form to be used in all classrooms and in many subject areas (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2003); one of the subjects is second/foreign language, which makes

it relevant to this study. Finally, it contains six clusters of teaching behaviors that cover most of the research areas identified in the literature review such as curriculum planning and delivery, accommodation of individual differences and problem solving strategies (See Appendix 2). The main idea for developing this scale was to observe the instruction used by teachers according to theoretical basis from the literature, differentiation strategies, and teaching in general. In short, the scale was developed to assess teacher practices in both gifted and mainstream classrooms.

In relation to the design of the classroom observation schedule, the COS-R contains six scales of teaching behaviours: curriculum planning and delivery, accommodations for individual differences, problem-solving strategies, critical thinking strategies, creative thinking strategies and research strategies. In total, there are 25 subscales of expected teaching behaviours (see Appendix 3). The COS-R ranks the effectiveness of each teaching technique using a three-point grade scale ranging from 1 to 3. Each behaviour item is measured by a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3 with 3 representing “effective”, 2 representing “somewhat effective”, 1 representing “not effective” and 0 representing “not observed”. To increase the reliability of the classroom observations and to minimize bias, two observers conducted classroom observations. The length of the classroom observation was around 45 minutes for each class. The observation team included the researcher (observer 1) and the district gifted coordinator from the Ministry of Education in the KSA (observer 2). There were a total of 20 observation sheets for the 10 EFL classes in the participating schools.

In this study, VanTassel-Baska et al.’s (2005) recommendations for the observation team were applied. According to these recommendations, one member of the observation team should be unfamiliar with school factors and should not have been involved in the implementation of the policies that are being observed, and the other should be an expert in the gifted programme. Therefore, the researcher, who was not involved in school factors and has not been involved in carrying out the policies that have been implemented, was chosen as observer 1, and a coordinator of the gifted programme from the Saudi Ministry of Education was chosen as observer 2. Another recommendation was that the team should gather and reach a consensus after each classroom observation. In this study, the observation team met before the classes to clarify the objective of the classroom observation and after each observation class to reach a consensus. However, since each observer had a different perspective, reaching complete agreement was problematic.

After in-depth discussions, observer 2's understanding of GELLs was revealed to be limited because her main experiences had been in maths and sciences. This focus resulted in very different interpretation of what was being observed. For example, during the discussion between the observation team, observer 2 indicated that she thought that she could not observe or score any research strategies in the EFL classes. Observer 2 thought that research strategies were found only in maths and science classes. On the other hand, observer 1 thought some research strategies were evident in the observed EFL classes. For example, many of the observed EFL teachers asked learners to present topics at the end of each class. For these presentations, EFL learners were asked to prepare a topic at home and then present that topic in front of the class. After the presentation, the teachers would ask the learners to make conclusions and describe the impact of what they presented. Observer 2 believed research strategies were closely linked to science and mathematics classes and disciplines, so she did not recognise the strategies evidenced in the EFL classes since they were outside the science domain.

Observer 2 had previously undertaken work in the participating schools. This work was linked to gifted maths and science provision and policy implementation. Three aspects – a) a science and maths focus, b) limited knowledge about ELLs and GELLs and c) focus on policy – led the researcher to question the effectiveness of the observations, in which observer 2 consistently rated teachers higher than observer 1 in most categories. In relation to this study, the differing level of understanding of each observer clearly impacted the classroom observation results, which is an important issue to consider in relation to the use of multiple observers. It also calls into question how to mediate individual teachers' beliefs and the possible bias in their views of who the gifted are in relation to identification.

Although VanTassel-Baska et al. (2005) recommended using two observers when feasible, the COS-R has been used effectively by only one observer (the researcher) in previous classroom observation research conducted by VanTassel-Baska (2011). Since the focus of this study was GELLs, the researcher decided to present and discuss the results of only observer 1 because these results were rooted in a deep understanding of ELLs and GELLs. Observer 1 was neither working for the Ministry of Education nor a member of staff within the school, so observations may be considered to be free from any implicit or explicit desire to reconcile policy and practice.

Conversely, there are a number of disadvantages associated with the use of classroom observations. First, observation comes with the potential risk of subjective bias from the

observer, which can occur if the observer records what he or she expected or wanted to see, rather than what actually happened (Hammersley et al., 2001). Schensul et al. (1999) pointed to another weakness: the researcher's acceptability on site may be affected by one's appearance, ethnicity, age, gender, and class. In this study, observers were encouraged to read the purpose of classroom observation in the consent form and the objective of the classroom observation before every observable class. The next section discusses the final research tools that were employed in this study: the interviews and focus groups.

4.9 Interview and Focus Group

The purpose of interviews and focus groups in this study was to achieve the second part of the study's aims, which focused on establishing the views of EFL teachers, head teachers and GELLs towards identification and support of GELLs. In relation to interviews with EFL teachers and head teachers, researchers can instantly clarify the responses of the participants during interviews and also have the ability to explore any underlying responses (Robson, 2002). Cohen et al. (2007) claim that it is possible to explore how participants in a given context think and make sense of a given phenomenon. The reason interviews were an appropriate method in this study is that interviews can be a relevant and helpful method in understanding the thoughts, views and beliefs of the EFL teachers and head teachers individually, deeply and investigating issues more thoroughly in a Saudi context.

This study used a semi-structured interview format, where specific questions are determined beforehand but participants also have the ability to clarify, explain, and deviate a little from the questions; there is flexibility instead of reliance on rigid, tabulated sequences, as asserted by Cohen et al. (2007) and Freebody (2003). This study determined specific questions before the interviews and then allowed the participants to express their thoughts and views within the themes of the questions.

The questions developed for the interviews and focus groups emerged from a synthesis of the key ideas relating to GELLs within the literature (see, for example, Matthews, 2006; Ford et al., 2002; Harris et al., 2007; Al Qarni, 2010; Aljughaiman, 2007). The two main themes that emerged – identification and support – formed the basis of the indicative questions for the interview and focus group work. As mentioned in chapter one, participants of the interviews (head teachers and EFL teachers) have been responsible for implementing Ministry of Education regulations. The current study wanted to better understand what this

looked like in practice, the interview questions focused on school and classroom practice and teacher perceptions rather than asking direct questions about the regulations. The focus group explored learners' perceptions of their experiences and their views on appropriate support in the classroom where regulations were being implemented

For the EFL teachers, the interview protocol consisted of 11 questions. Six questions were designed to establish how Saudi EFL teachers identified GELLs and the strategies they used, as well as their perception of the concept of giftedness as it relates to English language learning. Two questions were aimed at exploring how EFL teachers identified the various abilities of GELLs in EFL classes and the support they provided to them. The rest of the questions examined how EFL teachers supported GELLs socially and emotionally (See Appendix 3). The head teachers' interviews consisted of eight questions, with the first six questions aiming to establish how the head teachers interpreted the concept of giftedness as it related to English language learning as well as how GELLs were identified and assessed within the school context. The rest of the questions were intended to gain a better understanding of how the head teachers supported GELLs once they were identified (See Appendix 4).

The reason for conducting focus groups was to investigate GELLs' views about the support they received. Including pupils' voices would contribute to a more holistic understanding of the stakeholders involved and add an important dimension to the research aim: GELLs' views on what types of support GELLs need in school and in EFL settings. Utilising groups can allow researchers to gain meaningful data collectively; focus groups can create interesting atmospheres to stimulate participants to be involved in discussions of issues effectively (Morgan, 1997). The researcher believed that as the GELLs were teenagers (secondary learners) they may better express themselves in groups and encourage each other to speak, rather than be shy, not confident, or worried about expressing themselves. Morgan (1996) argues that generally the sufficient number of participants per group could be around five to ten. In this study, there were four focus group sessions held with groups of five GELLs each.

The focus group protocol included seven questions. The first three questions were aimed at finding out the types of support available to help GELLs improve their English language learning. The rest of the questions focused on the types of social and emotional support available for GELLs in the classrooms. The purpose was to establish the types of social and

emotional support the GELLs themselves considered necessary regarding their English language learning. The focus groups protocol is available in Appendix (5).

Despite the fact that interviews can provide comprehensive knowledge, the challenge is that different interviewees may understand and respond in different ways (Cooper and Schindler, 2003). The interview questions were designed to gain information about identification and support. In relation to this study, most of the identification and support questions were asked of both the EFL and head teachers to look more broadly beyond the classroom to explore if the outcomes of the findings were reflected in their own school context.

In relation to focus groups, Morgan (1988) and Krueger (1994) argue that it is difficult to assume whether the responses of participants are collective or individual. In this study, focus groups were conducted to investigate what kind of support GELLs were looking for. In support outcomes, it was not expected to investigate individual behaviour. It was accepted that everyone would have ideas and different responses because everyone has different needs.

This section outlined two of the main research tools employed in this study, qualitative interviews and focus groups, in order to gain in-depth information about views of head teachers, EFL teachers and GELLs regarding the state of GELLs in a Saudi context. The next section aims to explain the process of data analysis of these four sets of data tools; questionnaire, classroom observation, interviews and focus groups.

4.10 Data Analysis

After data collection, the main activity performed by the researcher was data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) outlined three main steps that can be used in data analysis: data preparation, data reduction, and finally analysis and reporting conclusions. Although they outlined these steps in relation to qualitative research, in this study, both quantitative and qualitative data analyses followed these three general steps.

Quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire was analysed as follows: first, the questionnaire data were fully translated from Arabic to English language. Afterward, all data were coded and entered into the database. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

software was used to enter and process all the questionnaire data. SPSS v16 was used in this study because it would be able to provide a descriptive statistical analysis technique to answer the first research question (examining EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs). By using descriptive statistics, a large set of data can be described and organised using tables and graphs in order to make decisions and reach conclusions (Vogt, 2005; Mann, 2010). In relation to this study, descriptive statistics was applied as a relevant tool to present the participating EFL teachers' attitudes in a structured way. Mann (2010) argues that in order to provide a data set in a numerical measure and obtain the central tendency of ungrouped data, a researcher could use the mean, median and mode of the data. The mode refers to the most frequent score in a data set (Mann, 2010). In this study, each item in the questionnaire was taken on its own to categorize data. Thus, the mode was used to measure central tendency to identify the most common category. The analysis of the data also included the frequency of each item.

The reliability of the collected data needed to be determined. Carver and Nash (2011) advised performing an internal consistency reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. For this study, the statistical analysis results indicated that the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha for the 20 items was 0.826. Since the threshold value of this test was 0.7, which is an acceptable threshold in most social sciences studies, the items had relatively high internal consistency (Kline, 2000; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000; Wasserman and Bracken, 2003; Hernon and Schwartz, 2009; Bryman and Cramar, 2011). Geake and Gross (2008) found that the reliability of the questionnaire that was used in their study to investigate attitudes towards teachers in England, Scotland and Australia, upon which the questionnaire used in the present study was based, was .90. Thus, the reliability of this study, which was 0.826, should be sufficient to indicate the internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Quantitative data gathered from the 10 classroom observations was analysed as follows: Preparing the data for observation was accomplished by fully translating all observation sheets from Arabic to English language. All data were coded and entered into the database. The SPSS software was used to enter and process all the observation data. Descriptive analysis, namely the mean, was applied in this observation analysis because this descriptive statistic was also used by the original authors of the COS-R (i.e., VanTassel-Baska, 2011), and this study replicated their process to allow comparisons to be made with previous literature and to place the current findings within the context of the wider body of knowledge. Second, reducing and analysing the data involved checking all observation sales

and subscales. Thus, descriptive statistics were used by collecting the means of each of observation scale and subscale to illustrate the effectiveness of teaching strategy used by EFL teachers (see chapter five).

The internal consistency reliability of the classroom observation data was indicated using the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha for the overall COS-R scale, which was .85, which should be accepted in most social sciences studies because values were above 0.7 (Kline, 2000; Wasserman and Bracken, 2003; Bryman and Cramer, 2011). In fact, a value between .70 and .80 is the reliability level that was recommended for using the COS-R by VanTassel-Baska et al. (2005).

The following analytical methods in this study were employed for the interviews and focus groups, which were expected to provide insight into the participants' views. Preparing qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were done by translating them in full from Arabic to English language. Afterward, all English copies were fully translated back to Arabic. To be familiar with the data, the researcher read the transcriptions many times. Afterward, *a priori* thematic data were identified and summarised; most of the themes were updated or broken down in the next step.

As described Smith (1999, 2004) and Smith et al. (2009), the qualitative interviews and focus groups followed interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA is an approach to qualitative research, which offers insights into how, in any given context, people make sense of a phenomenon that relates to their experiences (Smith, 1999, 2004; Smith et al., 2009). As the main objective of IPA is to explore in detail how participants make sense of their personal experiences and the social world (Smith and Osborn, 2008), this approach was considered as the most appropriate for this research because it intended to find the understanding of the experiences of giftedness, as it applies to learning a language that is not only foreign, but also culturally different. By using this approach, the researcher aimed to reflect her knowledge and interpretation of the data and focus on understanding the world of the KSA participants based on their culture, literature, and daily lives so as to make sense of their experiences.

In order to reduce and analyse the data, the researcher used a coding process that involved working closely and intensively with the transcribed data and annotating the data to search for insights into the participants' experiences. Thereafter, the emerging codes were

catalogued first, and then the patterns that emerged from the codes became the themes. Analysis of the data derived from the fieldwork was a semantic process based on analysis of themes after the coding process. The major focus, as asserted by Smith (1999) and Smith and Osborn (2008), was on the claims of the participants as well as the researcher's own interpretation of the meaning of those claims. Consequently, to enhance the researcher's understanding and get deep thinking of the data, the researcher developed themes for the EFL teachers, head teachers and GELLs data, organised them in the data were grouped, summarised, and tabulated. By doing this, the researcher became familiar with data, issues related to identification and support of GELLs and understand each theme individually. Throughout the analysis, quotations were used from the text as evidence to support the claims. From the themes, the conclusion was reported. All efforts were done to confirm meanings and ensure that the conclusions reached answered the questions of the study.

4.11 Pilot Study

The pilot study contributed as an approach to test the research tools (Baker, 1994). In this study, the main aims of conducting a pilot study were to discover any difficulties in questions or areas needing improvement before embarking on the main study. Approval was obtained from Glasgow University and the Ministry of Education in the KSA prior to access to the pilot school.

Connelly (2008) argue that a pilot study should use about 10% of the sample of the main project. In the current study, the interviews and focus group pilot study conducted with three EFL teachers, three head teachers, and four GELLs from one secondary school in Almadinah City. Although the pilot study was conducted on the most relevant members of the population, none of the findings from the pilot study were included in the final sample to avoid challenging the validity of the study findings. After examining the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, the researcher found that more clarification and examples could be used in the main study. For example, one of the questions for EFL teachers and head teachers was: Who identifies the student as a gifted English language learner in your school? Some examples were added to ensure clarity (i.e., general education coordinator, English teacher, parent nomination, other). Another interview item was: Tell me about the strategies you use to identify gifted English language learners in your school? Some examples were added (i.e., IQ test, teacher nomination, student's grades, clear guide from the ministry of education, student's behaviour in the class, other).

In addition, during the pilot study focus group, the researcher noticed that the GELLs were hesitant to respond to this question: What are the things that you want to change about your EFL teachers? The question was replaced by another set of parallel questions: What things do effective English language teachers do in their classrooms? If you were the English teacher, is there anything you would change during English language lessons? If so, what?

The questionnaires were piloted with 17 EFL teachers, and no changes were made to the research design on the basis of the outcomes of the pilot tests. The classroom observation pilot study was conducted in three different EFL classes. Each lesson had an observation team: the researcher (observer 1) and the district gifted coordinator from the Ministry of Education in the KSA (observer 2). During the classroom observation pilot, the EFL teachers were asked to provide a draft lesson plan—a request that was rejected by all of EFL teachers; on the basis of the request for this plan some of them refused to allow the observation team to attend the EFL class. To make sure the EFL teachers felt more relaxed and comfortable with the classroom observation sessions; this variable was excluded from the main classroom observation.

Secondly, during the classroom observations pilot study, it was apparent that one of the observation team (observer 2) was unclear about some of the scale's items. Thus, the researcher decided to discuss the background of the study, the objective of the classroom observation and reviewed the observation scales and items to check clarity of the instructions and the items before each classroom observation in the main study.

Conducting a pilot study also helped the researcher simulate the length of time that using the research tools would take: 45–60 minutes for interviews and focus groups, 30 minutes for questionnaires, and 45 minutes for classroom observation. This section outlined the pilot study and how this was expected to identify difficult areas needing improvement before embarking the main study.

4.12 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Merriam (2009) pointed out that addressing both validity and reliability is important in any study because data gathered in valid and reliable ways adds strength to the findings.

According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) validity refers “to the appropriateness, correctness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences researchers make based on the data they collect” (p. 158), and Ary et al. (1996) defined reliability as “the degree of the consistency with which it measures whatever it is measuring” (p. 268). According to Creswell (2004) and Johnson and Christensen (2004), the application of the mixed-method approach in a study could increase the validity of the study’s findings since any individual method gives a restricted view of the problem, so a mixed-method approach would allow valid interpretations. In particular, Dornyei (2007) claims that the triangulation of data collected from a mixed-methods approach could increase the validity of the interpretations, bringing different perspective from different data sources, which could increase rigor of the methodology. Calfee and Sperling (2010) also claim that using mixed methods approach would help to bring multiple perspectives from different sources of data and would increase the methodological rigor by utilizing multiple methods, which would help to present valid ‘story of reality’. In this study, a mixed method has been employed in an effort to overcome the limitations of a single design and to complement the strengths of a single design. Further, one of the important aims of using a mixed method is the triangulation strategy; a different source of data would allow the building up of one holistic body of data pertaining to the status of GELLs in Saudi context. The current study was also concerned with gaining a qualitative, fine-grained understanding of the experiences of teachers and GELLs, so increasing the study’s validity and reliability, particularly of the qualitative data, is important so that the findings can inform future practice. Thus, the data from the four research tools (questionnaire, observation and interview and focus group) complement each other.

Burns (2000) argue that to improve the reliability of a study, the instruments and the procedures of data collection used in the study should be clearly explained. Thus, to improve the reliability of this study, the instruments were explained to participants; the researcher confirmed that all instruments were clearly explained to participants before commencing the data-collection process. One copy of the English version of the instruments was reviewed by two native English speakers—one research supervisor, who is a specialist in Education and Gifted Education at Glasgow University; and another research supervisor and native English speaker, who is a specialist in Educational Psychology and Gifted Education at Glasgow University, who reviewed the second copy of the instruments and also this English copy reviewed by ethics committee.

4.13 Synthesis of the Chapter

Chapter four has explained the rationale of using a mixed-methods approach in this study, which is an approach that helped attain the main aim of exploring the experiences of GELLs in the Saudi context. It attempted to explain the design research tools and how these research tools helped to investigate the main aims of the current study. Primary data were gathered by means of a quantitative questionnaire to help to gain a sample of EFL teachers and assess their attitudes toward GELLs. Classroom observations helped to provide quantitative evidence from inside EFL classes, which could help to establish teaching practices with GELLs within a Saudi context. Qualitative interviews and focus groups conducted with EFL teachers, head teachers, and GELLs helped this study to explore in depth the views and beliefs toward GELLs. These four main research tools should triangulate to compare different sources of data, increasing their validity and supporting the report's conclusion about GELLs experiences in the KSA. The next chapter describes how the data obtained in the field were analysed.

Chapter Five: Analysis of the Quantitative Data (Questionnaire and Classroom Observation)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five is the first chapter in this study that reports on the analysis of the data. This chapter reports on the analysis of the quantitative data gathered from educators within the education system of the KSA and concentrates on different aspects of teaching EFL to gifted learners. The data has been analysed and guided by four key research questions, namely:

1. What are the attitudes of English as foreign language teachers towards gifted English language learners in Saudi school and classroom settings?
2. How do English as foreign language teachers' differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of gifted English language learners in their classrooms?
3. How do head teachers and English as foreign language teachers identify gifted English language learners in regular Saudi classrooms and schools?
4. What are the views of English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners on what support gifted English language learners need in school generally and in English as foreign language classroom specifically?

The analysis in this chapter includes data obtained from: a) the questionnaire, which was completed by 100 EFL teachers providing 200 item responses and b) classrooms observation of 10 EFL classes in six selected Saudi female secondary schools which provided 250 item responses.

5.2 The Findings of the Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to investigate the first research question of this study, which focused on examining EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs. As discussed in the

methodology chapter (See Chapter 4), the questionnaire was adapted from Geake and Gross (2008).

Table (1) provides the EFL teachers' responses to each item on the questionnaire (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree) using the modes to illustrate the most frequent score among EFL teachers' responses.

Table 1. EFL teachers' mode responses to the Questionnaire of the EFL Teachers' Attitudes

Items	Mode
GELs have advanced comprehension.	4
GELs are verbally articulate.	4
GELs dominate discussions.	4
GELs have unusual interests.	4
GELs are brighter than most adults.	4
GELs are disrespectful of authority.	2
GELs are creative thinkers.	4
GELs make friends easily.	4
GELs are perceived by others as elitist, superior or too critical.	4
GELs can find original relationships between ideas.	4
GELs have unusual sensitivity to the feelings of others.	2
GELs deserve special treatment by society at large.	5
GELs have a keen sense of humour.	4
GELs are insensitive to hurting the feelings of others.	2
GELs can see diverse relationships among ideas.	4
GELs can remember a large store of information.	4
GELs keep to themselves socially.	2
GELs have high expectations of others.	5
GELs are natural leaders.	4
GELs would make good schoolteachers.	4

Generally, according to Table 1 the findings demonstrated that 'the beliefs that GELs deserve special treatment by society at large' and that GELs 'have high expectations of others' had the highest frequency scores among EFL teachers' responses. The beliefs that

GELLs are insensitive to hurting the feelings of others, GELLs are disrespectful of authority and GELLs keep to themselves socially had the lowest frequency score among EFL teachers' responses.

5.2.1 Cognitive Ability

In the current study, the first investigated item relating to cognitive ability was advanced comprehension. There was significant agreement among the EFL teachers that GELLs have advanced comprehension, with 56% agreeing and 22% strongly agreeing with this statement and with only 20% of the participants disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this statement. Although Saudi teachers are employed to deliver specific subjects, these teachers play a key role in assessing learners, delivering the objectives of the curriculum, preparing examinations that reflect learners' comprehension and recognising any cognitive abilities of learners within regular classes. Therefore, EFL teachers may have noticed some characteristics of advanced comprehension among GELLs. The participating EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs' cognitive abilities are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLs' Cognitive Abilities

Items	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
GELLs have advanced comprehension.	3	17	2	56	22
GELLs are considered to be verbally articulate.	0	23	2	64	11
GELLs are creative thinkers.	10	10	5	61	14
GELLs are perceived as elitist, superior or too critical.	15	15	6	57	7
GELLs are brighter than most adults.	10	19	3	60	8
GELLs can see diverse relationships among ideas.	5	20	5	51	19
GELLs can find original relationships between ideas.	3	24	4	56	13
GELLs have an unusual sense of humour.	5	32	15	41	7
GELLs can remember a large store of information.	0	34	5	51	10
GELLs have unusual interests.	7	11	6	58	18

SD: strongly disagree, D: disagree, N: neither agree nor disagree, A: agree, SA: strongly agree (No. = 100 EFL teachers).

The data from this study revealed that three-quarters of participants agreed that GELLs are considered to be verbally articulate. The possible reason for this high degree of agreement among participants could be that EFL teachers are teaching GELLs who are trying to develop verbal abilities in two languages (Arabic and English)—Arabic for their own home use and English for school (where some English language vocabulary can sound unfamiliar to some EFL learners). As a result, EFL teachers may consider GELLs to be especially verbally articulated. Gross (2004) supported this notion, arguing that such bilingual situations may lead to increased verbal articulation among gifted learners in general.

The data also showed that 61% of the participants considered GELLs to be creative thinkers, with 14% of participants strongly agreeing that GELLs are creative thinkers. One possible explanation for these results is that the participants believed creative thinking to be one of the important characteristics of gifted learners. One of the supporters of this perspective is Renzulli (1977, 1978, 2005) who through his Three-Ring model viewed giftedness as the interaction of three characteristics: creativity, task commitment and well above-average ability, each of which significantly affects the development of giftedness. Renzulli's model has been adopted in some gifted programme in the KSA, thus, these EFL teachers might be influenced by how this model views giftedness.

More than half of the questionnaire respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that GELLs were perceived as elitist, superior or too critical. Only 30% of EFL teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this notion. This view was also shared by some of the head teachers who were interviewed, who thought of GELLs as elitist and superior. At the same time, 68% of participants agreed that GELLs are brighter than other EFL learners. The possible reason for these perceptions could be that GELLs show higher performance capability in specific academic fields (English language ability) and that such abilities are more remarkable than those of GELLs' peers. EFL learners receive minimal attention or support for the improvement of their abilities because of the focus on maths and science in the KSA, as discussed in chapter two.

In the questionnaires, 70% of the participants agreed that GELLs could find links between ideas in EFL settings. Furthermore, the data indicated that more than half of the EFL teacher participants agreed that GELLs have the ability to establish relationships between unrelated ideas. GELLs' potential ability to see relationships between Arabic and English could make

them more engaged in EFL classes. Even if one of the common features of gifted learners is that they can easily notice unusual and diverse relationships between unrelated ideas, this characteristic is not found in all gifted learners, as asserted by Luna (2005). The fact that this characteristic is not universal among GELLs could explain why 27% of participants did not agree that GELLs can establish relationships between unrelated ideas. GELLs' ability to establish links between Arabic and English in EFL classes may also be affected by low motivation in EFL classes because the curriculum neither focuses on their daily lives nor encourages their abilities, as the focus group sessions revealed (these focus groups are discussed in detail in chapter six). This explanation is also supported by Gottfried and Gottfried (2004), who noted that gifted learners can establish links between ideas and discover the relationship between them; gifted learners are able to find relationships between loosely connected ideas easily. These EFL teachers' views echo those of Farh (2010), who drew attention to some of the problems associated with the EFL programmes that occur in the Arab world (including the KSA) related to low motivation in EFL curriculum, which is generally not related to EFL learners' daily lives.

In the current study, 48% of EFL teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that GELLs have an unusual sense of humour, while 37% of the EFL teachers felt that GELLs were not as humorous as they have been labelled. There was less agreement with this statement than with the preceding statements. This lowered level of agreement compared by the previous investigated item may be because EFL teachers find it difficult to notice the humour of GELLs. Ford (2010) stated that humour is not easily noticeable by teachers. Noticing the humour of learners is likely even more difficult in EFL classes than in normal classrooms in the Saudi context because many GELLs feel shy and are not confident in expressing themselves in English language. This fact was confirmed by many GELLs in the focus group sessions in this study (See Chapter 6). In support of this argument, VanTassel-Baska et al. (2004) stated that gifted learners could experience considerable difficulties communicating with peers; these learners' lack of contact makes them shy and unlikely to demonstrate a sense of humour explicitly. Therefore, the fact that less than 50% of participants have not noticed an unusual sense of humour from their EFL learners is expected.

More than half of the participants agreed that GELLs were able to store large amounts of information. Storing and recalling information in English could be challenging for EFL learners in the Saudi context; Arabic is still considered to be the official language in the

country, but English is a foreign language that is not used in EFL learners' daily lives (see urRahman and Alhaisoni, 2013). Clark (2001) and Davis and Rimm (2004) argue that gifted learners may possess an outstanding memory that allows them to store and recall information.

This study found that 58% of the participants agreed and 18% strongly agreed that GELLs possess unusual interests. The high percentage of EFL teachers who agreed with the statement could be based on the cultural context of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a country where the Arabic language dominates, and in this country, one can function without the use of any other language, which was asserted by Karmani (2005). Therefore, a learner who shows interest in English might be considered unusual. Another possible reason for these results could be that the current EFL curriculum does not motivate or interest GELLs. This fact could be understood by EFL teachers, as was noted in the interview session with EFL teachers, and by many GELLs, who want to have interesting topics (will discuss in details in Chapter 6). In fact, numerous studies have reported that gifted learners have advanced interests and that their motivation needs to be addressed (Davis and Rimm, 2004; Powell and Siegle, 2004; Subotnik et al., 2011). These interests could differentiate the styles of learning by gifted learners and their peers (Powell and Siegle, 2004). In fact, a study conducted by Aliza and Hamidah (2009) in Malaysia identified difficulties among GELLs related to day-to-day classroom activities. This study found that GELLs are interested in reading materials that are considered difficult for the GELLs' age, show great interest in science and literature, show ingenuity in expressing themselves through speech and writing, learn new topics quickly and effortlessly, use a great variety of vocabulary in their speech and writing, ask a lot of questions and display high concentration levels. Furthermore, Kamarulzaman et al. (2013) presented the findings from a study on GELLs in which some of the common difficulties with learning English in Malaysia were investigated. Most of the identified problems were related to spoken English and a lack of confidence in normal conversations, which are not relevant or of interest to learners. According to Kamarulzaman et al. (2013), developing suitable and communicative education environment and providing relevant and interesting content would help GELLs reach their language learning potential. Consequently, when teaching GELLs, an important strategy may be to address these interests according to their needs and abilities in order to ensure the GELLs' success.

5.2.2 Social Issues

In the questionnaire, 63% of the participants agreed (with 37% strongly agreeing and 26% agreeing) that GELLs should be offered special treatment by society in order to address GELLs' social problems. As mentioned in chapter one, Islam views giftedness as an innate ability that needs to be supported by society (Alamer, 2010; Adas, 1998). Since the KSA is a totally Islamic country, these EFL teachers may be influenced by this Islamic conception of giftedness and by this conception's emphasis on the role of society to improve gifted learners' abilities. As mentioned in chapter two, the Ministry of Education and MAWHIBA established many Centres for Gifted Education around the KSA to support and improve gifted learners' abilities. The Ministry also established the General Administration for Gifted Students to manage gifted education programmes across the KSA in order to identify and support gifted learners (MAWHIBA, 2007; Alwasruh, 2005; Bushnak, 2007). Thus, the EFL teachers who agreed with the idea that GELLs should be offered special treatment by society may have been influenced by the special treatment that Saudi society gives to gifted learners through the MAWHIBA programme. The outcomes of the analysis of EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs' social issues are summarised in Table 3, which shows that the participating EFL teachers had a range of views regarding the potential social issues faced by GELLs. There were no strong consistent views expressed but rather a range of differing views.

Table 3. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLs' Social Issues

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
GELLs deserve special treatment by society at large.	0	29	8	26	37
GELLs can make friends very easily.	18	17	7	46	12
GELLs have unusual sensitivity to the feelings of others.	0	36	8	34	22
GELLs are insensitive to hurting the feelings of others.	15	33	10	24	18
GELLs keep to themselves socially.	13	34	14	22	17
GELLs have high expectations of others.	7	26	10	27	30

SD: strongly disagree, D: disagree, N: neither agree nor disagree, A: agree, SA: strongly agree (No. = 100 EFL teachers).

Bain et al. (2010) argue that gifted learners sometimes face social difficulties, especially establishing friendships with peers. The outcome of this questionnaire analysis indicated that 46% of the participants thought that GELs could make friends very easily but that 35% of EFL teachers disagreed with this statement. While the KSA is a rich Islamic country, this characteristic does not preclude the existence of poor minority or socially troubled families with gifted children. As described by Gottfried and Gottfried (2004), a learner's social background (with poverty being considered a social factor) may negatively influence a learner's self-expectations, which enable them to establish friendships easily. Therefore, the social background of some GELs may account for the participating EFL teachers' perception that these GELs sometimes face social difficulties. Another possible reason for this wide range of views may be that GELs struggle with the social areas related to the unique features of their personalities, as argued by Webb et al. (2007). The participating EFL teachers may have noticed some of these social difficulties among GELs, which may have accounted for their responses to this statement.

Further, the questionnaire results showed that 34% of participants agreed and 22% strongly agreed that GELs were sensitive when dealing with others. The possible reason here could be the sensitivity to using EFL in the KSA. Using two languages of different statuses has been a challenge in the KSA; the major difficulties that EFL learners have faced in Saudi schools were the differences in morphology and syntax between the Arabic and English languages. As a result, EFL learners may be shy and under confident. Thus, they could be sensitive in dealing with others in using English or making mistakes in front of their peers and their EFL teachers. This view was clearly shared by many GELs during the focus group sessions; they hoped to have more freedom to express themselves because they feel sensitive and shy about making mistakes in EFL classes (these will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6). This also could be the reason why 39 % of EFL teachers thought that GELs keep to themselves socially. In general, Bain et al. (2010) considered sensitivity to be a characteristic of gifted learners, arguing that such learners may be bright but sensitive and keep to themselves socially.

Finally, the questionnaire results showed that 55% of EFL teachers thought that GELs have high expectations of others. The possible reason for these high expectations could be GELs current situation in the KSA classes. Many GELs in the focus group sessions confirmed that they expect more from EFL classes (such as interesting and relevant topics and

resources) (See Chapter 6). Even though EFL teachers are often unable to meet the expectations of GELLs due to the limited resources available for these classes, the teachers' responses to this statement indicate that these teachers understand these expectations.

5.2.3 Leadership

From the questionnaire data, there was no agreement between EFL teachers about whether GELLs were natural leaders; 51% of participants agreed and 49% disagreed. An explanation of these results could be that EFL teachers may have noted that these leadership characteristics do not appear in all gifted learners; instead, leadership was a feature that could appear in some of them. These characteristics were investigated in this study using the questionnaire, and the outcomes of this questionnaire are summarised in Table 4, which indicates that the EFL teachers had a range of views about leadership and no clear, strong, and consistent view was shared among the participants.

Table 4. Rates of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards GELLs' Leadership

Item	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
GELLs are naturally leaders.	7	42	0	44	7
GELLs dominate discussions.	3	21	7	54	15
GELLs would become good schoolteachers.	21	24	14	41	0
GELLs are disrespectful to authority.	14	32	15	23	16

SD: strongly disagree, D: disagree, N: neither agree nor disagree, A: agree, SA: strongly agree (No. = 100 EFL teachers)

Another item investigated through the questionnaire in this study was the tendency to dominate discussions. The percentage of participants who agreed with this statement was quite high (69%). The participating EFL teachers may have found GELLs to have higher levels of knowledge in EFL classes, which could be characterised by the domination of classroom discussions; GELLs who were comparatively more competent in English than their peers could also sometimes be more competent in English than their EFL teachers. The ability to use a language that others find difficult may be described as domination by EFL teachers. In addition, gifted learners may express characteristics that teachers sometime find annoying, such as speaking too much in discussions, using humour in the classroom and

asking difficult questions (Swassing, 1985).

In the same vein, some EFL teachers thought that GELLs are disrespectful to authority (32%) and 46% of them disagreed with this statement. In fact, disrespecting authority and disrespecting teachers is against Islamic culture (Khan, 2014). The possible explanation is that culturally, EFL teachers have a deep concern about antisocial behaviour; and as such gifted learners' uniqueness and unusual behaviour may be interpreted as disrespectful as noted by Geake and Gross (2008). It implies that gifted learners need to be guided and motivated to help them with their social and emotional problems, which may be seen as disrespect of authority (Geake and Gross, 2008).

The participants who disagreed that GELLs would make good teachers totalled 45%, but 41% of participants agreed with this idea. GELLs' competency with English language and in other subjects seems to have been interpreted by the 41% of study participants as an indicator of the potential to be good teachers. Arguably, gifted learners could face challenges when trying to socialise with other learners, which may be the reason some participants (45%) felt that GELLs might not make good schoolteachers.

The previous sections presented the analysis of the EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs in the participating Saudi schools. The outcome of questionnaire data showed that many EFL teachers predominantly hold positive attitudes towards GELLs. Among the three themes discussed above, it is clear that those EFL teachers had highest positive attitudes towards GELLs' cognitive abilities, they may be find social and leadership issues a challenge. The next sections provide an analysis of the classroom observation conducted in 10 EFL classes.

5.3 The Findings of the Classroom Observation

The classroom observations were conducted in order to investigate the second research question of this study, which focused on how EFL teachers differentiate their teaching instruction in EFL classrooms in order to maximise the abilities of GELLs. The analysis of the data obtained from this classroom observation was intended to establish the instructional strategies of EFL teachers in relation to expectations from best practices in both gifted education classrooms and mainstream classrooms. The main focus of these classroom observations was the assessment of the prevalence of best teaching practices in EFL classes rather than the evaluation of individual EFL teachers. In this study, the classroom

observation method, gathered from 10 EFL classes, was adapted from the original method developed by VanTassel-Baska et al. (2003), known as the Classroom Observation Scale—Revised (COS-R). As discussed in chapter 4, observer 1 (the researcher) results were analysed and discussed in this study.

The findings of the classroom observations established that the curriculum planning and delivery scale had a higher mean than the other five scales (2.4) (see table 5), which means that this scale represented the most relevant teaching behaviour used by EFL teachers. In comparison, the critical thinking strategies and the research strategies scales had the lowest means (1.6 each), meaning that these scales were the least relevant teaching behaviour observed across these 10 EFL classrooms. Table 5 presents the mean result of each scale.

Table 5. Mean Scores of the Classroom Observation Scales

Scale	Mean
Curriculum Planning and Delivery	2.4
Accommodations for Individual Differences	1.8
Problem Solving	1.9
Critical Thinking Strategies	1.6
Creative Thinking Strategies	1.8
Research Strategies	1.6

The first scale was used to assess curriculum planning and delivery, and this scale contained five subscales (See Table 6). EFL teachers' attempt to encourage EFL learners to express their thoughts in EFL classes had the higher mean (2.3). These EFL teachers may have noticed the need of EFL learners to express themselves in English, which was also asserted as being an important need for GELLs in the GELL focus group sessions (See Chapter 6 for more details). These results indicate that some EFL teachers understood this need and tried to address it in the classroom. The outcomes of the data analysis of these results indicated that the next-most relevant teaching strategy observed was helping EFL learners reflect on what they learned (the mean 2.2) and engaging EFL learners in planning, monitoring or assessing their learning (the mean 2).

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics Results of Curriculum Planning and Delivery Scale

Subscale	Mean effectiveness(1– 3)	Std. Deviation
1. Set high expectations for EFL learners' performance.	1.9	0.9
2. Incorporated activities for EFL learners to apply new knowledge.	1.8	0.9
3. Engaged EFL learners in planning, monitoring or assessing their learning.	2	1.1
4. Encouraged EFL learners to express their thoughts.	2.3	0.8
5. Had EFL learners reflect on what they had learned.	2.2	0.8

The next scale addressed EFL teachers' accommodation of individual differences between EFL learners. With this scale, the highest mean score was linked to observed opportunities for individual or group learning (the mean 2). This result indicated that EFLs were observed to be provided with some opportunities for independent or group learning to promote an in-depth understanding of EFL content during the 10 EFL classes (see table 7). These outcomes could be explained by EFL teachers giving EFL learners a degree of freedom to learn according to their abilities either in a group or individually, which was indicated as a need by GELLs in the focus group sessions (will discuss in depth in Chapter 6). GELLs often feel shy and unconfident when speaking English in front of their peers or in front of the class. This need might have been understood by some of the participating EFL teachers, who gave learners the opportunity to learn according to their different abilities. EFL teachers allowed EFL learners to discover key ideas individually through structured activities or questions (the mean 1.9).

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics Results of Accommodations for Individual Differences Scale

Subscale	Mean effectiveness (1–3)	Std. Deviation
6. Provided opportunities for independent or group learning to promote depth in understanding content.	2	1.1
7. Accommodated individual or subgroup differences	1.5	1
8. Encouraged multiple interpretations of events and situations.	1.6	1
9. Allowed EFL learners to discover key ideas individually through structured activities or questions.	1.9	0.6

The third scale was related to problem solving. The uses of the subscales on this scale were not very relevant in the EFL classes. The possible reason for this lack of relevance is that, as pointed out by VanTassel-Baska (2011), problem-based learning is usually used in science classes and is not usually utilised when learning a language. In a study similar to the present study that combined many subject areas (language, science and arts), VanTassel-Baska (2011) found the use of the subscales on this scale to be irrelevant. In this study, the highest mean in this scale related to engaging EFL learners in solution-finding activities and comprehensive solution articulation was 2 (see table 8).

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics Results of Problem Solving Scale

Subscale	Mean effectiveness (1–3)	Std. Deviation
10. Employed brainstorming techniques.	1.7	0.8
11. Engaged EFL learners in problem identification and definition.	1.9	1
12. Engaged EFL learners in solution-finding activities and comprehensive solution articulation.	2	0.7

Critical thinking strategy was the fourth scale used in this classroom observation, and this scale was considered to be the least relevant strategy (with a mean of 1.6) in this study. The

highest mean in this scale was the encouragement of EFL learners to judge or evaluate situations, problems or issues (1.8). The second highest mean in this scale was the encouragement of EFL learners' synthesis or summary of information within or across disciplines (1.7).

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics Results of Critical Thinking Strategies Scale

Subscale	Mean effectiveness (1–3)	Std. Deviation
13. Encouraged EFL learners to judge or evaluate situations, problems or issues.	1.8	1
14. Engaged EFL learners in comparing and contrasting ideas.	1.3	0.9
15. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to generalize from concrete data or information to the abstract.	1.5	0.5
16. Encouraged EFL learners' synthesis or summary of information within or across disciplines.	1.7	0.7

The fifth scale was related to creative thinking strategies. The highest mean on this scale in the participating classrooms was the provision of opportunities for EFL learners to develop and elaborate on their ideas (2.2) see table (10). The results of this scale in the present study may indicate that some EFL teachers gave their EFL learners the chance to improve their ideas in either Arabic or English in EFL classes.

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics Results of Creative Thinking Strategies Scale

Scale and Subscale	Mean effectiveness (1–3)	Std. Deviation
17. Solicited many diverse thoughts about issues or ideas.	1.8	0.9
18. Engaged EFL learners in the exploration of diverse points of view to reframe ideas.	1.6	1

19. Encouraged EFL learners to demonstrate open-mindedness and tolerance of imaginative, sometimes playful solutions to problems.	1.7	0.8
20. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to develop and elaborate on their ideas	2.2	0.8

The last scale, research strategies, contained the lowest mean score among the participating EFL classrooms. The reason for this low score could be that projects that require a degree of independence or have opportunities for innovation are usually given only to learners who have been identified as gifted in science areas in the KSA (Ministry of Education, 1998). However, providing time for EFL learners to communicate research study findings to relevant audiences in a formal report or presentation had the higher mean (2) see table (11).

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics Results of Research Strategies Scale

Subscale	Mean effectiveness (1–3)	Std. Deviation
21. Required EFL learners to gather evidence from multiple sources through research-based techniques.	1.7	1.1
22. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to analyse data and represent it in appropriate charts, graphs or tables.	1.5	0.7
23. Asked questions to assist EFL learners in making inferences from data and drawing conclusions	1.4	0.8
24. Encouraged EFL learners to determine the implications and consequences of findings.	1.6	0.8
25. Provided time for EFL learners to communicate research study findings to relevant audiences in a formal report or presentation.	2	1.1

In conclusion, the curriculum planning and delivery scale had the highest mean (2.4) of all six scales, which indicates that the behaviours assessed by this scale were the most commonly teaching behaviours used by the observed EFL teachers. The critical thinking strategies and the research strategies scales had the lowest mean (1.6), meaning that the

strategies assessed by this scale were the least relevant strategies among the observed strategies. Despite the fact that some of the observed teaching strategies were more relevant than others, VanTassel-Baska (2011) claims that a mean less than 3 for each scale indicates that the behaviours assessed by the six scales need development. In this study, all the scales had a mean below 3. That means teaching strategies used by EFL teachers in EFL classes in the KSA may not be relevant in differentiating instructional practices and strategies as a result need improvement.

5.4 Synthesis of the Chapter

The analysis of the questionnaire data indicated that EFL teachers generally hold positive attitudes towards GELLs within EFL classes in so far as they acknowledge they are aware of them as a potential group within the class. For example, participating EFL teachers viewed GELLs as deserving special treatment by society at large, having very high comprehension and unusual individual interests. In the analysis of the results of the classroom observation, the strategies assessed by the curriculum planning and delivery scale were rated as the most commonly used teaching behaviours, while critical thinking strategies and research strategies were the least relevant teaching behaviours used by EFL teachers in EFL classes. This result emphasises the need for the development of the use of specific strengths of teachers in the classroom, and this development needs to be incorporated with their initial teacher training, their continued professional development and their everyday practices in the classroom. Both the questionnaire and classroom observation analysis are discussed more fully in terms of their implications and their relationship to the qualitative findings in Chapter seven.

Chapter Six: Analysis of the Qualitative Data

(Interviews and Focus Groups)

6.1 Introduction

Chapter six reports on the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from learners and educators within the education system of the KSA and concentrates on different aspects of teaching EFL to gifted learners. The data is analysed and guided by four key research questions, namely:

1. What are the attitudes of English as foreign language teachers towards gifted English language learners in Saudi school and classroom settings?
2. How do English as foreign language teachers' differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of gifted English language learners in their classrooms?
3. How do head teachers and English as foreign language teachers identify gifted English language learners in regular Saudi classrooms and schools?
4. What are the views of English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners on what support gifted English language learners need in school generally and in English as foreign language classroom specifically?

6.2 Emerging Themes from Head Teachers

The interviews with head teachers in this study were primarily focused around a) the meaning of giftedness as it relates to English language learning b) the identification of GELLs and c) the head teachers' administrative roles in supporting GELLs once they have been identified. The purpose here was to establish the head teachers' views in respect of GELLs, how they understand and support their GELLs' needs and whether or not they feel the existing identification strategies are adequate and effective to support them in their remit as school managers. The data derived from the interview sessions conducted with head

teachers evidenced a number of key themes including, government policy limitation, the power of the KSA teachers in decision-making, authority and the influence of examinations.

Previous literature stated that teachers are expected to act in accordance with internal policies, which have been developed by school managers, as well as adhering to governmental regulations (Geake and Gross, 2008). In accordance with this, schools in the KSA have a responsibility to identify and support gifted learners, Saudi schools are equally responsible for ensuring that no gifted learners are disadvantaged or excluded (Al Saif, 1999; Al-Ghamdi, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). Taking these factors into consideration, a key aim of this study was to examine the views, beliefs and understanding of the school administrative sector about GELLs represented by head teachers, and to analyse the interaction between EFL teachers and head teachers in educational experiences regarding GELLs.

6.2.1 Government Policy Limitations

In 2016, Prince Mohammed bin Salman introduced a new vision, known as Vision 2030, in order to establish a better future for Saudi citizens. One of the main aims of this vision is to generate a flourishing economy. In particular, educational requirements need to be consistently aligned throughout the country. This means that the education system in the KSA as a whole will be restructured according to economic and market needs at the end of 2030 (Vision 2030 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2016). This vision has the potential to either be limited to increasing only the number of STEM graduates in the KSA, or it could lead to a more widespread understanding that gifted learners may demonstrate high capabilities in different areas, including math, art and language, which could increase support for GELLs.

In order to restructure the educational system within the KSA, clear educational policies (including policies related to gifted learners) must be defined. One of the finding that emerge from the interviews with head teachers related to the clearly defined governmental policies and goals relating to GELLs in the KSA. Effective policy planning and management are the key elements that allow the development of successful strategies for the identification and support of gifted learners (Winebrenner and Brulles, 2012). In relation to this, the head teachers interviewed in this study were asked about any barriers they have encountered in the process of effectively identifying GELLs in their schools. Some stated that there are no

agreed-upon or official strategies to identify GELLs; instead, each EFL teacher is required to use their own strategies:

Subjective judgment and experience and different staff within a given subject area might have contrasting judgments of the same student, so we need clear criteria to follow to identify and help gifted students in an objective way. (HTs6/008)

We lack agreed-upon criteria regarding gifted education. They may have this in other Saudi schools for all subjects and especially for the English language, but we don't have it in this school. (HTs9/008)

We are supposed to identify gifted students by percentage. For example, in our school we have stated that we have 40% of gifted students in all the secondary stages of our school. However, I actually believe that we only have one or two gifted students in school. (HTs10/008)

These head teachers asserted that EFL teachers rely on their own assessment strategies to identify GELLs in their schools with no clear criteria or official strategies, which makes the identification process subjective and not standardised and produces variations between and within schools. This finding parallels findings by Al Qarni (2010) and Aljughaiman and Grigorenko (2013), who argue that there are no agreed criteria or strategies for the identification of gifted learners among Saudi schools. The general feeling among some of the head teachers indicted that there are doubts about the number of learners who have been identified as gifted in Saudi schools. This doubt could be the result of the increased number of learners being identified as a gifted in the last few years. For example, the number of learners labelled as gifted increased from 66,000 in 2007 to 80,000 in 2009 (Alqefari, 2010; Al Qarni, 2010). There is nothing wrong with these figures if these learners had been identified by appropriate identification methods, by qualified staff and through agreed-upon and official strategies. But there are some concerns about identification methods used in the KSA. Al Nafa'a (2000) and Al Qarni (2010) pointed out that some of these concerns were related to identification methods used in the KSA and to the perceived inability of the government to apply scientific standards and testing related to Saudi culture to the topic. In response, some Saudi studies (see, for example, Al Nafa'a 2000; Al Qarni, 2010; Alamer, 2010) argue that the KSA should consider whether it needs to modify its gifted education system according to scientific standards and according to its own cultural and societal needs.

Consequently, when head teachers were asked to comment on whether there is a clear official plan arrangement to continuously identify and support GELLs in their schools and within their EFL classes, all head teachers interviewed reported that there is no a clear plan to identify and support GELLs:

*I haven't heard about any plan from anyone responsible or a decision-maker.
(HTs1/006)*

*We don't have any plan from the Ministry to improve gifted English language learners.
We do not have any programme for gifted English language learners. (HTs7/006)*

There are no plans. (HTs9/006)

We don't have any plan from the Ministry, I am not sure if teachers prepare plans for the students, but they are not required to do so. (HTs10/006)

No such plans. It is only the teachers' efforts. (HTs4/006)

Many of the comments made by the participants in this study implied that GELL education is still considered to be in an early stage and that no further steps are given to these schools to recognise and support GELLs. Although governmental policies have been formulated and developed to support all gifted learners in all areas (including English), these policies have focused primarily on applied science. These policies do not provide EFL teachers with necessary tools, guidelines or even training to help with the process of identification while simultaneously requiring the submission of a list of gifted learners. Here, one can see how the government's policies contrast with the practicalities in schools. This was also asserted by Bushnak (2007) and Aljughaiman Grigorenko (2013), who both point out that the Saudi Ministry of Education and KACGC have not yet established a clear set of regulations for all schools or developed a gifted programme to meet the needs of gifted learners in all areas and for both genders.

The general feeling of most of the interviewed head teachers was that as a subject English language was receiving unequal attention from the KSA government through the creation of

MAWHIBA programmes for mathematics and science without the creation of such programmes for English language learning:

*There is no plan, but we have a lot (of plans) for maths and science subjects.
(HTs3/006)*

We have a lot for science but nothing on English and the arts. (HTs6/006)

*I am not sure if the plan is important for the English subject because we do not have
any plan from the Ministry to improve gifted English language learners. (HTs7/006)*

The interviewed head teachers stated that gifted education in the KSA ignores English area as a subject. GELLs were not provided with the necessary educational plans, programmes and services required to support their abilities. This possibly happened because the main focus of gifted programmes has been subjects that are important for the labour market and that emphasise the benefits that STEM graduates bring to the KSA's economy. The industries that have provided the opportunities for the greatest economic productivity employ a significant number of STEM graduates. This is a universal issue, and this situation resembles the STEM subject policies of many developed countries, which have been keen to increase the number of learners STEM disciplines while cutting spending on other courses (See for example Augustine, 2007; Sanders, 2009).

The data collected from the field of the current study has presented ample evidence to show that the KSA policies regarding GELLs have several limitations. The first limitation is related to lack of clarity. An effective regulations and goals need to be clearly defined, communicated and backed up by sound arrangements in order to be practicable. Furthermore, the issue of identifying GELLs from EFL classroom does not receive scrupulous attention from the authorities. The findings of the current study confirmed, as proposed in chapter two, that gifted education in the KSA relies on the natural science subjects and does not give due cognisance to other gifted learners. This results in the implementation of potentially ineffective and inappropriate policies, which are unable to ensure the smooth running of gifted education in general and GELLs in particular.

6.2.2 Decision-Making and the Power of Teachers in the KSA

A common theme that emerged from the interviews with the head teachers related to how teachers are viewed in Saudi Arabian culture. Many of the participants' comments portrayed KSA teachers as powerful figures in making decisions in the classroom. The head teachers of participating schools clearly felt that the classroom teacher was the key authority in the process of deciding who was a gifted learner (in English or any other subject). For example, when participants were asked about the strategies they use to identify GELLs in their school (e.g., IQ tests, teacher nominations and/or students' behaviour in class), they replied as follows:

Not sure. You can ask the teachers. I am here doing office work only and not teaching.
(HTs1/004)

Teachers' nomination is enough. (HTs10/004)

When asked about the support that their schools provided once learners had been identified as a GELLs, HTs9 responded;

As a head teacher, there is nothing I can help them [gifted learners] with. That is something that should come from the teachers, the Ministry or their family. (HTs9/007)

When asked who identifies learners as a GELLs in her school, HTs3 replied their EFL teachers were responsible for GELL identification, and when she was asked if she agreed with this identification method, she replied:

It is the only way we can decide whether the student is gifted or not. (HTs3/005)

Head teachers clearly asserted that EFL teachers were best placed to know the characteristics and features of GELLs. Head teachers also suggest that the EFL teacher was the only person who was responsible for monitoring and identifying gifted learners. This theme was common among many of the head teachers who participated in the study. In fact, many head teachers confirmed that they do not have to know about the identification strategies for gifted learners (including GELLs) applied in their schools as this was the teacher's role. Head teachers might not know how to apply these strategies themselves, or they might not have been taught

how to deal with these strategies. These findings are consistent with the fact that the General Administration for Gifted Students in Saudi Arabia considers teacher identification as an important factor in identifying gifted learners, even if previous research indicates that teachers have no official strategies in place to identify gifted learners or support them within regular classrooms (Al Qarni, 2010).

The data collected from the field of the current study portrays certain contradictions in the process of identifying GELLs in the KSA. Normally, the strategies used in the KSA schools are based on the Ministry of Education's definition; learners are required to meet at least three of the above criteria to be labelled as "gifted." Those who fit these criteria are supposed to be enrolled into centres administered by the MAWHIBA Gifted Programmes (Aljughaiman and Grigorenko, 2013). In practice, the findings of the current study indicate that the identification process within these Saudi schools varies from school to school. Some schools use achievement test scores while others use learners' general ability tests or the WISC-R. While many schools rely on teacher identification as the only method to identify gifted learners. Therefore, it was important to investigate whether head teachers accepted the identification strategies used by their EFL teachers. In this study, many of the head teachers who were interviewed agreed with the strategies that their EFL teachers used to identify GELLs:

Observing and recording how children deal with challenges and creative tasks given by the teacher is an important criterion and is fair enough to follow in identification. (HTs7/005)

I think the teacher can use the best strategies, as it is their responsibility. (HTs1/005)

The students' behaviours recognised by their teachers are sufficient to identify them. (HTs2/005)

The teacher deals with them and knows best the strengths and weaknesses of the students. So, teachers are able to identify them successfully. (HTs5/005)

When it comes to deciding which learners are gifted and which are not, for the most part, head teachers in the current study accepted their EFL teachers' identification strategies

within their schools. Presumably, this authority of the EFL teacher to decide issues of giftedness is the result of the huge responsibility given to KSA teachers. Oyaïd (2009) points out that major responsibilities are given to teachers in Saudi schools as providers of knowledge to learners and as educators of both moral and human values. Further, in the Islamic culture teachers are normally respected. Khan (2014) claims that teachers and prophets have the same respectful state in Islam. It is unclear however whether head teachers' acceptance of teachers' decisions regarding gifted learners can be regarded as trust, respect or avoidance of responsibility as head teachers in being a part of identification process. This finding parallels the findings of Hanoreh (2003), who suggests that some head teachers in Saudi schools did not fill their role of identifying and supporting gifted learners or promoting teachers to deal with the gifted learners adequately.

Considering all these factors, the coordination between EFL teachers and the participating head teachers concerning gifted learner identification strategies could be described as limited because of the head teachers' low conception of the identification strategies used in their schools. Vialle et al. (2001) argue that every school needs to have a clear understanding of the identification strategies that are used to identify gifted learners in their schools. In the same line, there were slightly different opinions from some of the head teachers regarding the effectiveness of these strategies. The head teachers interviewed in this study argued that an EFL teacher's strategies had to be accepted even if the strategies were questionable, and the teachers' position and role in the school had to be acknowledged:

Even I feel that the teachers are uncomfortable with their nomination sometimes, but we have to do so as we have no other choice because we are sometimes asked by the Ministry to upload a list of gifted students' names. (HTs10/005)

Anyway, we have to follow what the teachers think about them [gifted learners] because the teacher practices and deals with the students and has good insight into their real academic levels. (HTs8/005)

Not totally, as some of the teachers identify different students to a previous class teacher so if the students identify from teacher last year, the new teacher will believe on that without any efforts from her to see where are the abilities in these students. (HTs6/005)

These head teachers stated that EFL teachers' identification strategies seemed to be working and were accepted by the school administrators regardless of whether the administrators completely trusted the validity of these strategies. One possible reason for their acceptance of EFL teachers' strategies could be their need to fulfil their role as school administrators. Administrators may have to accept EFL teachers' strategies because they are required to submit a list of gifted learners to the Ministry of Education. However, even if teachers are considered a valuable source of information in Saudi schools, these head teachers felt that EFL teachers may have challenges preventing them from accurately identifying GELLs such as the rigidity of the curriculum, lack of knowledge and teacher education in general as asserted by Kanevsky and Keighley (2003) and Brown et al. (2005).

There were a few head teachers that expressed their dissatisfaction with current GELL identification. Unsurprisingly, some head teachers requested training for their EFL teachers to reduce variations in the giftedness of those who were identified as GELL:

We need to have good training for teachers to deal with gifted learners, English language learners and then with gifted English learners. (HTs4/008)

We need trainings for teachers to identify gifted learners appropriately, then try to help gifted learners according to their ability's needs. (HTs7/008)

I think the lack of a training programme for the teachers is a big barrier. Teachers do not receive any training at all for gifted English language learners, while we have them for math and science, especially with the MAWHIBA Programme. (HTs5/008)

These head teachers asserted that EFL teachers need training to know how to deal with GELLs effectively. This suggests that relying on a teacher's evaluation has been taken for granted in the sense that every EFL teacher has been given the right to identify GELLs, even those who have not been trained to work with gifted learners. Head teachers confirmed that teachers have some training for dealing with gifted learners for math and science teachers only, which was also asserted by Al-Makhalid (2012). These head teachers suggest that some type of training for EFL teachers was required in order to improve their ability to deal with gifted learners in the English language learning context. These head teachers might believe that EFL teachers themselves could have low levels of English language proficiency and limited experience with teaching practices, which are needed to meet the requirements of

their learners' abilities, as asserted by Alfahadi (2014) and Elyas (2008). According to Elyas (2008), even if EFL teachers in the KSA have a degree in English, no experience or previous teacher training is required by the Ministry of Education to be a teacher in their schools. A number of Saudi researchers (see, for example, Al kaldi, 2002; Al Qarni, 2010) have claimed that many Saudi teachers are not prepared to care for or identify, recognise and support gifted learners across all learning subjects (including English) before being employed as teachers or during in-service training. Thus, some of Saudi EFL teachers may have little experience with the features and characteristics of GELLs, which is necessary in order to recognise GELLs within regular EFL classrooms. In relation to this, EFL teachers need training that covers some of the important areas that could effectively help support GELLs once they are identified.

Generally, the data suggests that an EFL teacher is an authoritative figure with the power to make decisions on various issues in EFL classes. Two main factors seem to have contributed to this authority. The first factor is the huge emphasis on EFL teachers' duties in Saudi schools (Bin Salamah, 2001; Oyaid, 2009). The second factor is the respect accorded to teachers in Islam. Khan (2014) argues that Prophet Mohammad asked all learners to be honoured attentive to their teacher's words and never raise their voice above the teacher's voice. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad is quoted as advising learners to "seek knowledge and train to be dignified and calm while seeking knowledge, and humble yourselves with those whom you learn from" (Tabaraani).

6.2.3 Authority and Influence of Examinations

During the interviews with the participating head teachers, the authority and influence of examinations in the education system of the KSA was highlighted as another major issue in the education of GELLs. The comments revealed that in the Saudi Arabian education system, examinations and test results are highly valued as a way of determining a student's path in life. For example, head teachers mentioned examination results as the appropriate way of identifying GELLs:

The teacher should recognise if there are any outstanding abilities from test results of the evaluation exam that the teacher makes every two weeks. (HTs3/003)

I think it is good as the exam results reflect the student's knowledge. I prefer exam grades. (HTs4/005)

The exam grade is an objective way to identify them without any emotional bias. (HTs9/005)

One who gets high marks in most of the subjects, especially in math, and can create something like engines or machines. (HTs3/001)

Hence, these head teachers stated that exams results are one of the most effective methods for recognising GELLs in EFL classes. This is a theme, which was common among many of the head teachers who participated in the study. While some Saudi schools used achievement test scores, others used general mental ability tests and/or performance on the WISC-R to identify gifted learners. Many of the head teachers still trusted and agreed with the validity of test results to identify GELLs. Presumably, head teachers in the current study emphasised test results in order to avoid any subjective bias that might affect EFL teachers during their own identification process. Another understanding that can be derived from the head teachers' views is the influence of the MAWHIBA programme. MAWHIBA still trusts examinations and assessment results as indicators of giftedness, as asserted by Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012). They noted that most enrichment MAWHIBA programmes focus mainly on academic achievements. This could help to explain why many head teachers have relied heavily on the test results of STEM subjects and encouraged innovation in terms of creating visible items such as engines or machines, which relates to STEAM subjects more than languages.

One of the head teachers criticised this view and stated that some teachers do not look beyond test results in order to identify a GELL:

I think there should be training for teacher nomination and that they should be qualified as some teachers do not look beyond test or assessment results. (HTs7/004)

Another head teacher argues that;

Instead of teacher's nominations, I think gifted identification should combine teachers', peers' and parents' nominations. (HTs8/004)

These head teachers stated that dealing with GELLs is an area that needs consideration other than tests results. An issue is the ability of test results to reflect real English language skills and capabilities. In the same line, when taking tests and exams, some learners could demonstrate their high abilities but others could not, and recognising whether a learner is gifted or only a hard worker was difficult for EFL teachers. Additionally, noticing whether GELLs have any difficulties in EFL classrooms is difficult when only test results are used. This was noted among GELLs in a study in Kebangsaan, Malaysia. Learners at the Permatapintar National Gifted Centre performed very well in English language tests but did not engage very well when using the language in appropriate situations (Yunus et al., 2013b). What transpired here was that the learners experienced some language anxiety and/or underachievement, which may have had a detrimental effect on some of the gifted learners and prevented them from acquiring the targeted level of proficiency. The identification of GELLs could be expanded to involve for example in-class observation and continual course work assessment as stated by Clark, (2002) and Johnsen (2004).

The effectiveness of identifying GELLs using test results and other academic achievements remains a debatable issue because such a method can contribute to a rather detrimental effect on the communicative achievement of a target language. Further, basing abilities solely on examination and test scores may produce an inaccurate picture because these methods do not adequately test GELLs' abilities. The next section aims to outline the situation for EFL teachers and how they identify and support GELLs in an EFL classroom.

6.3 Emerging Themes from EFL Teachers

One of the intended outcomes of this study was to explore how EFL teachers identify, experience and support GELLs in the EFL classroom. The interviews with EFL teachers were primarily focused around a) the meaning of giftedness as it relates to English language learning, b) the identification and assessment of GELLs and c) how EFL teachers support GELLs once GELLs have been identified. The data derived from the interview sessions conducted with EFL teachers reported a variety of themes. The main themes identified were a lack of cultural relevance between Arabic and English and government curriculum limitations.

Classroom teachers can have a great impact on gifted learners' learning and the development of their potential (McBee, 2006). Gifted learners should be recognised by their teachers; otherwise, these individuals may become bored and frustrated (Smith and Chan, 1996; Winebrenner and Brulles, 2012). In Saudi Arabia, classroom teachers are supposed to identify and support gifted learners, and teachers are responsible for fulfilling the needs of such learners (Aljughaiman, 2007). Despite this, there are no governmental guidelines provided to help teachers identify or support gifted learners in their EFL classroom. Thus, EFL teachers have their own methods to identify and support GELs that should be understood.

6.3.1 Barriers for EFL Teachers: A Lack of Cultural Relevance of Arabic to English

A common theme that emerged from the interviews with EFL teachers related to how the English language is viewed in the KSA. Many of the participants' comments implied that the English language is not very popular in Saudi schools and within Saudi society. For example, one EFL teacher, when asked about the barriers facing GELs and the possible reasons for them, described the reason as "societal issues":

They may have societal issues regarding learning the English language, such as belonging to a poor family or a society with strict customs which do not always prefer the use of English. (TIntvs 8/011)

This EFL teacher indicated that EFL is not widely accepted among some of Saudi learners. There was a general feeling among the EFL teachers who were interviewed in the current study that there were tensions between the English and Arabic languages. The reason behind this could be the strong influence of Arabic, which is still considered to be the official language of the KSA, the language of Islam and the language of instruction in schools. Despite an increase in the demand for English language acquisition and the recent policy efforts made by the KSA to raise the need for English in educational institutions, English is still not widely accepted in all Saudi schools. This fact was also asserted by Karmani (2005), who found that regardless of the influence of globalisation in the KSA, which has led to an increase in the use of English, there is still visible resistance to the use of English, and the value of the English language in the KSA is still questioned.

In support of this notion, Glasser (2003) argues that even if the negative attitude towards the English language has changed as a result of the expanding horizons of new technologies and economic development in many fields, English is not widely accepted both in schools and in Saudi community. In the same line, some EFL teachers maintained that GELLs' families should be involved in the process of improving the English language abilities of their children:

The best practice for English language learners should be out of the school setting, by watching English movies, watching English programmes and travelling abroad, etc. I am not sure if the teachers can help the GELLs in school. (TIntvs 4/007)

Parental involvement to support their children's development at home is needed. (TIntvs 5/011)

I think that the best practice for GELLs should be to have activities outside the school—maybe by attending enrichment programmes or some other programme, which is supported by their parents and/or the Ministry, to help the students in this specific area. (TIntvs 7/007)

These EFL teachers emphasised the role of the family and society in changing the negative attitudes towards the use of the English language and in encouraging children to practice English in order to improve their language acquisition. According to Karmani (2005), teaching English in the KSA goes beyond teaching; it must address the beliefs and attitudes of Saudi learners. Many of the participants' comments portrayed Arabic as part of the Saudi culture, allowing Saudis to describe their history, beliefs and religion. Karmani (2005) argues that Arabic is the language of Islam and that bringing in a foreign language, such as English (from the West), might be regarded as bringing in a foreign culture that would interfere with Islam. With such sentiments, learners from families who feel their religion is threatened by Western language may nurture negative stereotypes regarding the use of Western languages (English). Perhaps these EFL teachers felt that they are not the only ones who are responsible for changing negative beliefs and views towards English, instead emphasising the family's and society's involvement in this change.

Some of the EFL teachers who participated in the interview sessions argue that there are some GELLs who have a positive attitude about using and learning English. However, the

EFL teachers also mentioned that teachers need to work harder to improve English language proficiency among learners who are unmotivated to learn the language because English is only used as a foreign language for school purposes and is not practiced in everyday life. One EFL teacher stated categorically that English was not a popular language among the other learners in the EFL classroom “since it is a foreign language and not used daily.” She argues that there was a tendency for learners to feel apprehensive when using this foreign language. They were struggling to increase their interest in using the English language:

The problem with the English language in class is that it is not very common [in the KSA] because we speak Arabic most of the time, so it does affect the gifted language learners' attitudes when they want to use English in class while their friends don't. (TIntvs6/010)

Another EFL teacher stated that:

As the Arabic language is our common language and the English language is not that popular, I tried to start the lesson with something interesting, such as pictures or maps. Then, I related this to the content of the curriculum that we follow. (TIntvs 2/008)

I think one of the good teaching practices for gifted students is to make the lessons real—for example, by taking them to a zoo if the lesson is about animals. I am sure a lot of students will remember the names of the animals after that, but we are not allowed to do such trips for financial and ethical reasons. (TIntvs 7/008)

There is a lack of interest in some students as we teach the English language since it is a foreign language and not used daily, so we need to increase the confidence of gifted English language learners who might be shy for any reason. (TIntvs 6/009)

I think that the important side to increase is the motivation of the students to be fluent in the English language. (TIntvs 9/009)

These EFL teachers confirmed that English is normally used in Saudi Arabia for school purposes. The issue with using Arabic and English, which each has a different status within the KSA, might have influenced the English learning by GELLs. For example, according to Jalaludin et al. (2008), the Malay language has been the national language and the medium

of instruction in schools in Malaysia. This status has had a very strong influence on the learning of English by Malaysian GELLs, as noted by Jalaludin et al. (2008). In their study, the authors established that one of the major problems that GELLs faced in Malaysian schools was the difference in morphology and syntax between the Malay and English languages. In the current study, some of EFL teachers seemed to understand this problem by implementing some activities intended to improve their learners' motivation. The issue of using two languages of unequal status in a country is not unique to the KSA.

Even if the negative attitude towards EFL learning has recently changed as a result of globalisation, EFL learning is still not that widely accepted in the KSA, and its value is still questioned. A general understanding that can be derived from the EFL teachers' views is that they felt that they are not the only ones who are responsible for changing learners' attitudes towards English, arguing that families should be involved in the process too. In accordance with this view, little attention is given to GELLs to improve their abilities in this atmosphere.

6.3.2 Government Curriculum Limitations

Another emerging theme that arose from the interviews with EFL teachers related to the lack of an enriched curriculum that would adequately suit GELLs. The lack of such a curriculum has created difficulties for EFL teachers in the KSA, who have to follow a very rigid government curriculum. When the interviewed EFL teachers were asked whether they were allowed to modify their English lesson to accommodate GELLs' abilities, EFL teachers replied:

*I tried to use some tools, but I am very controlled with the content of the curriculum.
(TIntvs 1/008)*

The direct instructions that we normally follow are from the content of the lesson/curriculum, which needs to be finished on time at the end of the term. (TIntvs 4/008)

I have to match my efforts in classroom teaching practices with the curriculum from the Ministry, and currently, there is a big gap between the two. (TIntvs 9/010)

These EFL teachers asserted that a gap exists between the strict curriculum and best teaching practices designed to meet the needs of GELLs. Many of the participants' comments implied that there is general sense of governmental control over the EFL curriculum. These EFL teachers could not modify the EFL curriculum because they have to follow the instructions of the lesson and need to finish the curriculum on time. Any changes in the development of teaching strategies have to occur simultaneously with the provision of greater flexibility with curriculum content for teachers and head teachers because changing one without changing the other will not work. EFL teachers indicated a number of barriers in teaching EFL. For example, EFL classes are expected to follow every unit presented in the EFL textbooks that are issued by the Ministry of Education, even in situations where this could have a negative impact on learners. The situation is compounded by the fact that the EFL curriculum in the KSA results in low learner motivation, does not focus on the daily lives of learners and does not encourage creativity among learners, as asserted by Khankar (2001). Consequently, some of the EFL teachers explained why they could not modify the EFL curriculums:

The problem we face is that we have to follow the curriculum in everything, even in the teaching practice, so I think we have to solve the problem by asking the Ministry to restructure the curriculum to make it focused on the students' abilities or to give the teacher the freedom to deliver the content according to his/her students' abilities. (TIntvs 6/007)

The best practice is to give the teachers freedom with the lesson. We need only the key elements from the Ministry. Then, we should have the freedom to deliver it according to our students' abilities instead of following everything in the curriculum. (TIntvs 3/007)

I think one of the good teaching practices for gifted students is to make the lessons real—for example, by taking them to a zoo if the lesson is about animals. I am sure a lot of students will remember the names of the animals after that, but we are not allowed to do so for many reasons such as we have to follow and finish the curriculum on time and also for financial reasons. (TIntvs 8/007)

These EFL teachers complained that there is no time and not enough teacher independence to carry out more activities according to their learners' abilities. There is a general feeling among EFL teachers that controlling the curriculum in the KSA causes some challenges.

These challenges include the approaches used in teaching, mainly memorisation and rote learning, which are controlled by the curriculums organised by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education has provided EFL teachers with two textbooks with different pedagogies for learning and teaching EFL. Using textbooks within suggested EFL pedagogies as the only method of teaching English could reduce EFL teachers' ability to recognise and modify the EFL curriculums according to learners' needs. They asserted that the Ministry of Education should reform the curriculum to give EFL teachers more freedom to teach according to learners' abilities. The controls over curriculum by the education system may not foster innovation and creativity among Saudi learners. The acknowledgement of this issue may have prompted the KSA government to create the Tatweer Programme, known as "The General Project of Curriculum Development" in 2007, which is currently applied in selected schools and which should cover all Saudi schools by 2017. Teachers that are participating in this programme have a degree of freedom and are able use different teaching practices and use several resources (Tatweer, 2011).

Khankar (2001) indicated that the majority of obstacles to EFL learners that exist in the KSA's EFL curriculum in secondary schools pertain to the gap in educational curriculum resources in areas that include content, teaching aids, school library, school activities, facilities and equipment. Similar results were found in this study, in which some of the participants mentioned that a lack of resources and materials are considered to be key challenges in their EFL classrooms:

The lack of resources in the class to improve the student's ability is a problem as we do not have enough financial support in the school to offer resources to gifted English language learners. (TIntvs 2/010)

The lack of resources in the class to improve the student's ability is a problem as we do not have enough to provide materials that meet different goals and have different contents and levels of difficulty so the students can study on their own. (TIntvs 3/010)

We need to encourage students to use computers and watch movies or YouTube videos because using textbooks only could be a barrier for the students' English learning. (TIntvs 8/010)

These EFL teachers indicated that they face numerous problems that limit their ability to support English learners in general, one of which is limited resources. These EFL teachers confirmed the importance of using different educational facilities, resources and devices to improve GELLs' abilities. This can be partly explained by the lack of effective planning and funds from the Saudi government. In a rich country like the KSA, the reason for the lack of such funds and resources is debatable; maybe no attention is being paid to resources.

There was a general feeling by EFL teachers that they face numerous problems that limit their ability to support GELLs. This feeling can be partly explained by the lack of resources and an EFL curriculum that was irrelevant to GELLs and EFL teachers have not a freedom to modify EFL curriculum according to their abilities and this needs to be finished on time at the end of the term. The following section considers GELLs' views of what kind of support they need in EFL classrooms.

6.4 Emerging Themes from GELLs

One of the intended outcomes of this study was to identify what kind of support GELLs need in the EFL classrooms. In the GELL focus group sessions, GELLs were primarily focused around (a) the types of support they need to improve their English learning and (b) the types of support needed for GELLs generally. The two major themes that emerged from the GELL focus group discussions were the professionalism and identity of KSA EFL teachers and the fear and apprehension of GELLs trying to learn English.

Freeman (1999) argues that giving gifted learners all the support that they need is essential for their success in their academic experiences. For example, in the teaching context, using different teaching practices that could support gifted learners' abilities is important. At the same time, Gavin et al. (2007) concluded that the teacher is the person who should support gifted learners by placing a heavy emphasis on their learners' strengths and weaknesses, including their critical thinking abilities, self-esteem, time management and problem-solving skills. Taking all these factors into consideration, this study examined the support GELLs themselves perceive is required within the EFL classrooms.

6.4.1 The Professionalism and Identity of EFL Teachers

During the GELLs' focus group sessions, the professionalism and identity of EFL teachers came under serious scrutiny. The participants of the focus groups indicated that most of the GELLs have high expectations of their EFL teachers:

I wish for the teachers to be friendlier with us. It is fine to make a joke or laugh together in class. (GELL1/007)

I wish to have more interesting English resources and friendly teachers. (GELL8/007)

I like my teacher, but I hope she can be more “stretchy” with us. I wish that she monitors our classes and gives us some freedom to express ourselves, either in Arabic or in English. (GELL4/006)

Teacher's involvement with students by using examples, analogies, and illustrations that can make the language easier to understand (GELL16/007)

I wish the school brings foreign language teachers so we can practice the language better with a native speaker. (GELL20/006)

These GELLs indicated that they have high expectations of their EFL teachers. For these GELLs, the best EFL teachers are ones who are close to learners and who give learners a sense of freedom in the EFL classroom. The GELLs stated that the best EFL teachers are not “regular” teachers. The term regular could refer to teachers who teach using “chalk-and-talk” methods and who are central to the class, as opposed to teachers who monitor students in group work, who use a communication approach or who implement learner-centric activities. The GELLs' views echo those of Fareh (2010), who drew attention to some of the problems associated with the EFL programmes that occur in Arab world related to learning activities that are centred on teachers instead of learners. Al-Seghayer (2014) argues that rather than focussing on teacher-centric activities, the EFL classes and English textbooks used in Saudi Arabia should focus on practical applications in the EFL classroom and provide opportunities for learner-centric activities and for learning by doing. Thus, teachers would then have more freedom to structure and plan their lessons according to their learners' needs. Teachers would then become more specialised in the field of teaching English

language (Al-Seghayer, 2014) This may be viewed a sign of a weak relationship between GELLs and their EFL teachers and poor preparation by teachers.

A large percentage of the GELLs suggest the implementation of resources and topics that would be interesting to GELLs both inside and outside the EFL classroom:

The teacher who brings interesting novels and reads passages from them instead of reading a passage about the life cycle of a frog! [Laughing] I think that will make the class more interesting. (GELL3/001)

Bring interesting things to the class, such as pictures, and not just only explain the lesson from the textbook. (GELL1/001)

The teacher who brings an attractive and interesting reading passage instead of a boring one. (GELL15/001)

The teacher should know how to change the daily routine of the class, bring new materials, and encourage us to use the language instead of the boring grammar and reading passages. (GELL17/001)

...bring some serious movies or documentaries to make the language more interesting. (GELL1/002)

One who provides a variety of knowledge and activities to suit what we are interested in. (GELL20/001)

Who removes the textbook and allows us to learn the English language from a storybook instead! [Laughing] (GELL5/007)

These GELLs hold their EFL teachers responsible for not changing the boring and routine situations they experience in EFL classes. The GELLs also indicated that the best EFL teacher is one who places a heavy emphasis on bringing interesting activities and topics. These secondary school learners are teenagers who are keen to deal with exciting, adventurous and interesting topics. This preference for interesting topics and activities might reflect one of the characteristics of gifted learners; Renzulli (2003) reported that to some

degree, learners' interests may reveal whether they are gifted. Furthermore, teaching EFL in the KSA, where the Arabic is the official language and English used for school purposes, may require interesting topics to capture the attention of the KSA learners. Krashen and Terrell (1983) wrote that including interesting and relevant texts for English learners is very important because motivating learners to read and learn in a second language is sometimes difficult. Therefore, GELLs may need a wide range of interesting topics in order to stay engaged with learning English.

In another group the issue regarding their need for more realistic resources and activities and relative topics from their EFL teachers also arose:

*...Brings real objects and materials for the students to understand the content.
(GELL3/007)*

Teachers should try something new—for example, discuss the lesson in a library or have classes in the school garden. (GELL12/007)

I wish the school brings real objects and materials for the students to understand the content. (GELL3/007)

We can enjoy learning the English language when the teacher relates the lesson to real life and brings an impact to our own world. (GELL2/001)

The teacher who brings novels and reads a passage from it instead of reading a passage about the life cycle of a frog! [Laughing] I think that will make the class more interesting. (GELL3/001)

Instead of talking about the snow and the snowman in America, I would prefer to discuss the industries here in Saudi. (GELL2/002)

In addition to studying interesting topics, these GELLs asserted that they need to practice English in real-world activities. They also stated that they need more real resources from their EFL teachers, such as movies and documentaries, to enable them to practice the language as it is used in different situations. The need for real topics and examples in English may be due to the unpopularity of English in the KSA. Such resources could also help

GELLs learn new vocabulary and phrases in their appropriate and complete context. Furthermore, GELLs stated that they could learn better with such resources because these resources could help establish a link between ideas, which could be one of the characteristics of gifted learners, as asserted by Luna (2005). For example, the third quote above indicates that topics that come from Saudi culture could help GELLs learn better than adopted topics that are not relevant to these learners' lives. In particular, Saudi citizens are not very familiar with snow because the KSA is very hot country. Learners may not consider learning about this context to be relevant enough to hold their interest.

GELLs in the KSA have a number of barriers to learning EFL. These GELLs generally felt that supporting GELLs was related to actual day-to-day classroom activities. It was not surprising to learn that a large percentage of the GELLs wanted EFL teachers to create interesting and relevant topics and activities for their EFL classes and even in sessions outside EFL classrooms. These activities include interesting and relevant materials that are considered challenging for their age and vocabulary that is related to their own lives.

6.4.2 Fear and Apprehension in GELLs' Efforts to Learn English language

The GELLs who participated in the focus group sessions raised the issue of speaking English during the learning process. When GELLs were asked to imagine what they would change if they were EFL teachers themselves, the GELLs mentioned that above all they would respect learners' errors:

I would respect my students' mistakes in the English language class, and there will be no laughing from the rest of the class when anyone makes a mistake so that no one will be shy. (GELL11/002)

I will allow the students to talk to each other in English to make them feel free and not shy. (GELL4/002)

I will help every student with their problems in the English language. Maybe one needs help in writing, another in speaking. (GELL17/002)

These GELLs stated that they are not allowed to speak and express their minds in English in the EFL classroom. Perhaps they found the optimal way of learning English is to facilitate communication between them and their EFL teachers without worrying and the stress of making mistakes. These GELLs felt less free in EFL classrooms than they consider ideal. Here, their EFL teachers could be placing too great an emphasis on grammatical correctness. In this approach, errors are regarded negatively rather than being a necessary aspect of the language learning process. This reality is also asserted by urRahman and Alhaisoni (2013), who argue that EFL teachers in the KSA schools have always placed a great deal of emphasis on grammatical correctness, which could result in negative attitudes among English learners.

In another group, the issue regarding the reluctance to learn English came up. Some of the participants presented a negative picture of EFL classrooms in general, in which routine activities and teaching are conducted only for school purposes:

I think English is boring as a subject. There's nothing we can do about that. I think that the best things to do are work hard and pass the exam. That's it. (GELL6/007)

Nobody will speak to me in English in the street or at home. I think that the best solution is to make the English language an optional subject. (GELL7/007)

I hope they change our boring lesson and bring some modern lessons—about technology, for example. (GELL4/007)

There is no benefit in learning another language just for school purposes; it is not logical, so we do not use it in our lives. (GELL7/001)

There is nothing we can do about it. It is a very boring subject, and the teachers can do nothing about that. (GELL6/001)

These GELLs indicated that they are unwilling to learn English. Here, a detailed examination of KSA GELLs' world needs to be carried out and insight into their lives needs to be gained in order to understand their stance on learning English. In the KSA, English is taught as a foreign language, and great emphasis is placed on correctness beginning with the lower stages of schooling. In this case, learners would tend to be not confident, shy and worry to express their thoughts to avoid making mistakes. This caused many of them to develop

negative attitudes towards EFL. In Islam, shyness (hayaa in Arabic language) is a key part of the faith and, taken in its appropriate context, may refer to self-respect, modesty or bashfulness. As narrated by Abu Hurairah (radi-Allaahu ‘anhu), the Prophet Muhammad said, “Faith consists of more than 60 parts; and hayaa (shyness) covers a large number of concepts which are to be taken together; among them are self-respect, modesty, bashfulness and scruple, etc.” (Bukhari). Thus, anyone who is a believer builds into their personalities and their character with a good dimension of shyness (for there are bad dimensions also). The good dimensions include avoiding doing anything displeasing to God because they will have to answer for all their deeds. The shyness illustrated by the learners in this study had more of a social nature with regard to their relationships with peers, friends and colleagues. Basically, this shyness involves avoiding doing something displeasing or embarrassing to others. Here, this shyness translates to learners becoming careful about saying something incorrect in front of their EFL teachers and peers. They were consciously or unconsciously practising their faith.

GELLs would tend to be shy and worry about making mistakes in EFL classes. It has been documented that GELLs learn better if they would be allowed to express their thoughts and enabling them to feel free in EFL classes. Less emphasis on grammatical correctness could help GELLs for finding the means by which they learn and also how they will improve their abilities.

6.5 Synthesis of the Chapter

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups with the three categories of participants: head teachers, EFL teachers and GELLs. The data that emerged from the head teachers suggest that in the Saudi education system, the process of identifying GELLs had variations between and within schools but mainly relied on EFL teachers. While many of the head teachers agreed with their EFL teachers’ evaluation to identify GELLs, some of the head teachers considered their EFL teachers’ identification strategies may be invalid and training may be required. The data presented evidence to show that the KSA policies regarding GELLs have several limitations, such as a lack of attention to GELLs compared to gifted applied science learners. High performance on examinations is regarded an important factor of giftedness by many head teachers. That means that head teachers trust English test results to demonstrate whether a learner is gifted or not.

The influence of globalisation in many countries (including Saudi Arabia) has led to an increase in the use of English. However, resistance to the use of English and its value in the KSA was never hidden during the interviews with EFL teachers. People who felt that their religion was being threatened by this Western language nurtured negative stereotypes regarding its use. There may also be limitations in the government's English curriculum, which EFL teachers have to follow rigidly. In particular, the KSA's EFL curriculum may not motivate learners and may not encourage learners' abilities.

Finally, the data gathered from GELLs suggest that EFL teachers have a great influence on EFL classroom decisions and are responsible for increasing the interest levels of GELLs. The GELLs wanted their EFL teachers to create interesting and relevant topics for their EFL classes. The data also suggest that GELLs have some barriers preventing them from speaking English fluently, such as shyness, a lack of confidence and the need for more freedom to speak in EFL classroom and in other contexts. In the current approach to teaching EFL in the KSA, errors are regarded negatively rather than as a necessary part of the language-learning process.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the relationship between the key research questions and existing knowledge is presented and interpreted. The discussion will also highlight how this study supports, reflects and extends the current knowledge concerning GELLs in the KSA. The discussion is guided by four key research questions, namely:

1. What are the attitudes of English as foreign language teachers towards gifted English language learners in Saudi school and classroom settings?
2. How do English as foreign language teachers' differentiate instructional practices to meet the needs of gifted English language learners in their classrooms?
3. How do head teachers and English as foreign language teachers identify gifted English language learners in regular Saudi classrooms and schools?
4. What are the views of English as foreign language teachers and gifted English language learners on what support gifted English language learners need in school generally and in English as foreign language classroom specifically?

7.2 What are the Attitudes of English as Foreign Language Teachers towards Gifted English language Learners in Saudi School and Classroom Settings?

One aim of this study was to identify the attitudes of EFL teachers towards GELLs. The analysis of the questionnaire data gathered from 100 EFL teachers in the six participating schools contributed to achieving this aim. The questionnaire data revealed that the participating EFL teachers believed that there are GELLs in their EFL classrooms and that the presence of GELLs is a phenomenon which they should address in their practice. In

contrast, previous research studies claim that in some contexts, gifted individuals are not considered which can make supporting them and improving their abilities difficult. For example, Tirri et al. (2002) carried out a multicultural study in Hong Kong that examined 214 teachers' attitudes towards gifted learners. The respondents' comments in this study were summarised very briefly "all children are gifted." Such views might reflect cultural, contextual and individual beliefs regarding giftedness. Cultural influences could also be seen in the attitudes of the EFL teachers included in the current study. They completed a questionnaire that allowed them to describe the features of GELLs within their classes, and their answers could reflect their beliefs and thoughts about the existence of GELLs in EFL classes. Their thoughts could reflect their contextual beliefs; the Islamic perspective on giftedness considers giftedness to be a gift from God that requires support from society (Adas, 1998). However, the problem in the KSA is that the education system focuses on STEM subjects while paying less attention to other subjects, such as language and arts (Salwe, 2007; Alarfaj, 2011). The implication of this focus on STEM subjects is that GELLs may remain unidentified in the KSA unless EFL teachers understand their abilities and how to recognise, identify and support these GELLs. For example, one of the interviewed EFL teachers explained that "giftedness is something given by God – that people are born with – and that it therefore needs support" (TIntvs 1/001). This view matches Islamic views of giftedness, as mentioned in chapter two (see Adas, 1998; Alamer, 2010). Thus, when the EFL teachers were asked how they support GELLs once they have been identified, some of them argue that GELLs need support to maximise their abilities and find their interests, but these beliefs do not always translate into practice.

Generally, the questionnaire data indicated that EFL teachers have relatively positive attitudes towards GELLs. This attitude does not differ much from the attitudes of other teachers surveyed during international studies, such as those conducted by Watts (2006), McCoach and Siegle (2007) and Chessman (2010) and local studies, such as the studies conducted by Al-Makhalid (2012) and Al Garni (2012). These researchers claim that most teachers in general have positive attitudes towards gifted learners and gifted education. It is possible that the MAWHIBA programme in conjunction with the Ministry of Education has heightened awareness of teachers in the KSA as to the existence of gifted learners. Although this could be viewed as a positive influence, educators have many concerns surrounding the validity and the quality of the MAWHIBA programme (Al-Ghamdi, 2007; Al Qarni, 2010). Hanoreh (2003) argues that one such concern is that Saudi teachers' training regarding giftedness has some weaknesses, including the absence of preservice and in-service

training for Saudi teachers. According to Al Qarni (2010), the MAWHIBA programme should provide more systematic training for teachers who work in the gifted centres and in regular schools in order to qualify these teachers to offer appropriate care for learners to develop their skills across all subject areas. Al Qarni (2010) and Alarfaj (2011) reviewed gifted programmes in the KSA and conclude that many problems exist as a result of untrained teachers working in regular classes. So while teachers in the present study had a positive attitude, this is not always reflected in practice.

The questionnaire results can be discussed under three main factors relating to the 100 EFL teachers' attitudes towards GELLs: cognitive abilities, social issues and leadership. In relation to social issue, many of the participating EFL teachers believed that GELLs should receive special treatment from society. This belief could reflect the influence of MAWHIBA on these EFL teachers and the influences of Islamic views of giftedness (Adas, 1998; Alamer, 2010), as explained in chapter two. According to Polanyi (1966), cultural and social influences play important roles in teachers' thoughts. The establishment of the MAWHIBA programme for gifted education could be evidence that Saudi society has encouraged giftedness by offering gifted learners special treatment. This treatment of gifted learners may have contributed to the teachers' belief that any gifted learner is somehow "special" and that society should therefore accord them special status. In this case, influences specific to Saudi culture are likely to have affected the EFL teachers' perception of gifted learners. Although some of the EFL teachers described GELLs' sensitivity, most of the EFL teachers in this study disagreed with the thought that GELLs have unusual sensitivity to the feelings of others. They suggest that GELLs are insensitive to hurting the feelings of others or GELLs keep to themselves socially. Although the leadership theme results showed that most of EFL teachers thought that GELLs were natural leaders, many participating EFL teachers perceived that GELLs tended to dominate discussions. The EFL teachers considered GELLs to be dominating discussions when these learners expressed characteristics that teachers sometimes find annoying, such as speaking too much in discussions, using humour in class or refusing to accept rules as asserted by Swassing (1985). As pointed out in the focus group session, GELLs themselves felt they were shy and lacked confidence to speak English in EFL classes, but the EFL teachers may felt that GELLs tended to dominate discussions in Arabic in EFL classes. The advanced language abilities of GELLs may also be part of the reason that the participating EFL teachers described GELLs as likely to dominate discussions. Al-Seghayer (2014) argues that the language abilities of some of ELLs are more

advanced than those of EFL teachers themselves in the KSA. Thus, these advanced abilities could annoy some EFL teachers.

EFL teachers had mostly positive perceptions of GELLs' cognitive abilities. Many of the participating EFL teachers identified GELLs as having significantly high comprehension and varied interests. As mentioned in chapter one, the education policy in Saudi Arabia states that "it is important to use appropriate methods to identify and nurture gifted learner and their abilities through specific standards issued by MAWHIBA for teacher evaluations which place the emphasis on teachers noticing and nominating gifted learner's characteristics and abilities, or through their academic achievement" (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010). Thus, the emphasis on cognitive abilities could be the result of the responsibilities given to KSA teachers, who are tasked with identifying gifted learners. Looking at learners' cognitive abilities has been considered to be the only way that teachers can fulfil the responsibility of identifying gifted learners, so a focus on these abilities is to be expected. One of these abilities, advanced comprehension, may include characteristics such as those mentioned by Clark (2002), Colangelo and Davis (2003) and Davis and Rimm (2004), such as accuracy, speed and a high level of understanding of abstract concepts. EFL teachers may have noticed that advanced comprehension is one of the cognitive elements that need to be considered when identifying, assessing and supporting gifted learners.

Unusual interests have also been identified by EFL teachers as an important characteristic of GELLs. Numerous studies have emphasised the role of interests in performance of gifted learners (See for example, Renzulli, 2003; Powell and Siegle, 2004; Davis and Rimm, 2004; Gavin et al., 2007; Subotnik et al., 2011). Gifted learners may often lack motivation in academic experiences. According to Reis and McCoach, (2000) common school experiences do not generally provide enough challenges, which learners (including gifted learners) need to meet their potential. In this study, this issue was also highlighted in the focus group by some GELLs who wished that they could work with more interesting topics and resources.

The responses to the questionnaire also indicated that EFL teachers think of GELLs as creative thinkers with advanced verbal abilities and the ability to find original relationships between ideas. Generally, these cognitive abilities could be important features of any gifted individuals. However, the overemphasis on these abilities in GELLs could reflect the beliefs and thoughts of EFL teachers. A study by Maajeeny (1990) about the meaning of giftedness in the Arab world (which includes the KSA) concluded that many teachers believe that

giftedness is synonymous with advanced mental abilities, which should be reflected by academic success. This could explain why many EFL teachers in this study trusted test scores and achievement tests as effective methods to identify GELs. These EFL teachers are likely to have believed that if giftedness is accompanied by academic success, then academic success implies giftedness. This finding is consistent with the findings of previous research study conducted in the KSA (Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012). As mentioned in chapter two, Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012) argue that gifted education in the KSA mainly relies on enrichment programmes (specifically the ETM). Aljughaiman and Ayoub (2012) claim that in practice, enrichment programmes in the KSA focus on academic achievements rather than on the social and practical aspects necessary for achieving success in daily life. This reveals the need for enrichment programmes to nurture all aspects of a student's life: social, academic, practical and mental. In fact, the presence of high test scores, the evaluation of which is the primary method used in the KSA to identify gifted learners, may be a valid determiner of gifted learners, but it should not be the only measure through which gifted learners are recognised or improved. Not all gifted learners best express their abilities through formal examinations; such learners, who have difficulty performing well in examinations, under the current system, are at risk of losing recognition.

A range of views existed among the EFL teachers regarding GELs' social issues and leadership characteristics in GELs in comparison with cognitive abilities. This disparity in findings could suggest that both GELs and teachers need to consider social issues in order to improve the social and emotional support for such learners. To modify the education system in the KSA to address the aims of Vision 2030 (see chapter two), EFL teachers should be prepared through professional training to recognise the different abilities of GELs, such as social and leadership abilities, which are not currently assessed in the KSA, instead of relying on cognitive abilities (even if they are very important). Otherwise, some GELs may remain unrecognised and may not develop the social skills that they lack or the leadership qualities they possess.

7.2.1 The Importance of Professional Training

Robinson (2008) argues that teachers could identify gifted learners by their characteristics, needs and abilities. In order for this identification method to be effective, EFL teachers need sufficient knowledge about GELs' characteristics and needs in order to offer appropriate learning opportunities so that these characteristics can be demonstrated. The KSA, like any

other country, expects teachers to possess competency and to work professionally in order to meet the needs of their learners. The Ministry of Education and MAWHIBA identify gifted learners in the KSA school system using teacher identification, achievement test scores, general mental abilities tests, the TTCT, and the WISC-R (Al Saif, 1999; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010). The indicators used to identify gifted learners include high academic achievement, high scores on the WISC-R, good performance on the TTCT, high scores on general mental ability tests and teacher identification of gifted learners. Furthermore, achievement tests are generally connected with levels of achievement; however, this connection varies with high-potential learners. In some cases, high-potential learners underachieve due to a lack of motivation, interest, social impact and support (Reis and McCoach, 2000). For instance, GELLs who lack social impact (e.g., stemming from the negative attitude towards learning English in the KSA and lack of interest in EFL curriculum) might progressively exhibit low motivation or interest in school as they get older and might have low achievement levels as a result. Thus, the participants in the KSA who portrayed negative attitudes towards GELLs may not have been supportive of low-performance gifted learners and high-performance learners. EFL teachers in the KSA should receive training about teaching EFL learners and understanding gifted learners in order to understand GELLs' characteristics, to clarify any misconceptions around them and to plan engaging learning experiences. Therefore, teacher education and professional on-going training are important. The KSA administrators should offer gifted training courses to challenge misconceptions about GELLs. These courses need to broaden out beyond the maths and science disciplines so as to encourage, for example, EFL teachers to join these courses (Balchin, 2005; Colangelo et al., 2004; Al Qarni, 2010).

Prior studies have noted the importance of changing teacher's attitudes towards gifted learners through gifted training courses. For example, Whitton (1997) found strong positive shifts in teacher attitudes towards gifted learners from negative to positive after teachers completed a course that provided them with information about gifted learners. Similarly, VanTassel-Baska and Baska (2004) and Al-Hadabi (2010) argue that the teacher was a key person in successful programmes for gifted learners and so the need to have EFL teachers with professional training cannot be overstated. Matthews (2006) argues that training to improve teachers' attitudes always focuses on either gifted learners or ELLs, and this training has a direct influence on improving teachers' attitudes towards these learners, but teachers often hold positive attitudes but have no clear plan on how to deal with GELLs and so often rely on their own initiative. Furthermore, a study conducted by Youngs and Youngs

(2001) that focused on teachers' attitudes towards English as a second language (ESL) learners concluded that teachers who have training in teaching and learning ESL or who attended courses about foreign language or multiculturalism and who have personally communicated with diverse cultures often had positive attitudes towards ESL. On the other hand, teachers who did not have personal experience dealing with other cultures often had negative attitudes towards ESLs within classrooms, and these negative attitudes could have had negative effects on ESL learners' abilities. Training across disciplines would seem to be crucial if learning and teaching are to progress.

Furthermore, there is a real need to consider teachers' professional training to deal with teaching strategies and differentiated instruction effectively in EFL classes. This training should emphasise two areas. First, teacher training should emphasise teaching strategies and classroom management. Second, this training should emphasise methods of differentiating instructions, the common and unique characteristics of gifted learners and the best practices to address these characteristics (Tomlinson, 1999). One example of the negative attitude that EFL teachers and head schools hold in the current study is that GELs have to be as fluent in English as Arabic, which is not necessarily found in all GELs, because they could be limited English language or have some social difficulties. Even if many of the EFL teachers who participated in the current study held a positive attitude of GELs, suitable training would help EFL teachers understand GELs' characteristics and how to plan for them. Thus, EFL teachers would become more specialised in the field of teaching EFL to all learners, including GELs.

7.3 How Do English as Foreign Language Teachers' Differentiate Instructional Practices to Meet the Needs of Gifted English Language Learners in their Classrooms?

The second aim of this study was to identify the instructional practices that EFL teachers use to meet the needs of GELs in regular classrooms. This aim has been attained through the analysis of the data gathered from the classroom observations of 10 EFL classes in the six participating schools.

According to VanTassel-Baska (2011) if the analysis of the classroom observation mean is less than 3 for each scale, the teaching strategies and behaviours are not commonly used and

need development. In this study, all the scales had a mean below 3. That means teaching strategies used by EFL teachers in EFL classes in the KSA might not be commonly used and might need improvement to meet GELLs' needs. In relation to each scale, the curriculum planning and delivery behaviours were among the most commonly used teaching practices used by EFL teachers in EFL classes. However, VanTassel-Baska et al. (2005) defined curriculum planning and delivery behaviours as general teaching behaviours, and accommodations for individual differences, problem solving, critical thinking strategies, creative thinking strategies and research strategies were defined as differentiated behaviours for gifted learners. Based on this interpretation of these teaching behaviours, EFL teachers are most often observed teaching general behaviours but are not as often seen teaching differentiated behaviours that could be important to meet the needs of GELLs in regular classes. This result is not surprising due to the limited knowledge and training regarding gifted education that is provided to these teachers. Hanoreh (2003) and Al Qarni (2010) claim that one of the main concerns in the KSA is that teacher training regarding giftedness is limited.

In the current study, the data also asserted that critical thinking strategies, creative thinking strategies and research strategies had limited use in the EFL classes. The least-taught strategy was research strategies. Powell and Siegle (2004) might have an explanation for the low frequency of the research strategy behaviour. Research techniques are more actively adopted by mathematics and science teachers rather than by language teachers. This conclusion seems to hold true in the Saudi context, which spread research techniques throughout the science fields; although some EFL classes offer a research component in theses participated classes. This is also supported by the differing views of the two observers in the current study where one came from the field of science and mathematics and held a very definite view about the term "research".

Encouraging EFL learners to express their thoughts was identified in this study as the most commonly used teaching behaviour on the curriculum planning and delivery scale. Gorgiladze (2005) argues that some aspects of problem-solving strategies could be applied in foreign language classes. According to Gorgiladze (2005), problem-solving strategies could be applied within foreign language classes by helping foreign language learners learn to think instead of giving ready answers during the presentation of new grammatical rules, involving these learners in the elicitation of vocabulary meanings from the examples given during a lesson or discussing EFL learners' everyday problems in the foreign language. In

the current study, the most observed differentiated teaching behaviour used by EFL teachers in their EFL classes was problem solving. Similarly, the analysis of the questionnaire data gathered in combination with the interview data indicated that some EFL teachers' support of their GELLs' problem-solving skills was the major and perhaps the most commonly used teaching behaviour applied by EFL teachers in the included KSA schools. One of the EFL teachers interviewed asserted that "... problem-solving activities can help develop the pupils' thinking skills and their key skills in communicating and working with others..." (TIntvs 1/7). When asked if she followed this teaching practice, the same teacher replied, "I tried, but I am very controlled with the content of the curriculum" (TIntvs1/8). This outcome clarifies that even if some EFL teachers have some knowledge regarding the appropriate treatment of gifted learners, applying this knowledge within EFL classes is often difficult due to their understanding and implementation of the highly centralised nature of EFL curricula. Nevertheless, the extent of use and the effectiveness of the application of this knowledge in EFL classrooms can still be improved by providing training and professional development for EFL teachers. Both the government's focus on centralisation rather than engagement and teachers' lack of knowledge and experience with these teaching behaviours may have contributed to the variable levels of support that GELLs receive in the Saudi context.

The acknowledgement of this fact may have been the motivation for the KSA government's creation of the Tatweer project, known as "The General Project of Curriculum Development" which was designed to steer the country's teaching practices away from the centralised Saudi curriculum and towards the encouragement of analysis and problem solving. This project was established in 2007 and aims to improve the quality of the education system in the KSA to match the standards of other nations by improving teacher education programmes, improving curriculum and offering better and more adequate facilities and resources to learners (Tatweer, 2011). In particular, the Tatweer Project was designed to improve the curricula in secondary schools. The programme aims to improve the curricula by including specific technical abilities and by improving the design of instructional strategies in order to improve the quality of the curricula, incorporate the use of IT (Information Technology) in the educational process and increase learners' abilities by supporting their critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Tatweer, 2011). Teachers who are a part of this programme have a degree of freedom and are able use different teaching practices, such as modifying classroom content and organising the classroom. This programme also enables head teachers to contribute to decision-making in schools in order

to improve the educational experience of Saudi learners. In 2007, as a pilot, the Tatweer Project was implemented in 50 secondary schools in different areas around the KSA. Due to the programme's high cost of providing every school with highly advanced technologies, the pilot was modified to a system of three stages. First, from 2011 to 2012, the programme's main aim was to choose and develop a model of changes and train staff to handle this model (Tatweer, 2011). Second, from 2012 to 2014, the aim was to support the previously defined model for change, apply it in selected schools and supervise its practice. This stage started in 2014 and will finish in 2017. By then, all secondary schools throughout the KSA are expected to have applied the Tatweer Project (Tatweer, 2011). However, of the 30,067 schools within the KSA, only 900 have implemented the Tatweer programme in specific cities or specific schools as an experiment (none of these schools participated in the current study). Implementing the programme has not been unproblematic. In an evaluation of the programme, Alyami (2014) indicates that the move towards decentralisation was welcomed, but that it is a major shift in policy and practice and there was no change in the levels of students' achievements. Interestingly, this study reports that the majority of the teachers that took part in the study had positive attitudes. As in the current study, these positive attitudes did not translate into practice and Alyami reports 70% of staff refused to change practice.

7.3.1 The Importance of Administration Engagement

VanTassel-Baska et al. (2007) argue that effective learning is highly connected with teacher behaviour and teachers' chosen instructional approaches. From this perspective, effective teachers need not only sufficient knowledge but also the freedom to use their chosen instructional approaches in their classes. The data from the current study showed that the EFL teachers who participated faced a number of barriers while teaching EFL in the Saudi context. These barriers included the centralisation of an EFL curriculum that was insufficient for meeting GELs' needs and insufficient knowledge about different teaching practices and behaviours.

The Ministry of Education in the KSA stated that the Saudi learners have the complete right to learn and be educated in a way that respects their abilities and needs and that Saudi curricula are expected to achieve this goal (Aljughaiman, 2010), but this ideal is not always practically applied. One example of the failure to apply this ideal that was noted during this study was the fact that the EFL teachers have to follow the Ministry of Education's curriculum rigidly and are unable to make any modifications to their lesson plan, which

would help them meet the need of GELLs. Alzaidi (2008) reported that head teachers felt dissatisfied with their role because there was a lack of self-autonomy due mostly, he argued, to the centralised system and head teachers' lack of ability to make choices.

EFL teachers have to follow the textbooks that are issued by the Ministry of Education, but these texts have been criticised (see Al-Seghayer, 2014) as having a design that is inappropriate for effective implementation in the KSA and that does not adequately identify with the needs of learners. The EFL curriculum and textbooks used in the KSA should focus more on practical interesting and relevant applications in the EFL classroom and reduce its centralisation. With this change, teachers would then have more freedom to structure and plan their lessons according to their learners' needs. VanTassel-Baska (2000) claims that more attention should be paid to the gifted curriculum in regard to the inclusion of an established curriculum that meets the needs of gifted foreign language learners so that these learners can reach to their linguistic potential.

EFL teachers also have to be aware of some teaching approaches that are intended to improve general EFLs' abilities, which has been confirmed in international studies, such as one conducted by Coelho (2004), and local Saudi studies, such as the one conducted by urRahman and Alhaisoni (2013). These studies argue that adopting different approaches for both the teaching and learning of English language could be a positive change for foreign language learners. One of these effective approaches was noted in a study carried out with Malaysian English language learners by Yousef et al. (2013). Yousef et al.'s study focussed on the effects of using an oral communicative approach instead of traditional approaches, such as teacher-centric classes and grammar–translation, in order to improve learners' English abilities. They concluded that the learners' motivation and attitudes towards English language improved after they had used the communicative approach and that the students engaged in English conversation more frequently than they had previously. When placed alongside the findings from this study, these results are important as these suggested pedagogical changes to the teaching of English would seem to improve learning for all. For example, the GELLs in the present study indicated that they wanted to use English language more and that this lack of opportunity to practice was a problem. While the emphasis in the present study has been on GELLs, the strategies described in the studies above would seem to support their learning. Kitano and Espinosa (1995) and Kitano and Pedersen (2002) argue that using different strategies with respect to the learners' culture and language issues is very important in order to support GELLs. These authors argue that there are some instruction

principles of which EFL teachers should be aware when dealing with GELLs. EFL teachers should recognise GELL's characteristics, be able to engage with the best instruction strategies designed cope with GELLs' abilities, recognise learners' strengths and weakness, use different and challenging experiences to meet learners' potential and their level of thinking, use student talk time instead of teacher-centric talk time, concentrate on language input through the improvement of verbal and written language acquisition and consider the language, cultural and racial background of the learners. Overall, the education in the KSA should engage EFL teachers and EFL learners in the classroom by reducing the centralisation of the curriculum and improving teachers' knowledge with appropriate training. Further, instead of teacher-centric learning, EFL teachers should encourage student-centric learning and working in groups which would help learners learn important communicative and collaborative skills in parallel with the skills required to complete tasks independently. Student-centric learning could help EFL learners learn by doing, which would allow EFL teachers to use different teaching behaviours sufficiently and effectively to meet the learning needs of all ELLs, including GELLs.

7.4 How Do Head Teachers and Teachers as a Foreign Language Identify Gifted English Language Learners in Regular Saudi Classrooms and Schools?

The study also sought to examine how head teachers and EFL teachers in schools and EFL settings identify GELLs. From the literature on this topic, the KSA government has entrusted school heads and teachers with the responsibility of identifying and supporting gifted learners who can be moved to the MAWHIBA programme centres after being identified. Thus, establishing the role of the heads of schools in identification processes was important. First, head teachers were asked how they defined "gifted," and they were then asked to define GELLs. Some of the participating head teachers placed high expectations on GELLs. Many of the head teachers defined GELLs as those who learn English very quickly without struggling. For example, one of the head teachers (HTs2/001) defined GELLs as "students who can complete the task within a limited time without asking the teacher," and another head teacher defined GELLs as "students who do not need help in learning English but instead help the other students" (HTs7/001). Where some GELLs were able to meet this definition, others were not. This definition could be explained as a positive stereotype in relation to gifted learners. This definition implies that gifted learners do not need to study

and do not need support or help to improve their abilities, which is a difficult state to achieve in all GELLs, and making decisions based on this interpretation of gifted learners could prevent these learners from reaching their potential (Subotnik et al., 2011).

The current findings demonstrated that head teachers had a very limited perception of GELLs. Many of these head teachers were not involved in the identification process and did not feel that they were responsible for participating in this process. This lack of engagement in the GELL identification process could be explained by the obstacles related to head teachers' knowledge of GELLs in their schools. Adequately fulfilling this role would involve becoming fully aware of, and being involved in, the work that the teachers are doing with learners and understanding the reasons behind this work. The limited role of head teachers in respect to gifted learners in schools has also been asserted by other researchers, such as Hanoreh (2003) and Al-Ghamdi (2007) who argue that the foundational education system in the KSA does not motivate gifted learners due to the fact that schools rarely fulfil the role that is expected of them and rarely promote capable and trained teachers.

Al-Sahlawi (2001) claims that most head teachers in Saudi schools need to improve their knowledge and their relationships with their teachers. This situation is also related to the limited level of power and control given to head teachers in Saudi schools. Alsharari (2010) argues that the education system is highly centralised and is governed by the Ministry of Education, which does not usually accept the opinions of head teachers and does not furnish them with the necessary authority required for them to develop their own internal educational processes. Saudi head teachers are also not involved in curricula development or provided with professional development training courses in their schools.

The current findings from interviews with head teachers showed that they perceived EFL teachers as the one who are responsible for identifying GELLs. In the Saudi education system, teachers are regarded as powerful figures, especially when making decisions about the gifted learner identification process. In the schools that participated in this study according to both teachers and head teachers' interviews, GELLs were identified only by their EFL teacher. Even where head teachers thought EFL teachers were not using effective gifted learner identification strategies, these strategies were still considered the best available strategies in these schools. In some schools, these strategies were described as sufficient and valid even if the EFL teachers who developed these strategies were not trained to deal with GELLs. This lack of teacher knowledge and experience is a serious threat to giftedness

recognition (Harris et al., 2009). This lack of training for EFL teachers could explain the current findings indicating that the GELL identification process in KSA schools has not been standardised and has involved variations between and within schools. Some schools relied on each teacher's own evaluation methods, and others used exam results to identify gifted learners.

Teaching for testing or examination purposes is a common phenomenon in many subjects in KSA schools (Siddiek, 2011). One of the outcomes of the current study was to demonstrate that EFL teachers commonly trust test results (whether in maths or English) as evidence of whether a learner is gifted in a language. These teachers considered high exams scores to be the most effective method of recognising GELLs in the Saudi context, and this perception received support from the head teachers at their schools. Evidently, some EFL teachers were confused when they were asked how learners' test scores could adequately identify GELLs. Although they appeared to know that other things mattered and that test results were not always reliable, they were not clear about what else could be done.

Teachers, as key players in Saudi schools, cannot neglect the obligation of gifted learner identification. Government regulations in the KSA require classroom teachers to identify and support gifted learners in order to meet the social and emotional needs of these learners (Aljughaiman, 2007), which underlines the importance of the role of teachers in the identification of gifted learners. The interviews with teachers primarily focused on the meaning of gifted in general and the meaning of GELLs. Many of participating EFL teachers thought that giftedness comes from God and that no one can explain its meaning, which reveals the influence of the Islamic faith on these responses. As discussed in chapter 3, Islam believes giftedness to be something given from God that needs support from the environment. Thus, with their responses, the participating EFL teachers were consciously or unconsciously expressing their faith. Although teachers may have held this belief, their practice seemed to be influenced by other things including guidance from the Ministry, their knowledge about teaching and learning and so on.

Some of participating EFL teachers stated that GELL refers to one who is gifted in maths and sciences. Their responses were supported by studies (see Aguirre and Hernandez, 1999; Iowa Department of Education and Belin Blank Centre, 2008) that argue that advanced mathematical ability is one of the common features of GELLs. Regardless of whether the participating EFL teachers acknowledged this fact or were simply affected by the

MAWHIBA Programme's focus on gifted maths and science learners, being gifted in maths is not a guaranteed characteristic between all GELLs. This is due to the fact that each person has different characteristics and needs different types of support, and generalising such ideas could prevent many GELLs from recognising their abilities and reaching their potential.

The findings from the current research indicates that the Ministry of Education and the MAWHIBA Programme policies may not have been clear enough to be implemented in the same way in different schools, resulting in individual teachers applying their own strategies. For example, during the interview sessions, one of the head teachers (HTs9/008) explained that "we lack agreed-upon criteria regarding gifted education. They may have this in other Saudi schools for all subjects and especially for the English language, but we don't have it in this school". Furthermore, one of the EFL teachers indicated that "there is not enough policies and instruction from the Ministry or decision-makers for us as staff to deal with/identify and help GELLs" (Ts5/0010). This view has also been asserted by other researchers (see Muammar, 2006; Bushnak, 2007; Alqefari, 2010) regarding not only GELLs but gifted education in general. Most of the head teachers and EFL teacher's participants in this study seemed unclear about the regulation, approaches and plans regarding GELLs. They insisted that they need to identify GELLs but that there are no official guidelines, approaches or tools to help them do so. They also affirmed that they have to support GELLs but that there is no official programme within EFL classes to do so.

7.4.1 The Importance of Modifying the Saudi Gifted Community

In order to offer the best opportunities to young people, the KSA should consider modifying its gifted education system according to its own cultural and societal needs. This would generate a clear vision and road map regarding gifted education in general and GELLs in particular. Some policies, identification methods and existing definitions of giftedness within Saudi Arabia have been adopted from and influenced by many international gifted institutions. However, Al Nafa'a (2000) and Muammar (2006) question if they can be appropriately applied to Saudi society. They argue that it is difficult to provide sufficient identification and provision to gifted learners due to the fact that the term 'giftedness' is not defined clearly within the KSA. Sternberg (2007) argues that a universal lesson of learning is that being taught in culturally-appropriate ways raises achievement. The current study indicates that there may be specific cultural influences that have to be considered when finding ways of providing appropriate learning experiences for GELLs. This would include

giving consideration to the definition of giftedness within an Islamic country that is outward facing and connecting with the global community.

Further, effective policies need to be clearly defined, communicated and supported in order to be practical among all Saudi schools. The reason many participants were confused about identification and pedagogical strategies may be because the issue of identifying and providing for gifted learners in regular classrooms has not received sufficient attention from the Ministry of Education and the MAWHIBA Programme. Instead, the existing identification process favours the natural science subjects, which have enrichment programmes in the MAWHIBA Programme centres. Other disciplines lie outside of these opportunities and teachers may be unsure how to offer appropriate challenge.

Many participants stated that gifted learners were learners who scored highly in STEM subjects, especially in mathematics, and who created visible things, such as machines. Such thoughts reflect the emphasis that the Ministry of Education and the MAWHIBA Programme place on test scores, such as achievement test scores, general mental ability tests and WISC-R performance, to identify gifted learners (Aljughaiman and Ayoub, 2012). Therefore, finding schools in which test scores have become criteria to identify gifted learners in the KSA was unsurprising. EFL teachers in this study heavily depended on GELLs' examination results in order to identify them. This dependence on examinations seems to be a narrow view of the concept of giftedness in relation to GELLs because a learner's ability to confidently speak English as a second language could be weaker than their ability to perform on written examinations because of the many areas involved in speaking. These areas may include shyness, a lack of confidence, hesitation, nervousness and the fear of having to express oneself correctly as asserted by many studies (see Mueen, 1992; Kanwal and Khurshid, 2012). GELLs could experience some language anxiety and/or underachievement. These factors prevented them from acquiring a level of proficiency in a test context with a targeted language. Here, the problem is likely to be a lack of the KSA community awareness and effective planning and management within Saudi schools about the best strategies to identify GELLs. Johnsen (2004) emphasised that there is no single measure that can accurately identify every learner's ability level. Instead of relying solely on standardised testing, identifying gifted learners should be expanded to involve in-class observation, development of appropriate provision, intelligence scores, continual course work assessment and an assessment of learners' problem-solving skills (Clark, 2002; Johnsen, 2004). This use of two researchers in this current study highlighted the differing views and understandings that can

exist when observing learners and interpreting the classroom observation results. This perhaps underlines the importance of utilising a range of identification measures and also highlights the need to consider provision to ensure that gifted characteristics can emerge.

Once again, the lack of training in relation to EFL teachers in order to understand the appropriate strategies for identifying GELLs was an issue. The issue behind teachers' training is the ability of teachers with no training, knowledge or experience to plan for, provide and identify GELLs appropriately in EFL classes. In this study, the need for teacher training regarding gifted education in the KSA seemed considerable because all the participating EFL teachers stated that they had no training relating to gifted education. This lack of training has been found not only with GELLs but also with gifted education in general within the KSA. Ali (2000) asserted that in order for the development of gifted education to be improved in the KSA, a variety of elements need to be addressed, including teacher education, teacher training and teaching practices. Across the world, countries have been considering how to improve learning and teaching (Donaldson, 2010). Many have looked at how to support teachers in this process. Saudi Arabia has considered this for Mathematics and Science teachers and has supported staff to attend Masters level courses in the USA through the Areteem Institute. Again the focus on STEM subjects can be seen. Consideration needs to be given to other disciplines. Attention also needs to be paid to undergraduate programmes so that effective practice is embedded within the education system and leads on to continuous professional development.

7.5 What are the Views of English as Foreign Language Teachers and Gifted English Language Learners on what Support Gifted English Language Learners Need in School Generally and in English as Foreign Language Classroom specifically?

The forth aim of this study was examine what supports GELLs need in EFL settings. GELLs participated through focus group sessions in order to establish the types of support they need. Head teachers and EFL teachers were interviewed in order to identify what kinds of support they provide to GELLs once they have been identified. Many of the participating GELLs stated that they had a number of barriers to accessing the support they needed. These barriers

included the lack of engaging material in EFL classes. A large percentage of GELs wanted interesting and relevant topics and resources for their EFL classes and even in sessions outside the classrooms. Addressing the interests of GELs in the Saudi context may be necessary. urRahman and Alhaisoni (2013) claim that having interesting and relevant texts for English learners in the KSA is very important because motivating learners to read and learn in their native Arabic language is often difficult, and the effort required to read in EFL could therefore be even more difficult. Because of these factors, GELs may need interesting topics in order to stay engaged with learning English.

GELs in the KSA would benefit immensely if they were allowed to explore their interests while learning English. They need choices for finding the means by which they learn and how they can exhibit their skills. For example, if a GEL is interested in reading stories, he or she might be more willing to work on English texts that involved such stories. Besides having variety of interests, gifted learners, and indeed all learners, learn better in contexts that are relevant to them because this relevance helps them in establishing links between ideas. EFL teachers would therefore benefit if closer attention were paid to creating real or realistic situations and examples. Furthermore, EFL teachers should pay closer attention to realistic situations and real-world examples in order to create ample opportunities for GELs to acquire language skills more effectively. Of course, this is an expensive undertaking that calls for more resources than these EFL teachers and schools currently possess. This fact was understood by some of the participating EFL teachers and head teachers. They argue that the lack of resources and materials, including IT facilities, teaching aids and library services, are important challenges in their EFL classes. They stated that they were struggling to increase the interest of GELs and motivate them to improve their English language abilities. Further, EFL teachers have to use the Ministry of Education's textbooks, which have often been criticised for having inappropriate designs that do not adequately relate to the learners. By unquestionably following these books, teachers are curtailing their professional freedom to structure and plan their lessons according to their learners' needs which would reduce their motivation and desire to learn English. Alshumaimeri (2003) explained that even after spending numerous years in English classes, very few learners acquired an appropriate level of fluency in speaking English, which had led to numerous individuals considering the time spent in these classes to be wasted. Similarly, Al-Seghayer (2014) discovered that there was unlikely to be any improvement in the English proficiency level unless changes were made to the way classes were taught.

Further, many of the participating GELLs indicated some social aspect to improve their abilities was necessary. They asserted that there are no reasons to learn a language that is used only for school purposes. There are two possible reasons for such thoughts. Firstly, EFL teachers in the KSA schools have placed a great deal of emphasis on grammatical correctness. With this approach, errors are regarded negatively rather than as an integral part of the language-learning process. Kamarulzaman et al. (2013) identified some common difficulties for undergraduate Malaysian GELLs, including a lack of confidence in normal conversations. Under confident students are not risk takers; they feel shy about making mistakes. Thus, participated GELLs in this study could be shy and careful about saying something incorrect in front of their teachers and peers. In a way, some are arguing that there is no reason to use English if they can operate without any problems using only Arabic. The other reason could be that negative attitude towards learning English language in the KSA. Karmani (2005) also found that English is not widely accepted in Saudi schools and local communities. This affects all ELLs, not just GELLs. Some EFL teachers who argue that there was a tendency for learners to feel apprehensive when using this foreign language have understood this attitude. A number of EFL teachers also held the view that it was because Arabic was and is still the official language of the KSA, the language of Islam and the language of instruction in schools.

7.5.1 Importance of School Support

The most significant question revolves around the reasons that learners have not improved their proficiency in the English language. Fareh (2010) drew attention to some of the problems associated with the EFL programmes in the Arab world, which mostly related to school support. Numerous teachers have not received sufficient training and are not familiar with effective teaching practices. The learning activities are teacher centered as opposed to learner centered. Students' aptitude, initial preparedness and motivation are insufficient. Educators in schools and other higher education institutions frequently lament the reduced capacities of their learners. In addition, these teachers state the learners are not encouraged to study. Finally, textbooks and resources are cited as being inadequate.

The current situation in EFL classroom is that EFL teachers have not been provided with resources from the Ministry of Education to support GELLs. Interesting and relevant topics and resources are even more important for improving learners' attitudes towards the English language. As noted, the EFL classrooms described in this study did not

consider learners' freedom to learn according to their interests and abilities. Instead, the learners have been controlled and have had no real opportunity to practice and communicate in English. This, in turn, has generated obstacles preventing these learners' application of English, hindering their abilities.

Adopting different approaches for both teaching and learning English could be a positive change for EFLs. EFL teachers should vary their teaching styles to involve more visual and kinaesthetic formats. Gifted students are exceptional, but, like many pupils, they are often better suited to learning through doing. Thus, rather than giving a lecture, EFL teacher may create opportunities for these learners to learn by doing. In the observation schedule that was used in this study, there were some examples of strategies being used that help GELLs through learning by doing. For example, in the accommodations for individual differences category, there are skills that encouraged GELLs to learn by doing, such as encouraging multiple interpretations of events and situations, which is a skill that allows EFL learners to discover key ideas individually through structured activities and questions. GELLs who are shy can be given frequent chances to make presentations in class and even outside the class. GELLs who excel at solving problems in a single way can be shown other methods of doing solving problems. The curriculum rigidity practised in the KSA schools can thus be reduced greatly through other teaching strategies, such as using music, rhymes and other mnemonics.

Further, the analysis of the results of the present study demonstrated that GELLs may experience social difficulties communicating with their peers and adults. At the same time, EFL teachers do not heavily emphasise natural communication. Using a communicative approach when learning a foreign language could improve motivation and achievement levels while also reducing the anxiety levels of learners. Many researchers have argued that there is a strong relationship between learning English through a communicative approach and second-language proficiency, which has a direct influence on language performance (see Ross and Rost, 1991; Dornyei, 1995; Dornyei and Scott, 1997). Therefore, locating learners who are especially gifted in learning English language, maintaining a positive attitude towards these learners, and helping them in accordance with their specific needs could be complex because of these cultural differences.

7.6 Conclusion and Recommendations

This research aimed to investigate the educational experiences of GELLs in the Saudi context. This study established that the Saudi education system is centrally planned and controlled by the state. Through the Supreme Committee for Educational Policy and the Ministry of Education, education policies are directed and cascaded down to the ground level, which has had a profound effect in controlling the curriculum. The current EFL curriculum does not appear to meet GELLs' abilities. In order to address this issue, more flexibility for teachers in relation to the EFL curriculum could be allowed because the current constraints have a negative effect on teachers' abilities to meet GELLs' needs. In addition, the EFL curriculum should be adapted in order to address GELLs' needs for more relevant and interesting topics.

This study found that there are some perceived policy and knowledge limitations regarding how EFL teachers and head teachers identify and support GELLs. In order to address this issue, approaches should be defined to clarify the goals and regulations regarding GELLs for teachers and schools. Reforming the gifted education system identification which includes identification methods and provision according to its culture and also at appropriate scientific standards instead of relying on test results are recommended to meet Saudi society needs and support gifted learners. Little attention has been given to gifted learners in regular classes in general. This practice could leave some learners behind because gifted centres are not found in all Saudi cities and are only intended for STEM subjects. Gifted learners within regular classes have no programme or enrichment activities to meet their needs. Thus, more attention should be paid to gifted learners in regular classes including GELLs.

This study found that head teachers have little power to make decisions in their schools. More power and autonomy should be given head teachers as this would allow them to make decisions about school and they could consider how to provide appropriate learning experiences for GELLs and indeed all learners. However, there is also a need to ensure that Head Teachers understand learners' needs, and in the case of this study, the needs of GELLs. A clear understanding of learners needs linked with greater autonomy could be a powerful combination for Saudi education. Clearly, Saudi teachers, including EFL teachers, have the huge responsibility of ensuring that the centralised learning process established by the Ministry of Education is followed. Reducing some these teachers' responsibilities would allow them to spend more time understanding learners' abilities and needs and considering

what this means for practice in the classroom. This in turn may help teachers to meet the standards set by the Ministry of Education.

In the interview and focus group sessions of this study, some GELLs and EFL teachers argue that the negative views of the English language held by some parts of Saudi society and schools made practicing English language outside of school difficult. Improving society's awareness and acceptance of other cultures and languages could help improve this issue. Working with the parents of GELLs to help them understand their child's abilities in ELL and could help to break down barriers. One of the important findings of this study is that some of the participating EFL teachers had limited knowledge or experience working with GELLs. Training for EFL teachers in some areas, such as understanding the different characteristics of GELLs that differ with respect to the cultural and language influences and differentiating teaching behaviours, could help these teachers identify and support GELLs more effectively. This could be tied in with the general development of EFL teachers as strategies for supporting ELL and GELL could result in more effective learning for all.

7.6.1 Recommendations

Based on the discussion of main findings, some key recommendations can be made that would help improve and support GELLs in EFL classes:

- a. The Ministry of Higher Education, which is responsible for colleges and universities in the KSA (see chapter two), could consider incorporating training focused on supporting all learners, including gifted learners, for teacher training courses at all universities. Developing a culture of continuing professional development will also be important here. In this way, teachers and head teachers will continue to engage in learning about learning once they are practicing professionals.
- b. Head teachers could be given more autonomy to manage different aspects of their schools, including classroom practice, pedagogies and curricula, in order to meet gifted learners' and GELLs' needs. This would allow head teachers to take into consideration the needs of individual classes within their schools while still maintaining the standards set by the Ministry of Education.

- c. The Ministry of Education could review teachers' duties in Saudi schools and consider ways in which teachers could have more time to focus on teaching and learning. This focus, when combined with professional development and training, would hopefully result in teachers having a deeper understanding of learners, including GELLs. This would subsequently have a positive impact on provision, identification and the social needs of GELLs. Indeed, this would support teachers to more fully meet the needs of all.
- d. GELLs were of the opinion that EFL textbooks may benefit from some updating with realistic, relevant and interesting topics relating to daily life in the Saudi context. Updating text books could capture learners' attention more fully, including the attention of GELLs. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and MAWHIBA could consider supporting, funding and supplying more resources to regular classes in order to effectively address GELLs' needs. For example, EFL classes could be provided with movies and documentaries in English to contribute to their engagement with EFL.
- e. In relation to point d. above, the Ministry of Education and MAWHIBA could extend attention to GELLs to the issues of GELLs in the KSA, not only STEM subjects. In particular, these organisations could work with regular schools and teachers to clearly define approaches and plans to support and identify gifted learners and GELLs. Providing teachers with a detailed plan and training for working with gifted learners would support them as they continually identify and provide for gifted learners and GELLs.

7. 7 Limitations

- a. The cultures of other counties are different from the Saudi culture. Due to the fact that there are limited studies related to GELLs in the KSA, the researcher used the findings of many international studies to inform this study. This study also indicates that gifted education in the KSA is influenced by many western models, resources and materials to support gifted learners within the Saudi context. However, many of the participants are influenced by the Islamic and Arabic traditions towards giftedness, which have a different perspective from the western models and thoughts. Further, many of the participants have limited knowledge and experiences in

implementing these models and thoughts in the KSA. For example, the classroom observation schedule and questionnaire were developed in a culture very different from the KSA. Although they had been used in other cultures, they had not been used in an Arabic context. The observation team (the researcher and the coordinator from the Saudi Ministry of Education) met before the classes to clarify the objective of the classroom observation and after each observation class to reach a consensus, but reaching complete agreement was problematic because each observer had a different perspective. The coordinator from the Saudi Ministry of Education might have been unfamiliar with the observation scales or she might have been influenced by the Saudi cultural perspective and the regulations from the Ministry. The emphasis on gifted STEM learners may have influenced how the coordinator completed observation schedule. Broader than this was the issue relating to the use of Western models within Saudi schools. As there was little opportunity for Saudi staff to think about gifted learners, it would seem that there is a need to train and prepare Saudi staff in how to deal with adapting models and resources before applying them appropriately in Saudi context. Thus, the study raises the question whether developing some grounded approaches, materials and resources specifically for and arising from the Saudi context would be better than using tools and western resources that were developed for other cultures.

- b. This study's findings were based on female participants due to the formal structures of gender segregation in the KSA, in which female learners are not allowed to attend male schools. As the researcher herself is female, she could not include male participants or enter male schools. However, the recommendations from this study are not gender specific. It is clear from the conclusions of the study that a number of factors, such as the centralisation of the Ministry of Education in the KSA, pedagogy, learning and teaching offer important views for EFL teachers, head teachers and GELLs regardless of gender.
- c. This study explored the view of GELLs, EFL teachers and head teachers. This choice of focus was made to provide a school-level perspective. Naturally, this focus meant that the views of some key stakeholders, such as the policymaking community, gifted coordinators in the Ministry of Education, parents and family members were not included within this thesis. Each of these groups form an important part of GELLs' lives and might have contributed further to understanding the wider context of the

study. However, using a mixed-methods approach in this study helped draw a coherent, fine-grained picture about the experiences of GELLs within the school and classroom contexts. The findings of the study- including pupils', head teachers and teacher's views in these schools- provide the starting point for holistic understanding. These findings indicate that all the stakeholders involved from practices in the classroom level up to the Ministry of Education need to be involved if learning is to be supported.

7.8 Recommendations for Future Research

In order to overcome the identified limitations and deal with some issues that emerged while conducting this study, some recommendations can be made for future studies:

- a. According to the findings of this study, there are some GELLs who had negative attitudes towards learning EFL for many reasons, such as the perception that English language learning is not supported by their society (such as parents and peers) or by the current Saudi gifted education system, which is focused on STEM subjects. Therefore, future research could investigate the opinions of parents and peers of GELLs to better understand wider societal attitudes towards EFL and how these attitudes may impact on GELLs.
- b. Future studies could address gender differences across different levels of school throughout the KSA. This would allow the results of such a study to be compared and contrasted in more depth across gender and age.
- c. An in-depth investigation of GELLs in relation to English language learning areas, such as reading, GELL language learning strategies and GELL language learning difficulties, could be conducted in the KSA. This would contribute to continuing professional development for teachers and in the support of the learners.
- d. If the Tatweer project, which offers freedom and autonomy for head teachers and teachers to deal with learners according to their abilities, is spread to all Saudi schools by the end of 2017 as planned, then future research might consider investigating the implications and influence of this project for gifted learners and GELLs. Evaluating the effectiveness of this project and its impact on gifted learners

including GELLs would be an important contribution to the debate around how to best meet the needs of GELLs.

7.9 Contribution to Knowledge

This study set out to explore how GELLs were identified, understood and provided for within the KSA. It sheds light on the little known experiences of teachers, head teachers and gifted learners in ELL classes within the context of an Arab country. The setting for the study is important as the strong cultural influences of Arabic and Islam play important roles across society. The strong culture; strong Arabic statues and deep Islamic roots shape how and if giftedness is understood within Saudi culture. Considering giftedness from this perspective and according to culture could help to better understand how education and policies might be reformed and how care needs to be taken when adopting practices that are different from the dominant culture. Using a questionnaire and classroom observation schedule that was developed in a Western context along with interviews and focus groups in an Islamic country allowed for the exploration of how GELLs who have gift in western language in this context were understood and supported within school and regular classes. Using these methods offers some cross-cultural perspectives on giftedness that can be used to achieve a coherent picture of the situation for GELLs in the KSA. Conducting the questionnaires, observations, interviews and focus groups with participants in this research indicated that although the gifted education system in the KSA adapted many international models and thoughts for use in the KSA, many of the participants have been affected by their cultural perspective and no real change has taken place in relation to gifted education. For example, in the identification process, many of the participants still believed that the most effective method of identification was teachers' evaluations. However, the teachers have not received any training about how to identify gifted learners or recognise them. Therefore, their ability to identify gifted learners appropriately might be limited. Thus, this study highlighted the need to look to the cultural perspective in the KSA, such as amendments to the structure of schools' policies, environments and attitudes, and to improve the teachers' practices and knowledge before adopting Western models in Saudi context. This study can contribute to the ongoing debate about culturally relevant provisions and identification processes for GELLs.

Looking at Arabic young people's understanding about English language and English language teaching in an Arabic context will contribute to the existing body of data gathered

in other cultural contexts in relation to the importance meeting the needs of GELLs in general EFL learning settings. Further, exploring teachers' and head teachers' understandings about giftedness will help to recognise the issues faced by school managers and class teachers as they provide appropriate learning opportunities for GELLs.

Internationally there is a focus on STEM subjects and Saudi Arabia is no different. This study has looked at GELL and challenges the idea that subjects in addition to STEM need to be considered. These subject areas are not mutually exclusive. For example, being gifted at English may be of benefit to STEM if Saudi scientists and researchers are working collaboratively in an international consortium where English is the dominant language. This study highlighted the need to consider giftedness across and within disciplines to enhance provision and opportunity for giftedness wherever it occurs.

Addressing giftedness both in different and specific domains could be of benefit to society and contribute to the development of civil society. One of these domains is English language. Acknowledging and developing GELLs through effective provision and identification procedures could allow GELLs to contribute to future discoveries in science and the arts. Importantly, it could open dialogue between and across different cultures.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: The Teacher Questionnaire



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The Teacher Questionnaire

(For each of the following statements, please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree neither, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. Choose one answer for each statement.)

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
GELs have advanced comprehension.					
GELs are verbally articulate.					
GELs dominate discussions.					
GELs have unusual interests.					
GELs are brighter than most adults.					
GELs are disrespectful to authority.					
GELs are creative thinkers.					
GELs make friends easily.					

GELs are perceived by others as elitist, or superior, or too critical.					
GELs can find original relationships between ideas.					
GELs have unusual sensitivity to the feelings of others.					
GELs deserve special treatment by society at large.					
GELs have a keen sense of humour.					
GELs are insensitive to hurting the feelings of others.					
GELs can see diverse relationships among ideas.					
GELs can remember a large store of information.					
GELs keep to themselves socially.					
GELs have high expectations of others.					
GELs are natural leaders.					
GELs would make good schoolteachers					

Adapted from: Geake, J. G., & Gross, M. U. M. (2008). Teachers' negative affect toward academically gifted students: An evolutionary psychological study. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52(3), 217-231.

Appendix 2: Classroom Observation



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Classroom Observation

Teacher education level: ☐ Diploma degree ☐ bachelor's degree ☐ post-graduate

How many years the teacher has been teaching English language in the intermediate school: ☐ 1-5 ☐ 6-10 ☐ 11-20 ☐ More than 20 years

Did the teacher take any training course in English language teaching practices:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Did the teacher take any training course in English language teaching practices for gifted learners: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Grade level.....

Number of students.....

Classroom desk arrangement.....

3=Effective	2=Somewhat Effective	1=Ineffective	N/O = Not Observed
<p>The teacher evidences careful planning and classroom flexibility in implementation of the behaviour, eliciting many appropriate student responses.</p> <p>The teacher is clear, and</p> <p>Sustains focus on the Purposes of learning.</p>	<p>The teacher evidences some planning and/or classroom flexibility in implementation of the behaviour, eliciting some appropriate student responses.</p> <p>The teacher is sometimes clear and focuses on the purposes of learning.</p>	<p>The teacher evidenced little or no planning and/or classroom flexibility in implementation of the behaviour, eliciting minimal appropriate student responses. The teacher is unclear and unfocused regarding the purpose of learning.</p>	<p>The list behaviour is not demonstrated during the time of the observation. (NOTE: There must be an obvious attempt made for the certain behaviour to be rated “ineffective” instead of “not observed”.)</p>

Scale and Subscale	3	2	1	No
Curriculum Planning and Delivery EFL Teacher...				
1. Set high expectations for EFL learners' performance.				
2. Incorporated activities for EFL learners to apply new knowledge.				
3. Engaged EFL learners in planning, monitoring or assessing their learning.				
4. Encouraged EFL learners to express their thoughts.				
5. Had EFL learners reflect on what they had learned.				
Comments:				
Accommodations for Individual Differences in EFL Teachers				
6. Provided opportunities for independent or group learning to promote depth in understanding content.				
7. Accommodated individual or subgroup differences				
3 Encouraged multiple interpretations of events and situations. 4				
9. Allowed EFL learners to discover key ideas individually through structured activities or questions.				
Comments:				
Problem Solving EFL Teacher...				
10. Employed brainstorming techniques.				
11. Engaged EFL learners in problem identification and definition.				

12. Engaged EFL learners in solution-finding activities and comprehensive solution articulation.				
Comments:				
Critical Thinking Strategies EFL Teacher...				
13. Encouraged EFL learners to judge or evaluate situations, problems or issues.				
14. Engaged EFL learners in comparing and contrasting ideas.				
15. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to generalize from concrete data or information to the abstract.				
16. Encouraged EFL learners' synthesis or summary of information within or across disciplines.				
Comments:				
Creative Thinking Strategies EFL Teacher...				
17. Solicited many diverse thoughts about issues or ideas.				
18. Engaged EFL learners in the exploration of diverse points of view to reframe ideas.				
19. Encouraged EFL learners to demonstrate open-mindedness and tolerance of imaginative, sometimes playful solutions to problems.				
20. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to develop and elaborate on their ideas				
Comments:				
Research Strategies EFL Teacher...				
21. Required EFL learners to gather evidence from multiple sources through research-based techniques.				
22. Provided opportunities for EFL learners to analyse data and represent it in appropriate charts, graphs or tables.				

23. Asked questions to assist EFL learners in making inferences from data and drawing conclusions				
24. Encouraged EFL learners to determine the implications and consequences of findings.				
25. Provided time for EFL learners to communicate research study findings to relevant audiences in a formal report or presentation.				
Comments:				
Additional comments:				

Adapted from: VanTassel-Baska, J., Avery, L., Struck, J., Feng, A., Bracken, B., Drummond, D., and Stambaugh, T. (2003). *The William and Mary Classroom Observation Scales–Revised (COS-R)*. Williamsburg, VA: Center for Gifted Education.

Appendix 3: Teacher Interview



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Social Sciences

EFL Teacher Interview Protocol

- 1) What do you think it means to be a gifted learner?
- 2) What do you think it means to be a gifted English language learner?
- 3) Who identifies the student as a gifted English language learner in your class? (*i.e., general education coordinator, English teacher, parent's nomination, others*).
- 4) Tell me about the strategies you use to identify a gifted English language learner? (*i.e., IQ test, teacher nomination, student's grads in the exam, clear guide from the ministry of education, student's behaviour in the class or other*).
- 5) Do you think these strategies identify all gifted English language learners in the school? *Please give reasons for your answer.*
- 6) Is there a clear plan to continually identify and support gifted English language learners? *If yes, what is it?*
- 7) What instructional strategies do you think could help the gifted English language learners learn better?
- 8) Do you follow some strategies that you think could help gifted English language learner? (*i.e., Critical thinking, critical strategies, solving problems or other*).
- 9) Once students are identified as gifted English language learners how do you support them:

a) Socially and emotionally? (*i.e., Frustration, Lack of interest, Lack of self-esteem, Family support problems, Social issues, Perfectionism, Developing relationships or others*).

b) Taking account of students' strengths and weaknesses? (*i.e., Creativity, Spatial Problem-solving, Verbal skills, Critical thinking, Self-esteem, Leadership, Organizational skills, Time management or others*).

C) To demonstrate their language proficiency level, (*i.e., help them communicate, ask questions, help them develop the linguistic ability or others skills*).

10) In your view, do you feel gifted English language learners face barriers in school?
Please give reasons for your answer.

11) In your view, do you feel gifted English language learners face barriers in your class?
Please give reasons for your answer.

Appendix 4: Head Teacher Interview



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Head Teacher Interview Protocol

- 1) What do you think it means to be a gifted learner?
- 2) What do you think it means to be a gifted English language learner?
- 3) Who identifies the student as a gifted English language learner in your school? (*i.e., general education coordinator, English teacher, parent's nomination, others*).
- 4) Tell me about the strategies you use to identify gifted English language learners in your school? (*i.e., IQ test, teacher nomination, student's grads in the exam, clear guide from the ministry of education, student's behaviour in the class or other*).
- 5) Do you think these strategies identify all gifted English language learners in the school? Please give reasons for your answer.
- 6) Is there a clear plan to continually identify and support gifted English language learners? *If yes, what is it?*
- 7) Once students are identified as a gifted English language learner how does the school support them:
 - a) Socially and emotionally? (*i.e., Frustration, Lack of interest, Lack of self-esteem, Family support problems, Social issues, Perfectionism, Developing relationships or others*).
 - b) Taking account of students' strengths and weaknesses? (*i.e., Creativity, Spatial Problem-solving, Verbal skills, Critical thinking, Self-esteem, Leadership, Organizational skills, Time management or others*).

C) To demonstrate their language proficiency level, (*i.e., help them in code switch, help them develop the linguistic ability or others*).

8) In your view, do you feel gifted English language learners face barriers in school?
Please give reasons for your answer.

Appendix 5: Focus Group



Protocol for Focus Group Discussion with Gifted English Language Learners:

- 1) What things do effective English language teachers do in their classrooms?
- 2) If you were the English teacher is there anything you would change during English language lessons? *If so what?*
- 3) In what ways are you satisfied with how the teacher has organised your learning in class? In what ways could they organise learning differently?
- 4) Are you happy to have been identified as gifted English language learners? *Please explain?*
- 5) What do you think you did to be identified as gifted English language learners?
- 6) What support for your learning do you need as a result of being identified as gifted English language learners? *(possible prompts: Help to develop your higher level thinking, help to develop your research skills, help to develop your English communication (speaking and writing) skills, help to develop your linguistic ability, help you in creative thinking skills or help you with your interesting resources or other).*
- 7) If you could tell the adults at this school about certain things that could help you learn better, what would you say about?
Teacher performance, Teaching practices, Materials and resources or other.

Appendix 6: Plain Language Statement for EFL Teacher



Project title: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Principal investigator: Badriah Alkhannani. Email: 1011773a@student.gla.ac.uk.

Supervisors: Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack.

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate how teachers of English language work with gifted English language learners (GELLs). In particular, the study is interested in:

- How head teachers and EFL teachers identify this group of learners,
- What EFL teacher attitudes are towards GELLs,
- How GELLs can be effectively supported in school and the classroom, and the experiences of GELLs in the English language classroom.

Why have I been chosen?

As a teacher of English language working with gifted English language learners in the regular classroom you identify, support and implement the contents of the curriculum for GELLs into classroom practice. You therefore meet the study criteria and you represent the main source of information relevant to the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You are expected to be engaged in a face-to-face interview. The interview will last approximately 1 hour. You are also expected to teach the learners in your regular English language classes so that an observation of approximately 45 minutes can be carried out. Furthermore, you will be asked to participate in a questionnaire. The questionnaire will take around 30 minutes.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

You can be assured that the results will not include your name as pseudo names will be used. Furthermore, data collected written or transcribed as hard copy will be shredded and all electronic data will be deleted from the computer after the successful completion of the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information will be used by the researcher to produce a PhD thesis and to publish papers.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack (The supervisors) and the Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information?

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the supervisors, Dr Margaret Sutherland, School of Education, St Andrews Building, University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH UK

Margaret.sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk, or

Dr Niamh Stack, School of Psychology, R434 Level 4, 58 Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QB Niamh.Stack@glasgow.ac.uk, or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer—Dr. Muir Houston: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk. Telephone: 0141-330-4699.

Confidentiality

The information you give me will not be shared with anyone else. All responses will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity at all times.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to decide not to take part in this study at any point. If you are clear about the information presented above and wish to become involved in the study, please sign the Consent Form. Thank you very much for your time and I hope you decide to participate. Regards, Badriah Alkhannani.

Appendix 7: Plain Language Statement for Head Teacher



Project title: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Principal investigator: Badriah Alkhannani. Email: 1011773a@student.gla.ac.uk.

Supervisors: Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack.

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate how teachers of English language work with gifted English language learners (GELLs). In particular, the study is interested in:

- How head teachers and EFL teachers identify this group of learners,
- What EFL teacher attitudes are towards GELLs,
- How GELLs can be effectively supported in school and the classroom, and the experiences of GELLs in the English language classroom.

Why have I been chosen?

As a head teacher working with GELLs in your school you have experience of implementing the regulation from the Ministry of Education in relation to GELLs.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to participate in face-to-face interview in your school. The interview will last approximately 1 hour.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

You can be assured that the results will not include your name as pseudo names will be used. Furthermore, data collected written or transcribed as hard copy will be shredded and all electronic data will be deleted from the computer after the successful completion of the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information will be used by the researcher to produce a PhD thesis and to publish papers.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh stack (The supervisors) and the Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information?

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the supervisors, Dr Margaret Sutherland, School of Education, St Andrews Building, University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH UK
Margaret.sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk, or

Dr Niamh Stack, School of Psychology, R434 Level 4, 58 Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QB Niamh.Stack@glasgow.ac.uk, or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk. Telephone: 0141-330-4699.

Confidentiality

The information you give me will not be shared with anyone else. All responses will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity at all times.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to decide not to take part in this study at any point. If you are clear about the information presented above and wish to become involved in the study, please sign the Consent Form. Thank you very much for your time and I hope you decide to participate. Regards, Badriah Alkhannani.

Appendix 8: Plain Language Statement for Gifted English Language Learners' Parents



Project title: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Principal investigator: Badriah Alkhannani. Email: 1011773a@student.gla.ac.uk.

Supervisors: Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack.

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate how teachers of English language work with gifted English language learners (GELLs). In particular, the study is interested in:

- How head teachers and EFL teachers identify this group of learners,
- What EFL teacher attitudes are towards GELLs,
- How GELLs can be effectively supported in school and the classroom, and the experiences of GELLs in the English language classroom.

Why have they been chosen?

As gifted English language learners, they meet the study criteria and they represent an important source of information about the real situation in their classrooms. So, their opinion is significant and relevant to the study.

Do they have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not your child takes part. If you decide your child will take part, you are still free to withdraw your child at any time and without giving a reason.

Moreover, whether you agree or decline your child to take part in the research that will not influence the education your child receives.

What will happen to them if they take part?

Your child will be invited to participate in a group discussion about their experiences in school. The group discussion will last approximately one hour.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

You can be assured that the results will not include your name as pseudo names will be used. Furthermore, data collected written or transcribed as hard copy will be shredded and all electronic data will be deleted from the computer after the successful completion of the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information will be used by the researcher to produce a PhD thesis and to publish papers.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh stack (The supervisors) and the Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information?

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the supervisors, Dr Margaret Sutherland, School of Education, St Andrews Building, University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH UK

Margaret.sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk, or

Dr Niamh Stack, School of Psychology, R434 Level 4, 58 Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QB Niamh.Stack@glasgow.ac.uk, or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer–Dr. Muir Houston: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk. Telephone: 0141-330-4699.

Confidentiality

The information you give me will not be shared with anyone else. All responses will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity at all times.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to decide not to take part in this study at any point. If you are clear about the information presented above and wish to become involved in the study, please

sign the Consent Form. Thank you very much for your time and I hope you decide to participate. Regards, Badriah Alkhannani.

Appendix 9: Plain Language Statement for Gifted English Language Learners



Project title: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Principal investigator: Badriah Alkhannani. Email: 1011773a@student.gla.ac.uk.

Supervisors: Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack.

Invitation:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study aims to investigate how teachers of English language work with gifted English language learners (GELLs). In particular, the study is interested in:

- How head teachers and EFL teachers identify this group of learners,
- What EFL teacher attitudes are towards GELLs,
- How GELLs can be effectively supported in school and the classroom, and the experiences of GELLs in the English language classroom.

Why have I been chosen?

As gifted English language learners, you meet the study criteria and you are an important source of information as you can tell me about life in your classrooms. So, your opinion is very important and relevant to the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Moreover, whether you agree or decline to take part in the research that will not influence the education you receive.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in a focus group discussion session with some of your friends. The discussion session will last approximately one hour.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

You can be assured that the results will not include your name as pseudo names will be used. Furthermore, data collected written or transcribed as hard copy will be shredded and all electronic data will be deleted from the computer after the successful completion of the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The information will be used by the researcher to produce a PhD thesis and to publish papers.

Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by Dr Margaret Sutherland and Dr Niamh Stack (The supervisors) and the Research Ethics Committee.

Contact for Further Information?

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the supervisors, Dr Margaret Sutherland, School of Education, St Andrews Building, University of Glasgow, 11 Eldon Street, Glasgow, G3 6NH UK
Margaret.sutherland@glasgow.ac.uk, or

Dr Niamh Stack, School of Psychology, R434 Level 4, 58 Hillhead Street, Glasgow, G12 8QB Niamh.Stack@glasgow.ac.uk, or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer—Dr. Muir Houston: muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk. Telephone: 0141-330-4699.

Confidentiality

The information you give me will not be shared with anyone else. All responses will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect your anonymity at all times.

Right to withdraw

You have the right to decide not to take part in this study at any point. If you are clear about the information presented above and wish to become involved in the study, please

sign the Consent Form. Thank you very much for your time and I hope you decide to participate. Regards, Badriah Alkhannani.

Appendix 10: Consent Form for Participants (EFL Teachers, Head Teachers and GELLs)



Title of Project: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Name of Researcher: Badriah Alkhannani

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and I agree my child can take part in this research.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that all the information I give will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect my anonymity at all times.
4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Appendix 11: Consent Form for Gifted English Language Learners' Parents



Title of Project: “An Exploration of the Educational Experiences of Gifted English Language Learners in the Saudi Context”

Name of Researcher: Badriah Alkhannani

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and I agree my child can take part in this research.
2. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my child at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that all the information my child give will be treated confidentially and every effort will be taken to protect my child's anonymity at all times.
4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) my child can take part in the above study.

Name of Participant's parent

Date

Signature